Political Science, Ph.D.

Graduate study in political science emphasizes the Doctor of Philosophy program. The department usually offers the master’s degree only as a preliminary step toward the Ph.D.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in political science requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit. The program is designed to prepare students for research, teaching, and scholarly endeavor in academic settings and private or governmental institutions. It produces graduates who are deeply committed to the study of politics, familiar with fundamental knowledge about political processes, well trained in methods and techniques for careful investigation of basic and applied research questions, and determined to make contributions to the discipline of political science and to society.

Six fields of study are available: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, formal theory, and for those who wish to go beyond the basic methodology training, research methods. Each student chooses three fields of study for qualifying examinations.

The department usually admits seven to ten Ph.D. students each year, so students work closely with faculty members, often collaborating on research and publication. Graduate students know one another and enjoy supportive, congenial working conditions.

Doctoral study usually lasts four to five years. The first-year curriculum for all students consists of core courses equally divided between substance and methodology. Emphasis is on basic research methods, including quantitative methods, that political scientists must understand thoroughly. Special attention is given to research design, collection of observations, and data analysis and interpretation.

The second and third years of study are spent in small seminars with focused, substantive topics. Papers written for these seminars might be submitted to journals or read at professional meetings. Students must take their qualifying examinations by the end of the third year. They take their comprehensive examination (oral defense of the dissertation proposal) by the middle of the first semester of their fourth year.

The fourth and fifth years are spent on dissertation research and writing. Students who do basic research and gather data abroad often require an additional year to complete the dissertation.

The Guide to Doctoral Study, available from the Department of Political Science and on its website, provides a comprehensive statement of departmental requirements.

Admission

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College.