

# Political Science, PhD

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## Degree Requirements Doctoral Candidacy

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and Mentored Experience Requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and apply to graduate via Workday Student. For the details of doctoral degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Doctoral Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

## Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required:** 48 units (**Note:** Remission applies for a maximum of 72 graduate-level units.)
- **Degree Length:** 6 years
  - First-year students take four courses per semester. Second and third-year students typically take three courses. After the third year, most students sign up for independent research with their dissertation advisor(s) or with a professor who specializes in an area of particular interest to them. Most students go out on the job market in the fall of their fifth year and complete the dissertation by the summer of that year. The exceptions are students in Comparative Politics. It typically takes them about a year longer to complete their degrees (6 years instead of 5) because they may need to spend time learning a language and/or conducting fieldwork.
  - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their coursework, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
- **Grade Requirement:** A grade of B+ or greater is required for coursework to count toward the degree.

## PhD in Political Science

Students in the PhD program are expected to acquire the following:

- A broad understanding of several fields of political science as a discipline
- Methodological competence sufficient to be productive professionals
- Specialized expertise in a particular field of concentration

The procedures and requirements described below are designed to facilitate the achievement of these objectives. In addition to the formal requirements stated here, we provide a list of recommendations that students should follow to succeed in the program. For a detailed year-to-year outline of requirements and recommendations, please refer to the section "Specific Requirements for Each Year in the Program" at the end of the *Guide to Graduate Studies*, located on the Graduate Program website.

Exceptions to any of these requirements must be approved by the director of graduate studies (DGS) in consultation with the Graduate Committee and, as needed, the respective Field Committee.

## General Course Requirements

In general, all students must successfully complete the following core courses with a grade of B or better:

- Math Camp (offered during the August before the first semester)
- POLSCI 5080 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I (first semester)
- POLSCI 5094 Mathematical Modeling in Political Science (first semester)
- POLSCI 5690 Quantitative Political Methodology I (second semester)
- POLSCI 5695 Quantitative Political Methodology II (third semester)
- POLSCI 5063 Causal Inference (fourth semester)
- POLSCI 5735 Research Workshop I (fifth semester)

According to the Probation and Dismissal Policy, if a student fails to obtain a B (3.0) in one of the required courses, they will be placed on academic probation and have the opportunity to retake the course the following year. Failure to obtain a B (3.0) after taking the course for the second time will result in dismissal from the program. Furthermore, failure to obtain a B (3.0) in another required course while on probation is considered extreme underperformance and will result in dismissal from the program.

In addition to required courses, students will be taking courses in different fields. Courses are mainly concentrated during the first two years. Students should plan to take four courses (12 units) per semester during their first year and three courses (9 units) per semester during their second year.

## Fields

The department divides the discipline of political science into six fields:

- American politics
- Comparative politics
- Formal theory
- International politics
- Political and social theory
- Quantitative methods

Before writing the dissertation, students must pass a qualifying evaluation (refer to next section) and fulfill requirements for certification in one major and one minor field. The major and minor field certifications are intended to ensure that students possess broad familiarity with the literature and material in the fields presented.

Field requirements are met by completing the required courses with a grade of B+ or better. A major field requires completing four courses in that field with a grade of B+ or better; a minor field requires completing three courses in that field with a grade of B+ or better.

Students are expected to complete course requirements for the major and minor by the end of their fourth semester. Exceptions can be granted by the DGS on a case-by-case basis but are not possible beyond the student's sixth semester.

## Field Requirements

### *American Politics*

- Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level seminars in American politics, including POLSCI 5210 American Political Institutions and POLSCI 5595 American Political Behavior.
- Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in American politics, including POLSCI 5210 American Political Institutions and POLSCI 5595 American Political Behavior.

### *Comparative Politics*

- Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level seminars in comparative politics, including POLSCI 5140 Approaches to Comparative Politics.
- Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in comparative politics, including POLSCI 5140 Approaches to Comparative Politics.

### *Formal Theory*

- Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level seminars in formal theory, including POLSCI 5080 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I and three other 5000-level courses that require POLSCI 5080 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I as a prerequisite. With permission of the Formal Theory Field Committee, an appropriate 5000-level economics course may be substituted.

- Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in formal theory, including POLSCI 5080 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I and two other 5000-level courses that require POLSCI 5080 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I as a prerequisite. With permission of the Formal Theory Field Committee, an appropriate 5000-level economics course may be substituted.

### *International Politics*

- Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level seminars in international politics. This requirement includes the 5000-level graduate sequence and 5000-level political science and economics courses authorized by the International Politics Committee.
- Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in international politics. The requirement includes the 5000-level graduate sequence and 5000-level political science and economics courses authorized by the International Politics Committee.

### *Political and Social Theory*

- Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level courses in political theory; the theory faculty recommends at least two of the History of Political Thought courses (POLSCI 5130 History of Political Thought I: Justice, Virtue, and the Soul, POLSCI 5133 History of Political Thought II: Legitimacy, Equality and the Social Contract, and POLSCI 5134 History of Political Thought III: Liberty, Democracy, and Revolution) and at least two seminars in political theory.
- Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level courses in political theory authorized by the Political Theory Committee.

### *Quantitative Methods*

- Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four methods courses, including the required sequence (POLSCI 5690 Quantitative Political Methodology I and POLSCI 5695 Quantitative Political Methodology II) and additional elective methodology courses authorized by the Quantitative Methods Committee.
- Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three methods courses, including the required sequence (POLSCI 5690 Quantitative Political Methodology I and POLSCI 5695 Quantitative Political Methodology II) and an additional elective methodology course authorized by the Quantitative Methods Committee.

According to the Probation and Dismissal Policy, if a student fails to meet field requirements as a result of grades or for other reasons by the end of their fourth semester, they will be placed on probation for one semester. Failure to meet the field requirements by the end of that probationary semester results in dismissal from the program.

## Qualifying Evaluations

Each student will be evaluated at the end of each semester through their second year. These evaluations will take place at the end of their first and second semesters, the end of their first-year summer, and the end of their third and fourth semesters.

Evaluation criteria for the academic year include the following: regular classroom attendance (at least 90%), participation in departmental intellectual life (e.g., seminars, conferences, professionalization workshops), and grades (a grade of B or higher for all required courses). Grades will be particularly emphasized, and faculty of required courses will use grades as clear communication that students have mastered the course material. Each required course will include a cumulative final exam or another final assignment of a cumulative nature that will assess the student's broad mastery of relevant materials.

At the end of their first-year summer, students must submit (a) evidence of research progress (which can consist of skill development, collaborative research, or individual research output) and (b) feedback from a faculty mentor.

The DGS will distribute a survey to all faculty to collect the necessary feedback regarding student performance and engagement. To remain in good standing, students must (a) be making good progress with respect to their coursework and mentored teaching experience assignments; (b) be advancing in terms of their research trajectory, as appropriate for their stage in the program; and (c) be maintaining professional comportment with faculty, peers, and staff.

If a student fails to successfully pass any of these evaluations, they will be placed on academic probation. If the student makes significant progress during the next evaluation period and satisfactorily addresses the terms of the probation, they will be removed from probation and return to good standing. Failing to make significant progress during the next evaluation period may result in dismissal from the program.

## Third-Year Paper Requirement

During their second and third years, each student is required to produce a solo-authored research paper. The expectation is that this paper will be in the same field as the student's dissertation and at the level of quality for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Students need to identify two advisors (i.e., the research paper chair and a second reader) and obtain their signatures on the Research Paper Proposal Form after taking the qualifying exam (i.e., by the end of January of their second year). In consultation with these advisors (i.e., the committee), they need to develop a research design (motivation, theory, design, data sources) by the last day of classes of the spring semester of their second year. By the end of the spring semester, the student needs to schedule a formal defense of the proposal with their committee and, after the defense, submit a form with the advisors' signatures to the departmental administrative assistant responsible for graduate affairs.

The third-year paper is due to the committee by the first day of classes of the third year. The committee will grade these submissions within the first two weeks of the semester. At this point, students will either receive a "revise and resubmit" or a "reject and resubmit" from their committee. A "reject and resubmit" is a judgment by the faculty that the paper does not reflect satisfactory progress toward the research paper. Students receiving this evaluation will be placed on academic probation, and a failure to significantly improve the project will result in dismissal from the program. In extraordinary circumstances, a "conditional accept/high pass" may be granted.

Students will enroll in Research Workshop during their third year. This fall workshop is devoted to helping students revise their papers for final submission.

The final papers are due to the DGS and both readers by the start of the sixth semester. Students are required to defend this paper publicly. The DGS will organize a public presentation for all research papers within the first three weeks of the spring semester.

The Third-Year Committee will evaluate the quality of the research paper and its potential for submission to and acceptance in a peer-reviewed journal. Students who received a "reject and resubmit" during the first round should anticipate stricter scrutiny from faculty at this stage. The paper can be graded as pass or fail. A failing grade in this defense by students who previously received a "reject and resubmit" will result in dismissal from the program. A failing grade without a prior "reject and resubmit" will result in the student being placed on probation until they resubmit and successfully pass the research paper requirement, which must occur before the end of the spring term. Failing to submit the revised paper and earn a passing grade by the end of the spring term will result in dismissal from the program.

In the event of disagreement between the chair and the reader, the DGS will select a third reader in consultation with the faculty in the student's area of study to evaluate the paper and make a decision about the final grade. The research paper chair and the reader(s) will inform the student and the DGS of the final grade, together with an explanation, within two weeks after the defenses have been completed.

## Dissertation Committee and Prospectus Requirement

Students are required to form a Dissertation Defense Committee that consists of at least three full-time Washington University faculty members by the start of the fifth semester (January of their third year). The formation of the Dissertation Defense Committee requires selecting a dissertation chair and at least two other faculty members and then submitting the Dissertation Defense Committee Proposal Form. The DGS will assist the student in making sure the composition of the committee meets the requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Students will enroll in the year-long Research Workshop during their third year. The spring semester of this workshop is devoted to helping students develop their dissertation prospectuses.

Students are required to have defended the dissertation prospectus by the end of the sixth semester (May of their third year). Dissertation prospectus defenses will be announced in advance and will be open to the public. Students who fail to schedule a defense or who fail the defense will be put on probation and may re-define their prospectus by August 1. Failing to schedule or failing the re-defense results in dismissal from the program.

Students are encouraged to apply for the National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant and to other outside funding agencies to pursue additional financial support for their dissertation research.

## Summary Timeline

(Please refer to "Specific Expectations for Each Year in Program" in the *Guide to Graduate Studies* on the Graduate Program website for more details.)

- End of second semester: Evaluation of class performance and meeting with the DGS
- End of third semester: Required courses (with the exception of the Research Workshop) completed
- Beginning of fourth semester (January): Submit Third-Year Paper Form (seeking chair and reader)
- End of fourth semester: Major and minor field requirements completed; defend research paper prospectus to chair and second reader
- Before the start of fifth semester (August): Submit third-year paper
- Beginning of sixth semester (January): Resubmit and defend third-year paper; submit Dissertation Committee Proposal Form
- End of eighth semester: Defend Dissertation Prospectus (resubmitted prospectus must be defended before the start of the seventh semester)

## Dissertation and Defense

The requirements for the completion of the dissertation are described in the general degree requirements by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, which are applicable to all Washington University doctoral candidates.

## Graduation

Students need to graduate by May of their sixth year. Failure to do so results in the student being placed on probation. The student then has a chance to finish their dissertation by August of that same year. Otherwise, they will be dismissed from the program.

## Foreign Language Requirement

There is no uniform foreign language requirement set by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, or by the department. The extent and substance of foreign language competence required will be determined by the Graduate Committee in consultation with the student and their advisor.

## Mentored Teaching Experience Responsibilities

Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs) are curricular in nature and require that students collaborate with a faculty member.

Mentored teaching responsibilities vary from course to course but, in all cases, consist of attending class and grading papers and assignments. Examples of other responsibilities include running discussion sections or reviews, disseminating course materials, and holding office hours.

Graduate students are expected to participate in the MTE for an average of 10 hours per week. During some weeks, the MTE will involve considerably fewer hours; during other weeks (usually around midterms and finals), it will involve considerably more hours.

Faculty are expected to set expectations for grading at the beginning of each semester, and graduate students should plan accordingly for weeks of heavier grading or other responsibilities.

According to the Probation and Dismissal Policy, poor performance in the fulfillment of mentored teaching responsibilities will result in the student being placed on probation. Lack of improvement while on probation will result in dismissal from the program.

## Mentored Experience Requirement

All students need to meet the mentored experience requirement of the Department of Political Science and the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, by the time they graduate. This requirement includes the following:

- Participating in departmental intellectual life, which includes but is not limited to meeting with outside speakers, attending talks and in-house conferences, presenting their own research, assisting with graduate student recruitment, and helping to organize in-house conferences (e.g., CPAC)
- Participating in an MTE for a "core" course in the student's field of study; "core" courses include introductory courses, Quantitative Political Methods, and other courses considered "core" by the DGS
- Giving at least one supervised guest lecture or presentation
- Participating in the MTE or teaching a class that involves regular interaction with students

The Department of Political Science has its own unique Mentored Experience Requirement Implementation Plan that all students in this program should review. It can be accessed at the dedicated tab above.

## MA in Statistics

Students pursuing a PhD in political science may apply for a tailored MA in statistics. The completion of this program should not add any more time to a student's time to degree. Students should consult with Professor Betsy Sinclair if they are interested in pursuing this MA degree.

## Required Courses

| Code        | Title  | Units |
|-------------|--|-------|
| POLSCI 5024 | Casual Inference                               | 3     |
| POLSCI 5080 | Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I | 3     |
| POLSCI 5094 | Mathematical Modeling in Political Science     | 3     |
| POLSCI 5090 | Quantitative Political Methodology I           | 3     |
| POLSCI 5695 | Quantitative Political Methodology II          | 3     |
| POLSCI 5735 | Research Workshop I                            | 3     |

## Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called *preliminary*, *qualifying*, *general*, *comprehensive*, or *major field exams*. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential, and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers. The program, which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

## Mentored Experience Requirements

Doctoral students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree requirement that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of units that a student must earn through Mentored Teaching Experience(s) and/or Mentored Professional Experience(s) is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing some units of the Mentored Experience Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in ASGS 8005, 8010, or 8015 Mentored Teaching Experience - Assistant in Instruction; ASGS 8020 Mentored Teaching Experience - Mentored Independent Teaching; or ASGS 8120 Mentored Professional Experience to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for the degree.

## The Doctoral Dissertation

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) must be created no later than the end of the student's third year; departments may set shorter timelines (e.g., by the end of the student's second year) for this requirement. As evidence of the mastery of a specific field of knowledge and of the capacity for original scholarly work, each candidate must complete a dissertation that is approved by their RAC.

A Title, Scope & Procedure Form for the dissertation must be signed by the committee members and by the program chair. It must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, at least six months before the degree is expected to be conferred or before the beginning of the fifth year of full-time enrollment, whichever is earlier.

A Doctoral Dissertation Guide and a Dissertation Template that give instructions regarding the format of the dissertation are available on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Both should be read carefully at every stage of dissertation preparation.

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requires each student to make the full text of the dissertation available to the committee members for their review at least one week before the defense. Most degree programs require two or more weeks for the review period; students should check with their faculty.

## The Dissertation Defense

Approval of the written dissertation by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is strongly recommended before the student can orally defend the dissertation. The Doctoral Dissertation Committee that examines the student during the defense consists of at least five members. Normally, the members of the RAC also serve on the Doctoral Dissertation Committee. The dissertation committee is then additionally augmented to ensure that the following criteria are met:

1. Three of the five members (or a similar proportion of a larger committee) must be full-time Washington University in St. Louis faculty members or, for programs involving Washington University in St. Louis-affiliated partners, full-time members of a Washington University in St. Louis-affiliated partner institution. All members must be authorized to supervise PhD students and have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study. One of these three members must be the PhD student's primary thesis advisor, and one may be a member of the emeritus faculty.
2. All other committee members must be active in research/scholarship and have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study whether at Washington University in St. Louis, at another university, in government, or in industry.
3. At least one of the five members must bring expertise outside of the student's field of study to the committee, as judged by the relevant department/program and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

The approval processes outlined in the RAC section of the Doctoral Council bylaws also apply to the doctoral dissertation committee, including approval of each dissertation committee by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

The student is responsible for making the full text of the dissertation accessible to their committee members for their review in advance of the defense according to program rules. Washington University in St. Louis community members and guests of the student who are interested in the subject of the dissertation are normally welcome to attend all or part of the defense but may ask questions only at the discretion of the committee chair. Although there is some variation among degree programs, the defense ordinarily focuses on the dissertation itself and its relation to the student's field of expertise.

Attendance by a minimum of four members of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee, including the committee chair and an outside member, is required for the defense to take place. This provision is designed to permit the student's defense to proceed in case of a situation that unexpectedly prevents one of the five members from attending. Students should not plan in advance to only have four members in attendance. If four members cannot attend, the defense must be rescheduled. The absence of all outside members or of the committee chair also requires rescheduling the defense.

Students, with the support of their Doctoral Dissertation Committee chair, may opt to hold their dissertation defense in person or by utilizing a virtual or hybrid format.

## Submission of the Dissertation

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation online to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The submission website requires students to choose among publishing and copyrighting services offered by ProQuest's ETD Administrator. Students are asked to submit the Survey of Earned Doctorates separately. The degree program is responsible for delivering the final approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair or director, to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not yet completed their PhD requirements; they finish earning their degree only when their electronic dissertation submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.