

Guide to Undergraduate Studies in Politics

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Students majoring in Politics at The Catholic University of America must take a set of required courses in the major and complete a comprehensive assessment, which consists of a senior exam and a senior writing assignment. There are also a number of opportunities available to politics majors, including a pre-law track, internships for credit in D.C. and abroad, and joint degrees.

Course Requirements

The study of Politics is divided into one of three main areas of specialization (or departmental “concentrations”): American Government, World Politics (which includes

comparative politics and international relations), and Political Theory. All courses belong to one or more of these three concentrations. (Designations can be found on the Politics department website and in the University’s Course Catalog.)

To ensure familiarity with the three concentrations, all Politics majors **must take these three courses**, usually during their first three semesters:

POL 111 Introduction to American
Government

POL 112 Introduction to Comparative Politics

POL 211 Introduction to Political Theory

Beyond these three, Politics majors must take a minimum of 9 (and a maximum of 11) additional elective courses in Politics. **Four** of the nine must be in one concentration, and **at least three** must be outside it (i.e. in one or both of the other two politics concentrations).

Students who choose a concentration in World Politics are required to take POL 212, Introduction to International Relations, in addition to the other three introductory courses. POL 212 counts as one of the nine required elective courses.

Altogether, students must take a minimum of 12 Politics courses to complete the major. The School of Arts and Sciences permits a maximum of 14 courses in the major. Politics courses beyond that maximum will not count toward graduation, and courses completed with a final grade below C- cannot count towards the major.

The Comprehensive Assessment

In addition to coursework, Politics majors must also complete a comprehensive assessment. The assessment consists of two parts: a two-part senior exam, taken in the fall of the senior year, and a senior writing requirement, due in the spring of the senior year.

Senior Exam. The exam is administered to seniors on the Monday and Tuesday prior to Thanksgiving and includes two parts:

* Day One (a two hour exam) consists of questions on issues relevant to the subject of politics as a whole.

* Day Two (a three hour exam) consists of three essay questions, two of which from the student’s area of concentration.

Students taking the exam should have a basic familiarity with the essential themes and concepts of the discipline, as well as those related to their particular concentration in Politics. They are strongly encouraged to review readings, lectures, assignments, and other material from their previous Politics courses to prepare for the exam.

Senior Writing Assignment. Seniors must also fulfill a requirement in systematic thinking and writing. This is usually done by substantially revising, under the guidance of a member of the faculty, an earlier paper assigned in an upper-level course. Papers shall be at least 20 pages in length, excluding title page and bibliography; the product of careful research using library sources; and

well-organized and free of typographical errors.

Papers must be submitted to their professors and the Departmental Administrative Assistant no later than the spring deadline (which is usually the first week of April of the senior year). **Only after a regular member of the faculty signs the paper, signifying that it has met the necessary standards for approval, will the paper fulfill the writing portion of the comprehensive assessment.**

Eligible students may also choose the honors thesis option (below).

Advising

All students who declare an intention to major in politics are assigned a Politics faculty member to advise them on organizing their studies. In addition, the Undergraduate Coordinator and department Chair are available to all students needing guidance.

A student seeking a particular faculty member as an advisor is encouraged to first contact that faculty member directly. Then, she should contact the department Administrative Assistant to request the change in advisor.

Students unsure of who their advisor is should check Cardinal Station or contact the Administrative Assistant.

Planning a Course of Studies

The required courses in the major should ideally be taken in sequence, starting with

POL 111 in the fall of the freshman year (see the suggested course plan below). Once the required courses are completed, students may choose among other Politics course offerings. Note that 500-level courses are designated for seniors (or “advanced undergraduates”) and graduate students. In addition, no more than two independent study courses may be taken towards completion of the major.

Politics students are expected and encouraged to take classes from a wide range of disciplines in order to achieve a solid foundation in the liberal arts. However, politics majors may find certain courses in other fields to be of particular interest and utility. These include courses in the fields of:

- * Business and Economics (including Principles of Macroeconomics and Principles of Microeconomics)
- * Drama (including Public Speaking, Speech for the Actor, and Intro to Speech Communication)
- * History
- * Mathematics (particularly Probability, Mathematics in Politics, and Statistics)
- * Philosophy (including Philosophy of the Social Sciences, Introduction to Symbolic Logic, and Morality and Law)
- * Psychology
- * Sociology

Options and Opportunities in the Major

Students may want to consider a variety of options and opportunities which, with varying degrees of careful planning, can accompany a major in Politics. They include:

Double majors, minors, and certificates. Students who choose a double major should begin planning their course of studies by spring of their freshman year to ensure they can meet the requirements of both majors. They must complete an application for a double major (available at the School of Arts & Sciences Office, 107 McMahon).

Minors in other disciplines are relatively easy to arrange. Popular minors for Politics majors include Economics, English, History, Peace and Justice Studies, and Philosophy. There are also two certificate programs (European Studies and Islamic World Studies) that are popular with Politics majors.

Requirements for other majors, minors, and certificates can be found online and in the Arts and Sciences Advising Handbook.

The Pre-Law Track. All of the concentrations in Politics provide a popular and appropriate preparation for students intending careers in law. Students who wish to tailor their major more specifically as preparation for law school may follow the formal politics pre-law track. Interested students should register at the departmental office and contact the program coordinator, Dr. Dennis Coyle (319-5813; coyle@cua.edu), for advisement.

Pre-law students take POL 220: Introduction to Law and Politics, in addition to the three introductory courses required of all majors. They then take two law-related courses at the 300 or 400 levels, including at least one semester of Constitutional Law (323 and/or 324). Other offerings vary from year to year,

and may include courses such as Law and Morality, Principles of the American Founding, or International Organizations. Please consult with Dr. Coyle and the department Administrative Assistant for a current list.

Finally, pre-law students take one 500-level law-related course, usually in the senior year. Classes typically offered at this level include POL 507: The Supreme Court, and POL 553: Constitutional Theory & Interpretation.

Pre-law students may take additional law-related courses and simply count them toward their regular concentration or as general Politics classes.

Note that the pre-law sequence supplements, but does not replace, other requirements for the major. Thus, the student still pursues one of the three regular concentrations – American, World, or Theory – while completing the additional requirements below. All pre-law courses also count toward a regular concentration, so no additional coursework is required.

Internships. Students in their junior or senior year who wish to undertake an academically supervised field of work in Congress, an executive branch agency, a think-tank, a political party, or another political organization may register for the internship course (POL 495A, POL 495B). Students may take no more than two such courses for credit. See Dr. John Kromkowski for details (319-6188; kromkowski@cua.edu).

Study Abroad. Students are encouraged to study abroad (usually during one semester of their junior year). The university offers a variety of opportunities for doing so. There are three international internship programs geared towards Politics majors: one in London, one in Dublin, and one in Leuven (Belgium). The British and Irish programs include internships within the respective parliaments, and the Leuven program includes an internship with the European Parliament or Commission. All three also include regular coursework in Politics and other disciplines.

Students who choose to study abroad should see their advisors to make sure that all requirements are met. Contact the Center for Global Education office for details (319-5618).

The Honors Thesis. Students with a 3.5 GPA by the start of their senior year may opt to write a Senior honors thesis (generally 60 pages in length) under the direction of a faculty member. Students must receive special permission from the Undergraduate Coordinator to register for the two-semester Senior Honors Thesis class (POL 496A in the fall and 496B in the spring) to receive credit for their work on the thesis.

Students develop a thesis topic in consultation with their professor, write up and present a proposal to the undergraduate committee of the department early in the first semester, and carry out the research and writing of the paper thereafter. After submitting the paper (usually by April 1 of the spring semester), they

present their work before a small group of faculty at the end of the semester.

Completing the honors thesis is **not** the same as “graduating with honors” (a designation based on overall GPA and completion of Honors-level university courses). However, the honors thesis offers students a valuable introduction to conducting advanced research, and many graduate programs require the submission of such research as part of their application process. Students writing an honors thesis are also excused from Day Two of the comprehensive examinations.

The B.A./J.D. Joint Degree. The B.A./J.D. program allows a student to complete both a bachelor’s degree and a law degree within six years. Students must have a 3.6 GPA by the end of their sophomore year, score a minimum of 157 on the LSAT in their junior year, and be accepted to study at the Columbus School of Law. Completing this program requires careful advanced planning. Interested students should consult Dr. Coyle and the Arts and Sciences office (107 McMahan) by the end of their sophomore year.

The B.A./M.A. Joint Degree. The B.A./M.A. program allows students to apply credit jointly to a B.A. and an M.A. degree in order to complete both degrees in five years. It, too, requires careful advanced planning. Students must have a 3.5 GPA at the beginning of their junior year to be eligible to apply. They must take the GRE, apply to the graduate program of the department at the

beginning of their junior year, and be admitted.

Students in the program are allowed to count four courses toward both the B.A. and M.A. degrees. (Thus, the total number of undergraduate and graduate courses taken is 46 rather than the usual 50). Apart from this, students must fulfill all distribution requirements for the undergraduate degree in the College of Arts and Sciences and all requirements for the B.A. and M.A. in Politics. The Senior Comprehensive Examination requirement may be waived, depending on the circumstances of each student's course plan.

Students interested in the B.A./M.A. program should contact the Department Chair or Undergraduate Coordinator by the beginning of their junior year to develop a possible program of study. Once a program has been drawn up, it must be formally approved by the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and the department. Students then apply to the graduate program.

For complete and authoritative information about the B.A./M.A. in Politics, see the Guide to Graduate Education in Politics (available from the Department) and the University's Graduate Announcements. Students may also contact the Administrative Assistant or the Graduate Coordinator of Politics (Dr. Christopher Darnton).

Minor in Politics

Students who major in another discipline may also decide to pursue a minor in Politics. The Politics minor requires completion of the three introductory courses (POL 111, POL 112, and POL 211); two courses in one of the three concentrations (American, World, or Theory); and one additional politics course.

Students interested in a combined Politics/Pre-Law minor must take two of the three introductory courses (POL 111, POL 112, and POL 211); POL 220 (Introduction to Law and Politics); either POL 323 (Constitutional Law I) or POL 324 (Constitutional Law II); an additional law-related course at the 300 or 400 level (such as POL 323, 324, or 404); and a final 400 level or 500 level law-related course, usually in the senior year.

POLITICS MAJOR -- SUGGESTED COURSE PLAN

Year One

<i>Fall Semester</i> POL 111 “LC 101” { PHIL 201 ENG 101 or TRS 201 Language + 1 elective	<i>Spring Semester</i> POL 112 “LC 102” { PHIL 202 ENG 101 or TRS 201 Language + 1 elective
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Year Two

<i>Fall Semester</i> POL 211 Math/Natural Science Philosophy + 2 electives	<i>Spring Semester*</i> POL 212** or POL 2xx/3xx POL 2xx/3xx Philosophy Math/Natural Science + 1 elective
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Year Three

<i>Fall Semester*</i> POL 3xx/4xx POL 3xx/4xx Math/Natural Science + 2 electives	<i>Spring Semester*</i> POL 3xx/4xx Theology Math/Natural Science + 2 electives
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Year Four

<i>Fall Semester†</i> POL 4xx/5xx POL 4xx/5xx Theology + 2 electives	<i>Spring Semester††</i> POL 4xx/5xx POL 4xx/5xx Theology + 2 electives
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Electives may include literature, language, humanities, or other courses (including courses needed to fulfill university distribution requirements).

* Usual semester for studying abroad (if requirements are met)

** Required for World politics concentrators

† Senior exam administered

†† Senior paper due