

POLITICAL SCIENCE, B.A. (LIBERAL ARTS)

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park, World Campus

Program Description

The Political Science major offers the student an opportunity to understand not only American federal, state, and local governments, but also the political systems of other nations and the philosophies that underlie them. Courses are offered in American, comparative, and international politics, and in political theory and methodology. Internship opportunities are available.

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 are interested in how power and resources are allocated in society. Students in this major study governments, public policies, and political behavior in the United States and around the world from both a humanistic and scientific perspective. If you're interested in how history, culture, and economics shape our lives and impact things like economic development, conflict, foreign policy, terrorism, globalization, and the environment, then this is the major for you.

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/>)

World Campus

Direct Admission to the Major

Incoming first-year students who meet the program admission requirements are admitted directly into the major. Admission restrictions may apply for change-of-major and/or change-of-campus students.

For more information about the admission process for this major, please send a request to the college, campus, or program contact (listed in the Contact tab).

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, a minimum of 123 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	15
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	39

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 course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

Requirements for the Major

In meeting the requirements for the major, students must take at least one course at any level from FOUR of the five fields offered in the department: Political Theory, Methodology, American Politics/Public Administration, Comparative Politics, and International Relations.

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade 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/>).

Code	Title	Credits
Additional Courses		
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 15 credits in PLSC at or above the 400 level		15
Select 15 credits in PLSC at any level, with at least 9 of these credits above the 100 level or above ¹		15
Select 9 credits from the following:		9
PLSC 1	American Politics: Principles, Processes and Powers	
PLSC 3	Comparing Politics around the Globe	
PLSC 10	Scientific Study of Politics	
PLSC 14	International Relations	
PLSC 14H	International Relations Honors	
PLSC 17N	Introduction to Political Theory	
PLSC 17W	Introduction to Political Theory	

¹ Up to 6 credits of these 15 credits at any level may be taken in related or complementary disciplines with approval of an academic adviser.

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.

Integrated B.A. in Political Science and M.I.A. in International Affairs

Undergraduate degree available at the following campuses: Harrisburg, University Park, World Campus

Graduate degree available at the following campuses: University Park

Requirements for the Integrated B.A. in Political Science and M.I.A. in International Affairs can be found in the Graduate Bulletin (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/international-affairs/#integratedundergradgradprogramstext>).

Integrated B.A. in Political Science and M.P.P. In Public Policy

Undergraduate degree available at the following campuses: Harrisburg, University Park, World Campus

Graduate degree available at the following campuses: University Park

Requirements for the Integrated B.A. in Political Science and M.P.P. in Public Policy can be found in the Graduate Bulletin (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/public-policy/#integratedundergradprogramtext>).

Program Learning Objectives

- Students will develop substantive knowledge of the discipline of Political Science.
 - Students will be able to define and use the concepts political scientists employ to make and substantiate knowledge claims.
 - Students will be able to describe the central debates and theoretical frameworks of political science and international politics.
- Students will develop knowledge about how political scientists use empirical analysis to gain insight into political and social processes, to advance political and social goals, and to evaluate the effects of programs and policies.
 - Students will be able to explain multiple approaches to empirical research, such as large-scale observational research, experiments, surveys, case studies, formal modeling, and elite interviewing.
 - Students will be able to describe both the application, and the advantages and disadvantages of different research methods in relation to particular problems.
- Students will develop the ability to create coherent, persuasive, and empirically grounded oral and written arguments.
 - Students will be able to construct and defend logical arguments.
 - Students will be able to present evidence to support empirical claims.
 - Students will be able to communicate ideas effectively in conformity with academic standards.
- Students will develop the ability to systematically analyze problems and draw evidenced based inferences. Students in different majors will accomplish this with different emphases depending on the courses they take as part of the BA/BS.
 - Bachelor of Arts students in PLSC and INTPL will analyze problems and draw evidence based inferences using a broad range of techniques according to programmatic focus and individual preference.
 - PLSC Bachelor of Science majors will analyze problems and draw inferences using various data sources and statistical tools.
 - PLSC SODA majors will analyze problems and draw inferences using computational tools appropriate to large complex data sets.
- Students will develop the ability to combine the substantive knowledge, modes of inquiry, and analytic skills learned in the classroom to address contemporary problems in an uncertain world.
 - Students will be able to draw upon political science research to construct testable explanations of novel situations.

- Students will be able to weigh the arguments, evidence and inferences used to address problems under conditions of uncertainty.
- Students will develop ethical reasoning and citizenship skills to participate in a global, pluralistic society.
 - Students will be able to trace the possible ethical implications of public policies and political structures and their consequences for democratic political values.
 - Students will be able to articulate the goals, conditions, and challenges of democracy and describe the roles of citizens and public officials in manifesting and preserving democratic values.
 - Students will be able to critically evaluate the values inherent in the exercise of power through political systems, social structures, information, and collective action.

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/>)

University Park

Liberal Arts Academic Advising

814-865-2545

Use the Liberal Arts Meet the Academic Advisers web page (<https://la.psu.edu/student-services/academic-advising/meet-the-academic-advisers/>) to see the contact information for the specific adviser(s) of this program

Harrisburg

Juliette Tolay, Ph.D.

Program Coordinator

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Middletown, PA 17057

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World Campus

Undergraduate Academic Advising

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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 University Park 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
PLSC 1 (US)*	3 PLSC 14 (IL)*	3
LA 83	1.5 World Language Level 2	4
World Language Level 1	4 General Education Course	3
General Education Course (GQ) [‡]	3 General Education Course	3
FYS/General Education Course	3 CAS 100, CAS 100A, CAS 100B, CAS 100C, CAS 138T, or ENGL 138T (GWS) [‡]	3
ENGL 15, 30H, 137H, CAS 137H, or ESL 15 (GWS) [‡]	3	
	17.5	16

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 3, 20, or 22*	3 PLSC 7N, 10, or 17N*	3
World Language Level 3	4 LA 283	1.5
General Education Course (GQ) [‡]	3 PLSC 400-Level*	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
	BA Fields	3
	16	16.5

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 400-Level*	3 PLSC 400-Level*	3
Related Course in Consultation with Adviser*	3 Related Course in Consultation with Adviser*	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D (GWS) [‡]	3 BA Fields	3
BA Fields	3 Elective (WAC)	3
	15	15

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 400-Level*	3 PLSC 400-Level*	3
Related Course in Consultation with Adviser*	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 Elective	3

Elective (OC)	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 General Education Course (GHW)	3
	15	15

Total Credits 126

* 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.

All incoming Schreyer Honors College first-year students at University Park will take ENGL 137H/CAS 137H in the fall semester and ENGL 138T/CAS 138T in the spring semester. These courses carry the GWS designation and satisfy a portion of that General Education requirement. If the student's program prescribes GWS these courses will replace both ENGL 15/ENGL 30H and CAS 100A/CAS 100B/CAS 100C. Each course is 3 credits.

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/>).

Advising Notes:

- 24 credits within the major must be completed at University Park (policy 83-80). Talk with your academic adviser for additional details.

Political Science, B.A. at Commonwealth Campuses

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
PLSC 1 (US)*	3 PLSC 14 (IL)*	3
World Language Level 1	4 World Language Level 2	4
General Education Course (GQ)†	3 General Education Course	3
FYS/General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
ENGL 15, 30H, or ESL 15 (GWS)‡	3 CAS 100, CAS 100A, CAS 100B, or CAS 100C (GWS)‡	3
	16	16

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 3, 20, or 22*	3 General Education Course	3
World Language Level 3	4 General Education Course	3
General Education Course (GQ)†	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course (GHW)	3
General Education Course	3 Elective (WAC)	3
	16	15

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 7N, 10, or 17N*	3 PLSC 400-Level*	3
General Education Course	3 PLSC 400-Level*	3
ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D (GWS)‡	3 Related Course in Consultation with Adviser*	3
LA 283	1.5 BA Fields	3
BA Fields	3 Elective	3
Elective (OC)	3	
	16.5	15

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 400-Level*	3 PLSC 400-Level*	3
PLSC 400-Level*	3 Related Course in Consultation with Adviser	3
Related Course in Consultation with Adviser*	3 Elective	3
BA Fields	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	15	15

Total Credits 124.5

* 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/>).

Advising Notes:

- 24 credits within the major must be completed at University Park (policy 83-80). Talk with your academic adviser for additional details.

Career Paths

Political Science is one of the most versatile majors in the liberal arts. The program provides students with an in-depth understanding of political issues while honing their ability to think critically and communicate persuasively. As a political science major, you will learn to conduct research and to evaluate information and assemble empirically supported arguments. These skills are necessary for success in a variety of careers, including law, public policy, lobbying, business, political campaigning, and government, as well as with non-profit organizations.

Careers

Penn State Political Science graduates are serving as advisers to the State Department; as attorneys and management specialists in the Department of Justice; as speech writers, lobbyists and policy analysts on Capitol Hill; and even in the United States Senate. Our alumni have built successful careers in business, and as lawyers, teachers, and journalists. Many are successful entrepreneurs, some work for NGOs, others are leaders of major corporations. You can learn from their experience through our alumni mentoring program.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM (<https://>

apsanet.org/CAREERS/Careers-for-Political-Scientists/Careers-Sectors-for-Political-Science/)

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
(<https://polisci.la.psu.edu/undergraduate/student-life/alumni-mentor-program/>)

Contact

University Park

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814-865-4597
<https://polisci.la.psu.edu/undergraduate/advising/>
<https://polisci.la.psu.edu/>

World Campus

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<https://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/degrees-and-certificates/penn-state-online-political-science-bachelor-of-arts-degree> (<https://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/degrees-and-certificates/penn-state-online-political-science-bachelor-of-arts-degree/>)

Harrisburg

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