

POLITICAL SCIENCE, B.A. (BEHREND)

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Erie

Program Description

The discipline of political science consists of different related subfields such as American government, international relations, comparative politics (the study of different political systems), political theory, law, and public policy and administration (the study of how governments accomplish objectives). The major offers students the opportunity to take course work in most subfields as well as seek practical experience through an internship. All students are encouraged to develop research and writing and statistical skills. Many students have continued their education in law or graduate school.

Crime and Law Option

This option requires coursework in criminology and law and helps to prepare students for careers in law and criminal justice, including students planning on law school.

International Relations Option

This option requires coursework in international politics and comparative politics and prepares students for careers with international institutions or in business in other countries, and for graduate school work in international affairs.

Politics and Government Option

This option allows students to choose their own concentrations of coursework within political science and helps to prepare students for a variety of careers, including government employment, social studies secondary education, activist politics, and graduate school in political science.

Public Policy Option

This option requires coursework related to how to make government and policy decisions effectively and prepares students for careers with government offices, businesses, interest groups, or think tanks related to public policy, or in public administration, or for graduate degree programs in public policy or public administration.

What is Political Science?

Political science is one of the social sciences. It is the study of systems of governance and governmental institutions, political activity, political thought, and political behavior. Political science draws from many other academic disciplines, including economics, law, sociology, history, philosophy, geography, psychology, and anthropology. There also are subfields of political science, such as comparative politics, political theory, international relations, international law, public administration, and public policy. Political science students study how American government works (and doesn't work) and what can be done to improve government at the federal, state, and local level. In comparative government and international relations coursework, students study the politics and policies of other countries. Political theory courses examine the ideas of famous political philosophers, while courses on law and the legal process provide knowledge about the criminal justice and civil litigation systems.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You want to understand how political and governmental decisions are made.
- You love discussing and analyzing events in the news.
- You're interested in how the legal system works.
- You're interested in how diplomacy works.
- You're looking for a degree that is useful in many different career paths.

Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and
2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, a minimum of 120 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	15
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	42-43

0-7 of the 45 credits for General Education are included in the Requirements for the Major. This includes: 0-6 credits of GS courses; 0-4 credits of GQ courses; 0-3 credits of GH courses.

3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if world language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.

Per Senate Policy 83.80.5, the college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of coursework in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned.

Requirements for the Major

Each student must earn at least a grade of C in each 300- and 400-level course in the major field.

To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn a grade of C or better in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Common Requirements for the Major (All Options)

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
PLSC 1	American Politics: Principles, Processes and Powers	3
PLSC 3	Comparing Politics around the Globe	3
PLSC 14	International Relations	3
Additional Courses		
Select one of the following:		3
PLSC 7N	Contemporary Political Ideologies	
PLSC 17N	Introduction to Political Theory	
PLSC 17W	Introduction to Political Theory	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
<i>Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 12 additional credits of PLSC courses not used to complete other requirements. At least 12 credits from Additional and Supporting Courses must be at the 400-level.		12
Requirements for the Option		
Select an option		18-19

**Requirements for the Option
Crime and Law Option (18 Credits)**

Code	Title	Credits
Additional Courses		
Select 6 credits from the following:		6
SOC 5	Social Problems	
SOC 12	Criminology	
SOC 13	Juvenile Delinquency	
CRIMJ 100	Introduction to Criminal Justice	
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 6 credits from the following:		6
PLSC 471	American Constitutional Law	
PLSC 472	The American Legal Process	
PLSC 487	International Law and Organizations	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
Select 6 PLSC credits in law courses from an approved list		6

International Relations Option (18 Credits)

Code	Title	Credits
Additional Courses		
ECON 104 or GEOG 126	Introductory Macroeconomic Analysis and Policy Economic Geography	3
Select 6 credits from the following:		6
PLSC 90	Introduction to Security	
PLSC 140	Contemporary Controversies in International Relations	
PLSC 200N	Government and Politics of Europe	
PLSC 220	Politics of the Developing World	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
Select 3 credits of HIST from approved list (GH)		3
Select 6 credits in PLSC comparative politics or international relations courses from an approved list		6

Politics and Government Option (18 Credits)

Code	Title	Credits
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
Select 12 credits of PLSC courses		12
Select 6 credits of courses in related areas from a major-approved list		6

Public Policy Option (18-19 Credits)

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
PLSC 202	American Public Policy	3
Additional Courses		
PLSC 111 or PLSC 223N	Debating the Purpose of Government Ethnic and Racial Politics	3
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 3-4 credits from the following:		3-4
PSYCH 200	Elementary Statistics in Psychology	
SCM 200	Introduction to Statistics for Business	
STAT 200	Elementary Statistics	
STAT 250	Introduction to Biostatistics	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
Select 3 credits of GEOG from approved list		3
Select 6 PLSC credits in policy courses from approved list		6

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses**. This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

B.A. Degree Requirements

World Language (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one world language in addition to English. This proficiency must be demonstrated by either examination or course work. See the Placement Policy for Penn State World Language Courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/>).

B.A. Fields (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, World Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major; world language credits in this

category must be in a second world language in addition to English or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language). Credits must be selected from the list of approved courses.

World Cultures (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor, elective, or General Education requirements, except for the University Cultural Diversity (US/IL) requirement.

Program Learning Objectives

- Understanding of the institutions, processes, constitutional background, and policy outcomes of American government and the ability to compare American government to other countries around the world.
- Knowledge of key theories and concepts, historical developments, organizations, and modern issues in international relations.
- Understanding of government institutions, electoral processes, and policies in a variety of countries around the world and the ability to compare the effectiveness or impact of differing political arrangements across countries.
- Knowledge of some of the philosophical underpinnings of modern politics and government and the legal principles by which political disputes are often settled.
- Ability to use the comparative case study method of analysis, quantitative forms of analysis, and legal analysis in oral communication and in written research.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

Erie

Robert Speel, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Political Science
159 Kochel
Erie, PA 16563
814-898-6206
rws15@psu.edu

Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

Political Science, B.A. at Erie Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 15 or 30H ^{†‡}	3 PLSC 1 or 3	3
PLSC 1 or 3	3 General Education	3
General Education	3 General Education	3
World Language (Level One)	4 General Education	3
First-Year Seminar	1 World Language (Level Two)	4
	14	16

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 14 or 17N	3 PLSC 14H or 17N	3
CAS 100 ^{†‡}	3 ENGL 202A ^{†‡}	3
General Education	3 General Education	3
General Education	3 General Education	3
World Language (Level Three)	4 General Education	3
	General Education	1.5
	16	16.5

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PL SC 400-level*	3 PL SC 400-level, Writing Across the Curriculum (W) course*	3
PL SC American Government any level	3 PL SC International Politics any level	3
General Education	3 BA Knowledge Domain	3
General Education	1.5 General Education	3
World Cultures	3 Electives	3
	13.5	15

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PL SC 400-level*	3 PL SC 400-level*	3
PL SC Comparative Politics any level	3 PL SC Gov in Theory and Practice any level	3
BA Knowledge Domain	3 BA Knowledge Domain	3
Electives	3 Electives	3
Electives	3 Electives	3
	15	15

Total Credits 121

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/>).

Program Notes:

- Both US (United States Cultures) and IL (International Cultures) must be completed within the degree requirements.
- Students can double count US & IL requirements for general education courses but not for the World Cultures requirement.

Advising Notes:

- The course series listed above is only one of many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The number of electives required varies per student. Please be sure to consult with an adviser about your intended plan.

Political Science, B.A. at Erie Campus (3-Year Accelerated Plan)

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits Summer	Credits
ENGL 15 or 30H ^{††}	3 PLSC 14	3 General Education Course	3
PLSC 1	3 PLSC 17N or 7N	3 General Education Course	3
PLSC 3	3 World Language (Level Two)	4	
World Language (Level One)	4 General Education Course (Inter-Domain)	3	
General Education Course (GQ) [‡]	3 General Education Course (GN)	3	
	General Education Course (GH)	3	
	16	19	6

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits Summer	Credits
CAS 100 ^{††}	3 ENGL 202A ^{††}	3 BA Fields Course	3
World Language (Level Three)	4 World Cultures Course (PLSC)	3 Elective	3
PLSC Course	3 PLSC 400-level Course [*]	3	
PLSC 400-level Course [*]	3 General Education Course (Inter-Domain)	3	
General Education Course (GQ) [‡]	3 General Education Course (GS)	3	
General Education Course (GA)	3 General Education Course (GHW)	3	
	19	18	6

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 400-level Course [*]	3 PLSC Course	3

PLSC Course	3 PL SC 400-level, Writing Across the Curriculum (W) Course [*]	3
PLSC Course	3 BA Fields Course	3
BA Fields Course	3 Elective	3
General Education Course (GN)	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	18	18

Total Credits 120

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/>).

Program Notes:

- The Political Science major at Behrend has 4 options: Politics and Government (general option), Crime and Law, International Relations, and Public Policy. In each of those 4 options, students will need to choose 2 of their general education courses from approved lists. In the last three options, 4 PLSC courses beyond the introductory level must be chosen from approved lists. All 4 options could be achieved

in 3 years with the plan above just by plugging in specific courses for the general education or PLSC course requirements.

- Both US (United States Cultures) and IL (International Cultures) must be completed within the degree requirements.
- Students can double count US & IL requirements for general education courses but not for the World Cultures requirement.

Career Paths

The B.A. in Political Science program emphasizes the development of key intellectual skills, ingraining the habits of questioning, debating, challenging, and shaping coherent and persuasive arguments. You'll be expected to master effective writing, speaking, and reasoning, and conduct upper-level research in public affairs—skills that are impressive to future employers. Penn State Behrend has a comprehensive support system to help you identify and achieve your goals for college and beyond. Meet with your academic adviser often and take advantage of the services offered by the Academic and Career Planning Center beginning in your first semester.

Careers

Employers of recent Penn State Behrend B.A. in Political Science graduates include the FBI, CIA, U.S. State Department, Social Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Pennsylvania General Assembly, and NASA. Recent Political Science graduates work as attorneys for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Michigan Attorney General, The Nature Conservancy, and GEICO, and in policy positions at Toyota Motors, Erie Insurance, and the Center for Naval Analyses. Other recent graduates work in education at the University of California, Los Angeles, University of Notre Dame, University of Connecticut, and in many secondary schools.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM (<https://behrend.psu.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences/academic-programs/political-science/>)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

Recent Penn State Behrend Political Science alumni have attended the law schools at Cornell University, University of Pittsburgh, New York University, George Washington University, University of Illinois, and Boston College. Other recent graduates have pursued graduate degrees in fields such as public policy and international relations at the University of Pennsylvania, Georgetown University, Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, Pepperdine University, China's Fudan University, and England's Cambridge University.

If you are interested in a teaching career, you can fast-track your completion of Pennsylvania teacher certification in middle-level or secondary social studies through Penn State Behrend's agreement with Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES (<https://behrend.psu.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences/academic-programs/political-science/>)

Professional Resources

- American Political Science Association (<https://apsanet.org>)
- American Society for Public Administration (<https://www.aspanet.org/>)

- United Nations Public Administration Network (<https://unpan.un.org/>)

Contact

Erie

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
170 Irvin Kochel Center
4951 College Drive
Erie, PA 16563
814-898-6108
HSSOffice@psu.edu

<https://behrend.psu.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences> (<https://behrend.psu.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences/>)