

Political Science, PhD

The doctoral program in political science is nationally recognized as a leader in the discipline, with outstanding research faculty in each of the major subfields and a reputation for outstanding graduate training.

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 PhD.

The program is designed to prepare students for research, teaching, and scholarly endeavors 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 society.

The department usually admits six to eight PhD 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.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- demonstrate in-depth knowledge of two major fields in the discipline and competency in one minor field (the minor field may be within the discipline, in an interdisciplinary subject, or in another related discipline);
- demonstrate advanced research skills, including advanced statistical analysis and broad knowledge of a range of theoretical and methodological approaches relevant to their field of research;
- demonstrate effective teaching skills following the pedagogical standards of the discipline;
- be familiar with and follow disciplinary norms and standards, including understanding issues related to ethical practices in research; professional, public, and collegial engagement; and instruction; and
- demonstrate a full understanding of the research enterprise, including an ability to engage others' work and an ability to make original and substantial contributions to the field.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy in political science requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a Graduate College program grade-point average of at least 3.40.

Four fields of study are available: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and

methodology. Each student chooses three fields of study for qualifying examinations.

The PhD in political science requires the following coursework.

Required Coursework

Students must complete the appropriate course numbered 5100-5700 before enrolling in a course numbered 7000 or above. In unusual circumstances and with the permission of the instructor teaching the higher-level course, a student may enroll in that course and a course numbered 5100-5700 at the same time.

Core Courses

Students take the following courses, except POLI:7270, on an A-F graded basis. Students must earn a B or above in all courses except POLI:5000 and POLI:7270.

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
POLI:5000	Introduction to Political Analysis	4
POLI:5001	Introductory Methodology	4
POLI:5003	Intermediate Methodology	4
POLI:7003	Advanced Methodology	4
POLI:7270	Responsible Research in Political Science	1

Graduate students are expected to take at least 12 s.h. of coursework per semester through their second year of graduate study. Typically, this is in regularly scheduled courses rather than readings courses.

Additional Courses

Students complete 55 s.h. of additional coursework in field area, advanced political science, and elective courses.

During the third year, students are expected to take a minimum of 12 s.h. of regularly scheduled coursework; readings courses should be limited to the second semester of the third year. Students may take up to 12 s.h. in readings courses (not counting coursework accumulated in summer terms, when readings courses are often all that is available).

Field Area

Students complete three of the following field area requirements. All courses must be taken on an A-F graded basis.

Course #	Title	Hours
American Politics		
These courses:		
POLI:5100	American Politics	4
POLI:7150	Problems in American Politics (taken twice for 4 s.h. each)	8
International Relations		
This course:		
POLI:5500	International Politics	4
8 s.h. from these:		
POLI:7502	International Institutions and Cooperation (may be repeated)	4
POLI:7503	International Conflict and Cooperation (may be repeated)	4

POLI:7550	Problems in International Politics (may be repeated)	4
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Comparative Politics

This course:

POLI:5400	Comparative Politics	4
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8 s.h. from these:

POLI:7202	Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior (may be repeated)	4
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POLI:7450	Problems of Comparative Politics (may be repeated)	4
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Methodology

8 s.h. from these:

POLI:5700	Introduction to Formal Models in Political Science (may be repeated)	4
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POLI:7002	Topics Methodology (may be repeated)	4
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Students may develop a self-defined field area, drawing upon coursework outside of political science with the permission of their advisor.

Advanced Political Science Courses

Students take a minimum of 12 s.h. of political science courses (prefix POLI) numbered 5000 or above to satisfy the advanced political science courses requirement.

Electives

Elective courses must bring the total credit for the PhD to a minimum of 72 s.h. Elective coursework is tailored to a student's background and career goals. It is selected in consultation with the student's advisory committee and can include research.

Students may enroll in any course numbered 4000 or above, including additional political science courses (prefix POLI). From these, students are permitted a total maximum of 12 s.h. from POLI:7900 Readings Tutorial, POLI:7901 Research Tutorial, and POLI:7910 PhD Dissertation.

Qualifying Exam and Comprehensive Exam

Students must complete 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.

Postcomprehensive Registration

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. Graduate College regulations require that students be registered at the University of Iowa each semester after passing the comprehensive examination until their degree is awarded, and that this registration accurately reflects the amount and type of work undertaken, the use of university facilities, and the amount of consultation with the faculty. After passing their comprehensive examination, students working on their dissertation research should register for POLI:7910 PhD Dissertation.

Admission

Because the number of positions available in the PhD program is limited, the competition for admission is keen. However, applicants who did not major in political science or who are not acquainted with quantitative research methods are not at a disadvantage.

The deadline for application and consideration for assistantships and fellowships is Jan. 7.

Admission requirements include a baccalaureate degree, an undergraduate grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.30 on a four-point scale (or its equivalent for international applicants), and three letters of recommendation from persons who can comment upon the applicant's academic ability and motivation. For applicants who have pursued graduate work elsewhere, a graduate GPA of at least 3.50 is required.

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

Students may only enter the program in the fall semester.

Career Advancement

The Doctor of Philosophy program in political science is designed to prepare students for careers in research and teaching. All students receive a thorough grounding in research methods. It is this grounding that permits teachers to be critical consumers of the research they read and permits researchers to undertake significant theoretical and empirical work.

Because the faculty and the graduate student body are not large, there is ample opportunity to collaborate with individual faculty members in research endeavors. In addition, students spend some time as apprentice teachers in large undergraduate classes.

PhD graduates secure employment in a wide variety of academic and nonacademic settings. In particular, they work in highly ranked research universities and teaching colleges throughout the United States and the world. Over the last decade, almost all graduates seeking academic positions found jobs.

Iowa graduates use their training to build distinguished research records that allow them to move to some of the nation's top institutions.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

Political Science, PhD

Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		

72 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. ^{a, b, c}

Graduate College program GPA of at least 3.40 is required.^d

		Hours	0
First Year			
Fall			
POLI:5000	Introduction to Political Analysis	4	
POLI:5001	Introductory Methodology ^a	4	
Field Area course	^{e, f}	4	
		Hours	12
Spring			
POLI:5003	Intermediate Methodology	4	
Field Area course	^{e, f}	4	
Advanced political science course (prefix POLI, numbered 5000 or above)		4	
		Hours	12
Second Year			
Fall			
POLI:7003	Advanced Methodology	4	
POLI:7270	Responsible Research in Political Science	1	
Field Area course	^{e, f}	4	
Advanced political science course (prefix POLI, numbered 5000 or above)		4	
		Hours	13
Spring			
Advanced political science course (prefix POLI, numbered 5000 or above)		4	
Elective course	^{g, h}	4	
Elective course	^{g, h}	4	
		Hours	12
Third Year			
Any Semester			
Qualifying Exams	ⁱ		0
		Hours	0
Fall			
Elective course	^{g, h}	4	
Elective course	^{g, h}	4	
		Hours	8
Spring			
Elective course	^{g, h}	4	
Elective course	^{g, h}	4	
		Hours	8
Fourth Year			
Fall			
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation ^{g, h}	3	
Exam: Doctoral Comprehensive Exam	^j		3
		Hours	3
Spring			
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation ^{g, h}	2	
		Hours	2
Fifth Year			
Fall			
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation ^{g, h}	1	
		Hours	1
Spring			
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation ^{g, h}	1	

Exam: Doctoral Final Exam ^k	
Hours	1
Total Hours	72

a Students must earn a B or above in all courses except POLI:5000 and POLI:7270.

b Four fields of study are available: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and methodology.

c Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

d Graduate College program GPA is comprised of all courses that are approved degree requirements. If a student takes more than the minimum required number of semester hours to complete the degree, but all courses taken are eligible to count toward the degree, those courses will be included in the Graduate College program GPA.

e Complete courses for three of the following field areas: 1) American politics: POLI:5100 and POLI:7150 (taken twice); 2) international relations: POLI:5500 and 8 s.h. from POLI:7502, POLI:7503, POLI:7550; 3) comparative politics: POLI:5400 and 8 s.h. from POLI:7202, POLI:7450; 4) methodology: 8 s.h. from POLI:5700, POLI:7002.

f Students may develop a self-defined field area, drawing upon coursework outside of political science with the permission of their advisor.

g Students may enroll in any course numbered 4000 or above, including additional political science courses (prefix POLI). From these, students are permitted a total maximum of 12 s.h. from POLI:7900, POLI:7901, and POLI:7910.

h Elective courses must bring the total credit for the PhD to a minimum of 72 s.h. Elective coursework is tailored to a student's background and career goals. It is selected in consultation with the student's advisor committee and can include research.

i Must be completed by the end of the third year; students choose three fields of study for qualifying examinations.

j Includes oral defense of the dissertation proposal and must be completed by the middle of the first semester of the fourth year.

k Dissertation defense.