

POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Political science addresses how individuals and groups organize, allocate, and challenge the power to make collective decisions involving public issues. The goal of the major is to enable students to think critically and analytically about the agents, incentives, and institutions that shape political phenomena within human society. The subfields of political philosophy and analytical political theory (which includes the study of both qualitative and quantitative methodology) support the acquisition of the lenses through which such thought skills can be enriched. The subfields of American government, comparative politics, and international relations, in turn, allow students to reinforce and refine those skills, while also promoting their application to a wide variety of contexts, whether contemporary or historical. Students may also construct interdisciplinary curricula, which allows them to apply the approaches of the discipline to a topic for which a more complete understanding also involves approaches gleaned from other disciplines.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Students are held to the requirements that were in place when they declared their major. However, with approval from the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), the following requirements, updated for the academic year 2022-2023, may be fulfilled by students who declared the major in a prior term.

Students following the standard B.A. degree program must take twelve term courses. These courses include: at least two introductory courses (i.e. bearing numbers between 101 and 119); at least one course designated as belonging to the methodology and formal theory subfield; at least two non-introductory lectures designated as "core"; at least two classes in each of any two of the department's subfields (other than methodology and formal theory) – international relations, American government, political philosophy, and comparative politics; at least two seminars, including at least one during their senior year.

All students, regardless of their graduating year, may also take courses related to political science that are offered by other departments. Students who elect the standard program may petition to count up to two such courses toward the major. Students may routinely count Residential College Seminars taught by members of the Political Science faculty toward the major, and they may petition to count one Residential College Seminar taught by an instructor outside the department. Students who have completed Directed Studies may, with the approval of the DUS, count one term of DRST 005 or DRST 006 toward the major.

Students following the standard B.A. degree program, interdisciplinary concentration are allowed to identify and pursue an area of study that crosses conventional disciplinary and departmental boundaries. Examples of interdisciplinary concentrations include (but are not limited to) urban studies, health politics and policy, political economy, political psychology, or a focus on the politics of a given global region informed by the study of the history and society of that region. Students

choosing an interdisciplinary concentration are required to take twelve term courses toward the major. At least seven courses must be in the field of concentration. Of the courses counting toward the major outside of the field of concentration, at least two courses must be taken in each of any two of the department's five fields. As many as three courses taken in other departments may be counted toward the major, with the permission of the DUS. *Note:* students who choose the interdisciplinary concentration must fulfill the introductory course requirement, the core lecture requirement, the methodology and formal theory subfield requirement, and the seminar requirement as described for the standard degree program.

Students wishing to pursue the Political Science major with an interdisciplinary concentration must submit an application, which is due prior to the beginning of the November recess in the student's final year of enrollment. Students should also meet with the DUS to discuss their proposed program of study in their sophomore or junior year.

The intensive major The intensive major gives students an opportunity to undertake more extensive coursework and research for the senior essay than is possible in the standard major. Requirements for the intensive major are identical to those for the standard program or interdisciplinary concentration, with the following exceptions: (1) in the spring term of the junior year, intensive majors take PLSC 474 in preparation for writing a yearlong senior essay; (2) in the senior year, intensive majors fulfill the senior essay requirement by enrolling in the yearlong course sequence PLSC 490 and PLSC 493 (PLSC 490 also counts toward the senior seminar requirement); (3) a total of fifteen term courses is required.

Juniors wishing to pursue an intensive major must apply to the DUS. The application should contain: (1) the intensive major application form signed by a faculty adviser who has agreed to supervise the student for the final three terms of enrollment; (2) a plan of study that identifies the political science courses that will be taken in those three terms; and (3) a one-page description of the proposed senior essay.

Seminar requirement Students majoring in Political Science are required to take at least two seminars taught by members of the Political Science department, including at least one during the senior year.

Credit/D/Fail Students may count up to two lecture courses taken Credit/D/Fail toward the major, which will count as non-A grades for purposes of calculating Distinction in the Major. Seminars taken Credit/D/F will not count toward the major requirements, but will count as non-A grades for purposes of calculating Distinction in the Major.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Seniors in the major must complete a senior essay. The essay can be written either in one term or over both terms of the senior year. In order to graduate from Yale College, a student majoring in Political Science must achieve a passing grade on the senior essay. The senior requirement for the standard B.A. degree program with an interdisciplinary concentration is the same as for the standard program, with the provision that the essay must be written on a subject that falls within the field of concentration.

Senior essay The senior essay provides an appropriate intellectual culmination to the student's work in the major and in Yale College. The essay should ordinarily be written on a topic in an area in which the student has previously done coursework, and an effort should be made to demonstrate how the student's work relates to broader topics, issues, and approaches within the discipline of political science. It should rest on research that is appropriate to the subject matter, and should reflect an awareness of how the student's topic is connected to previous work within the discipline of political science. Essays are expected to be in the range of 25–30 double-spaced pages. At the beginning of the term in which the essay is written, students must have their senior essay topic approved by a faculty member who has agreed to advise them. Each student is expected to consult regularly with the seminar instructor or adviser and take the initiative in developing a plan of research, scheduling regular meetings, and submitting preliminary drafts for review.

One-term essays may be written either in a seminar or, with the approval of an adviser and the DUS, in PLSC 480. More extensive information about the senior essay can be found on the department website.

Yearlong senior essay Students who wish to undertake a more extensive research project than is possible in a single term may fulfill the senior essay requirement by enrolling in the yearlong course sequence PLSC 490 and 491. Both classes are offered in both terms, but must be taken in order. PLSC 490 also counts toward the senior seminar requirement. In the first term, students writing a yearlong senior essay develop a research prospectus for the essay and begin their research under the supervision of a member of the faculty who specializes in the area being investigated. In the second term, students complete the essay. Yearlong senior essays are expected to be substantially longer than a regular term paper. While there is no fixed length, they are normally at least fifty pages long.

Majors who wish to enroll in the yearlong senior essay must apply for admission in their junior year. By the appropriate date, students should submit to the office of the DUS: (1) the yearlong senior essay prospectus form signed by a faculty adviser who has agreed to supervise the student during both terms of the senior year; and (2) a one-page statement describing the research project. Due to space constraints in PLSC 490, it is expected that no more than fifteen students will be admitted each term.

Students graduating in spring 2026 and subsequent classes have the option of choosing an honors track or a non-honors track. Senior essays of students seeking to fulfill the honors requirements may be either semester-long or year-long. Honors will be awarded to students who meet the standard for honors on their senior essay (as determined by a second reader appointed by the director of undergraduate studies) and who meet certain standards of achievement across graded coursework in the major as determined by the chair, the DUS, and the faculty. Senior essays of students not seeking to fulfill the honors requirements must be written within a seminar and will not be assigned to a second reader.

ADVISING

The DUS and other members of the department can provide advice about departmental requirements, options within the major, requirements of two majors, study abroad, and other matters related to the major. Majors must secure written approval of their

course selections each term from the DUS. All subsequent changes in a student's major program must also be approved. Although advisers (beyond the DUS and the senior essay adviser) are not formally assigned, students are encouraged to seek advice from other department faculty members who are knowledgeable about their fields of interest. Information on faculty interests can be found on the department website.

Combined B.A./M.A. degree program Exceptionally able and well-prepared students may complete a course of study leading to the simultaneous award of the B.A. and M.A. degrees after eight terms of enrollment. See Academic Regulations, section L, Special Academic Arrangements, "Simultaneous Award of the Bachelor's and Master's Degrees." Interested students should consult the DUS prior to the sixth term of enrollment for specific requirements in Political Science.

STUDY ABROAD

Students who study in a junior term abroad program or at another university during the summer may, with the approval of the DUS, count up to two courses toward the major. Students who study in a junior year abroad program may, with the approval of the DUS, count up to four courses toward the major. Students may also petition to have non-Yale courses that were not taught in political science departments count toward the major. Pending approval of the DUS, these courses will count toward the maximum number of substitutions.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

B.A. DEGREE, STANDARD PROGRAM

Prerequisites None

Number of courses *Standard major*—12 term courses; *intensive major*—15 term courses

Distribution of courses 2 intro courses; 2 core lectures; 2 seminars (1 in senior year); 1 course in methodology and formal theory subfield; 2 courses in each of any two subfields (excluding methodology and formal theory subfield)

Substitution permitted 2 courses from other depts with DUS approval

Senior requirement 1-term senior essay in sem or in PLSC 480; or 2-term senior essay in PLSC 490, 491

Intensive major 1 addtl elective; PLSC 474 in spring term of junior year; 2-term senior essay in PLSC 490, 493

B.A. DEGREE, INTERDISCIPLINARY CONCENTRATION

Prerequisites None

Number of courses *Standard major with interdisciplinary concentration*—12 term courses; *intensive major with interdisciplinary concentration*—15 term courses

Distribution of courses 7 courses in concentration: 2 intro courses; 2 core lectures; 2 seminars (1 in senior year); 1 course in methodology and formal theory subfield; outside of concentration: 2 courses in each of any two subfields

Substitution permitted 3 courses from other depts with DUS approval (2 courses from other depts with DUS approval for intensive major)

Senior requirement 1-term senior essay in sem or in PLSC 480; or 2-term senior essay in PLSC 490, 491; both options on subject within concentration

Intensive major 1 addtl elective; PLSC 474 in spring term of junior year; 2-term senior essay in PLSC 490, 493 on subject within concentration