Political Science

Department Website: http://political-science.uchicago.edu

PROGRAM OF STUDY

Political science is the study of governments, public policies, political processes, political behavior, and ideas about government and politics. Political scientists use both humanistic and scientific perspectives and a variety of methodological approaches to examine the political dynamics of all countries and regions of the world, both ancient and modern. Political science contributes to a liberal education by introducing students to concepts, methods, and knowledge that help them understand and judge politics within and among nations. A BA degree in political science can lead to a career in business, government, journalism, education, or nonprofit organizations; or it can lead to a PhD program in the social sciences or to professional school in law, business, public policy, or international relations. Our graduates have gone into all those areas in recent years.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Course Requirements

The Political Science major requires twelve political science courses and a substantial paper. All students must take three out of the four courses that introduce the fields of political science. All students must also take the required research methods course. Students may meet the writing requirement by completing a BA Thesis or by writing a Long Paper. The BA Thesis and Long Paper options are explained below.

Introductory Course Requirement

To gain a broad understanding of political science, the department’s faculty thinks students should take a wide range of courses. To ensure that breadth, students are required to take at least three of the following four courses:

- PLSC 28701 Introduction to Political Theory
- PLSC 28801 Introduction to American Politics
- PLSC 28901 Introduction to Comparative Politics
- PLSC 29000 Introduction to International Relations

Each course will be offered every year, introducing students to the four principal areas of study in political science. The introductory courses must be taken for quality grades.

Research Methods Requirement

To prepare students to evaluate the materials in their classes and to write research papers, students are also required to take the department’s research methods course, which will be offered every quarter:

- PLSC 22913 The Practice of Social Science Research

The department also strongly recommends, but does not require, a course in statistics.

Political Science Course Requirement

In addition to the above requirements, students are required to take six to eight Political Science courses of their choosing in order to develop their interests in and knowledge of the field. Those following the Long Paper path, described below, must complete eight courses while those on the BA Thesis path must complete at least six. It may be appropriate for advanced students to pursue an independent study credit (see below). Courses outside Political Science may be considered for the major only by petition. (Please submit the General Petition Form (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/General%20Petition.pdf), along with a copy of the course syllabus, to the department or electronically.)

Writing Requirement: Two Options

Students who are majoring in political science must write at least one substantial paper. There are two ways to meet this requirement, by writing a BA Thesis or by submitting a Long Paper.

OPTION 1: LONG PAPER

The Long Paper is typically a course paper. It may be written for either a professor in Political Science or a professor in another department whose course is accepted for Political Science credit. Students who write a Long Paper are not required to write a BA Thesis. Students submitting a Long Paper must submit an approval form (https://political-science.uchicago.edu/sites/political-science.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Long%20Paper%20Form.pdf) to the department (electronic submission permitted), signed by an instructor who verifies that the paper meets two requirements: (a) the paper is 20 pages or longer, double-spaced (that is, approximately 5,000 words or longer); and (b) the paper received a grade of B or better (that is, a grade of B- or below does not meet the requirement).

The Long Paper might be:
• A class paper for any course used to meet the major’s requirements.
• An extended version of a shorter paper written for a course. If a course requires a shorter paper, students may ask the instructor for permission to write a 20-page paper instead.
• Written for a course that did not require any papers. Students may ask the instructor for permission to write a 20-page paper, either in place of another assignment, as an extra assignment, or as an ungraded assignment.
• Written for a Political Science instructor after a course is completed. The student could either produce an entirely new paper or, with the instructor’s permission, take a shorter assignment and turn it into a longer paper.

If the paper is not a graded assignment for class, it still meets the department’s requirement if the instructor attests that it merits a grade of B or better. Unless the paper is written for a graded class assignment, students must ask the instructor’s permission to submit any such paper.

Students are responsible for obtaining an approval form (https://political-science.uchicago.edu/sites/political-science.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Long%20Paper%20Form.pdf) to verify the successful completion of the Long Paper and giving it to the relevant instructor. Please ask the instructor to sign the approval form and return it to the departmental office (electronic submission permitted). The deadline for submitting the approval form (http://political-science.uchicago.edu/sites/political-science.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Long Paper Form.pdf) and the paper is 4 p.m. on Friday of the second week of the quarter in which the student expects to graduate. Students should complete their paper before their final quarter; the approval form should be submitted to the department as soon as the writing requirement is completed (electronic submission permitted).

OPTION 2: BA THESIS

Writing a BA Thesis will meet the writing requirement in Political Science and may also qualify a student for consideration for honors; see sections below for more information. In either case, the paper is typically from 35 to 50 pages in length (the length of most scholarly articles in professional journals). It must receive a grade of B or higher. Students choose a suitable faculty member to supervise the research and writing. The deadline for submitting the BA Thesis to the department is 4 p.m. on Friday of the fourth week of the quarter in which the student expects to graduate.

Students who choose to write a thesis will submit an application to the Director of Undergraduate Studies by the posted deadline, usually by the end of the fifth week of Spring Quarter of their third year. Students will be asked to list prior coursework and methodological training in their proposed area of interest. The application will include a proposed topic, a plan of study, and the signature of a faculty advisor. Students are allowed to have advisors outside of the department. Students will need to have the endorsement of a faculty member prior to submitting this application. The department will assist students who are having trouble finding advisors.

BA Colloquium. Students who choose to write a BA Thesis are required to enroll in PLSC 29800 BA Colloquium in the Autumn Quarter of the fourth year. Students may not study abroad while they are enrolled in the BA Colloquium. The colloquium is designed to help students carry out their BA Thesis research and to offer feedback on their progress. Students who write a BA Thesis must also enroll in PLSC 29900 BA Thesis Supervision for one quarter, normally Winter Quarter of fourth year (although enrollment may be in any quarter).

BA Thesis Supervision. During their fourth year, students who choose to write a BA Thesis must register with their BA Thesis faculty adviser for one quarter of PLSC 29900 BA Thesis Supervision. Students may also elect to take a second quarter of PLSC 29900 BA Thesis Supervision, which will count toward the twelve required courses. To enroll, students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/fillable-reading-research-form.pdf). The final grade for the course will be based on the grade given the BA Thesis by the faculty adviser. Although most BA Theses are supervised by Political Science professors, the adviser need not be a member of the Department of Political Science.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS MEETING THE WRITING REQUIREMENT WITH A LONG PAPER

Three of the following Political Science courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLSC 28701</td>
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<td>PLSC 29000</td>
<td>Introduction to International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLSC 22913</td>
<td>The Practice of Social Science Research</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Eight additional Political Science courses  

Fulfillment of the writing requirement  

Total Units 1200
At least five must be courses in Political Science.

Summary of Requirements for Students Meeting the Writing Requirement with a BA Thesis

Three of the following Political Science courses:

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Six additional Political Science courses

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<tr>
<td>PLSC 29800</td>
<td>BA Colloquium</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLSC 29900</td>
<td>BA Thesis Supervision</td>
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Total Units 1200

At least three must be courses in Political Science.

Pass/Fail Courses

Courses that meet requirements for the major are normally taken for quality grades. The three required introductory courses must be taken for quality grades. However, students may take up to two courses in the major on a P/F basis.

Independent Study

Students with extensive course work in Political Science who wish to pursue more specialized topics that are not covered by regular courses have the option of registering for PLSC 29700 Independent Study, to be taken individually and supervised by a member of the Political Science faculty. Students must obtain the prior consent of the program director and the instructor, as well as submit the College Reading and Research Course Form (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/fillable-reading-research-form.pdf). The substance of the independent study may not be related to the BA Thesis or BA research, which is covered by PLSC 29900 BA Thesis Supervision. Only one PLSC 29700 Independent Study course may count toward requirements for the major.

Honors in the Major

Students who do exceptionally well in their course work and who write an outstanding BA Thesis are recommended for honors in the major. A student is eligible for honors if the GPA in the major is 3.6 or higher and the overall GPA is 3.0 or higher at the beginning of the quarter in which the student intends to graduate. Students who wish to be considered for honors are required to register for PLSC 29800 BA Colloquium and PLSC 29900 BA Thesis Supervision and to submit a BA Thesis. To graduate with department honors, then, a student must have both honors-level grades and a BA Thesis that receives honors.

Double Majors

Students who plan to double major may complete the Political Science requirements by either the BA Thesis option or the Long Paper option. Students who write the BA Thesis must attend the Political Science BA Colloquium even if the other major also requires attendance at its colloquium. A request to use a single BA Thesis for two majors requires the approval of both program directors on the Petition to Use a Single Bachelor's Paper for Two Majors (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/BA_Double_Major_0.pdf) form.

Courses Taken at Other Universities by Students Who Transfer to the University of Chicago

Students who transfer into the University of Chicago and wish to transfer courses into the major should see the Director of Undergraduate Studies soon after matriculation. The introductory course requirement and the research methods requirement cannot be satisfied by courses taken elsewhere, but courses may be counted toward the major by petition (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/General%20Petition.pdf).

Becoming a Political Science Major

Most students declare a major at the end of the second year or beginning of the third. The department encourages students to try out the major even before declaring. To receive announcements about the program in the major and other information about the Department of Political Science, students should sign up for the
undergraduate email list either through the departmental office or on the Undergraduate Political Science subscription list page (https://lists.uchicago.edu/web/subscribe/ugpolsall/).