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.

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

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 to 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.

Five fields of study are available: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, formal theory, and research methods. Each student chooses three fields of study for qualifying examinations.

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 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.

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 following courses are required during the first and second years of graduate study.

Course #	Title	Hours
First Year, Fall Semester		
POLI:5000	Introduction to Political Analysis	4
POLI:5001	Introductory Methodology	4
A field seminar numbered 5100-5700 (see the "Field Seminars" section)		4
First Year, Second Semester		
POLI:5003	Intermediate Methodology	4
Two field seminars numbered 5100-5700 (see the "Field Seminars" section)		8
Second Year		
POLI:7003	Advanced Methodology	4

Field Seminars

The field seminars numbered 5100–5700 are as follows.

Course #	Title	Hours
POLI:5100	American Politics	4
POLI:5400	Comparative Politics	4
POLI:5500	International Politics	4
POLI:5700	Introduction to Formal Models in Political Science	4

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.

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. 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).

Core Graduate Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
POLI:5000	Introduction to Political Analysis	4
POLI:5001	Introductory Methodology	3-4

POLI:5100	American Politics	4
POLI:5400	Comparative Politics	4
POLI:5500	International Politics	4
POLI:5700	Introduction to Formal Models in Political Science	4

Advanced Graduate Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
POLI:5003	Intermediate Methodology	4
POLI:5111	American Public Policy	3
POLI:5117	Bureaucratic Politics and Public Administration	3
POLI:5200	American State Politics	3
POLI:7002	Topics Methodology	4
POLI:7003	Advanced Methodology	4
POLI:7100	Modeling American Politics	4
POLI:7150	Problems in American Politics	4
POLI:7202	Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior	4
POLI:7270	Responsible Research in Political Science	1
POLI:7450	Problems of Comparative Politics	4
POLI:7502	International Institutions and Cooperation	4
POLI:7503	International Conflict and Cooperation	4
POLI:7550	Problems in International Politics	4
POLI:7900	Readings Tutorial	arr.
POLI:7901	Research Tutorial	arr.
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation	arr.

Quantitative Methods

All doctoral students must demonstrate at least minimal competence in quantitative methods. Students must earn at least a B grade in POLI:5001 Introductory Methodology, POLI:5003 Intermediate Methodology, and POLI:7003 Advanced Methodology. Students who do not meet this requirement must take a substitute course selected by faculty members who teach the quantitative methods courses.

Postcomprehensive Registration

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 in POLI:7910 PhD Dissertation. No more than 30 s.h. are granted for dissertation preparation.

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

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]		

Students must maintain a Graduate College program GPA of 3.40 or higher. [c]

	Hours	**0**
First Year		
Fall		
POLI:5000	Introduction to Political Analysis	4
POLI:5001	Introductory Methodology [d]	4
Field Seminar course [e]		4
	Hours	**12**
Spring		
POLI:5003	Intermediate Methodology [d]	4
Field Seminar course [e]		4
Field Seminar course [e]		4
	Hours	**12**
Second Year		
Fall		
POLI:7003	Advanced Methodology [d]	4
Elective course [f]		4
Elective course [f]		4
	Hours	**12**
Spring		
Elective course [f]		4
Elective course [f]		4
Elective course [f]		4
	Hours	**12**
Third Year		
Any Semester		
Qualifying Exams [g]		
	Hours	**0**
Fall		
Elective course [f]		4
Elective course [f]		4
	Hours	**8**
Spring		
Elective course [f]		4
Elective course [f]		4
	Hours	**8**
Fourth Year		
Fall		
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation	3
	Hours	**3**
Spring		
Comprehensive Exam [h]		
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation	3
	Hours	**3**
Fifth Year		
Fall		
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation	1
	Hours	**1**
Spring		
POLI:7910	PhD Dissertation	1
Final Exam [i]		
	Hours	**1**
	Total Hours	**72**

a Five fields of study are available: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, formal theory, and research methods.

b 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.

c A graduate student's Graduate College Program GPA is comprised of all courses that are approved degree requirements.

d Must earn grade of B or better.

e Choose from POLI:5100, POLI:5400, POLI:5500, POLI:5700.

f Includes field of study concentration coursework selected from core or advanced graduate courses in the department; may take up to 12 s.h. of readings courses, research, and thesis credit. Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.

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

h Includes oral defense of dissertation proposal and must be completed by spring semester of the fourth year.

i Dissertation defense.