

Political Science Major and Minor

www.PoliSci.Pitt.edu

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A major in political science is designed to help students understand the complexity of political developments in the United States and throughout the world. The major also provides students with a broad education that will help them to prepare for a wide variety of careers in various levels of government service, law, education, journalism, business, and the nonprofit sector. Those interested in government service careers may wish to complement their study of political science with courses in public service offered through the College of General Studies and the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.

The political science department offers courses that meet the international foreign cultures, philosophy, social science, and quantitative requirements of the core curriculum of the School of Arts and Sciences, as well as requirements for the wide range of certificate programs sponsored by the University Center for International Studies (African Studies, Asian Studies, European Union Studies, Global Studies, Latin American Studies, Russian and East European Studies, West European Studies, Global Service Center).

Required courses for the Political Science major

The political science department offers many courses in four fields: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. The core courses provide students with a survey in each of these fields and with the methods employed in the contemporary study of politics. The field courses, at 1000-level, provide students with advanced coursework in each of these areas of specialization, and are numbered to match the introductory courses (12xx American Politics, 13xx Comparative Politics, 15xx International Relations, 16xx Political Theory). The combination of core and field courses provides students with a comprehensive overview of political science as a discipline while permitting students to concentrate in a particular field. The major requires the completion of 36 credits distributed as follows.

Core courses

PS 0200 American Politics
PS 0300 Comparative Politics
PS 0500 International Relations
PS 0600 Political Theory
PS 0700 Research Methods in Political Science

Primary Field

Minimum of four 1000's level PS courses within one subfield (i.e., 12xx, 13xx, 15xx, or 16xx).

Breadth Requirement

Minimum of three 1000's level PS courses outside of the student's primary field.

Capstone seminar

The University of Pittsburgh requires students to complete one writing-intensive course in their major. The Capstone Seminar, which is ideally taken in the primary field, fulfills the university-wide requirement of an intensive writing course (W-course) in the major and allows students to undertake advanced work under the direction of faculty in a smaller seminar setting.

Honors major requirements

Departmental honors are conferred upon students who maintain an overall GPA of 3.5 and achieve a GPA of 3.7 or better in political science.

Grade requirements

A minimum GPA of 2.0 in departmental courses is required for graduation. In addition, a student must earn a grade of at least C- for a course to satisfy a PS requirement.

Satisfactory/No Credit option

No course to be counted toward the major can be taken on an S/NC basis.

BPhil in Political Science

Outstanding and motivated students seeking an even more challenging academic experience, especially those who are considering graduate school, must consult with an advisor about the option of a BPhil in Political Science. The BPhil degree, which is offered through the University Honors College (UHC), requires a plan of cognate fieldwork and a thesis approved by the department and UHC. For more information on the BPhil, see www.HonorsCollege.Pitt.edu/BPhil.

Date of Adoption

Students declaring the PS major after September 1, 2025 use this version of the major. Students who declare the PS major prior to that date should consult with the PS advisors for information about the requirements of the prior PS major.

Advising

Questions about courses, departmental requirements, and extracurricular opportunities should be addressed to the undergraduate advisors.

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Internship

A wide range of internships in the public and private sector are available. Students should work closely with a faculty advisor to ensure receipt of academic credit. Internships are taken for S/NC and do not fulfill major requirements.

Independent Study

Students who have completed a field course may explore a particular subject in greater depth through a tutorial with a faculty member.

Checklist for the BA in Political Science

All the following core courses

- _____ PS 0200 American Politics
- _____ PS 0300 Comparative Politics
- _____ PS 0500 International Relations
- _____ PS 0600 Political Theory
- _____ PS 0700 Research Methods

Seven upper-level courses (these must include a capstone seminar AND either an analysis OR methodology course)

Primary Field: Four courses in the same field (12xx, 13xx, 15xx, or 16xx)

- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____

Breadth Requirement: Three courses in fields other than the Primary Field

- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____

One Primary Field (recommended) OR Breadth Requirement must be a Capstone seminar

- _____ PS 1 _____

Checklist for the BPhil in Political Science

_____ All of the requirements for the BA in Political Science

At least four courses in cognate disciplines, approved by the student's advisor

Subject	Course	No.
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

_____ Completion and defense of an original paper of high quality, at least 25

pages in length, approved by the student's advisor and UHC.

Checklist for the Political Science minor

Students may complete a minor in Political Science, which consists of a sequence of five courses in one of the four substantive fields.

The core course in one field

_____ PS 0 _____

Four upper-level courses in the same field

- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____
- _____ PS 1 _____

Note: Students must apply for any official minor they will complete or have completed at the time they apply for graduation.

Potential PS Courses

The following lists provide a sample of course options. Offerings vary by term. Students should follow the number codes to select appropriate courses.

American Politics

- PS 1201 Constitution and Civil Liberties
- PS 1202 American Constitutional Law
- PS 1203 Women in Politics
- PS 1205 Race, Gender and Politics
- PS 1211 Legislative Process
- PS 1212 American Presidency
- PS 1216 Modern Civil Rights
- PS 1220 Sports and American Politics
- PS 1221 Latina/o/x Politics
- PS 1232 Political Attitudes and Public Opinion
- PS 1234 Electoral Behavior and Democratic Process
- PS 1240 Politics of Diversity
- PS 1251 Urban Government and Politics
- PS 1252 State Government
- PS 1261 American Public Policy
- PS 1262 Health Policy in the US
- PS 1264 American Politics through Film
- PS 1275 Religion and Politics
- PS 1281 Capstone Seminar in American Politics

Comparative Politics

- AFRICANA 1030 Intro to African Politics
- AFRCNA 1331 African Liberation Movements
- AFRCNA 1661 Political Economy of Africa
- PS 1309 Comparative Regionalism
- PS 1311 Western European Government and Politics

- PS 1316 Asian Politics
- PS 1317 Politics of the European Union
- PS 1321 Latin American Politics
- PS 1324 US-Latin American Relations
- PS 1327 Revolution
- PS 1332 Gov't and Politics in Contemporary China
- PS 1333 Government and Politics of Japan
- PS 1340 Democratization
- PS 1341 Gov't and Politics of the USSR & Russian Fed.
- PS 1351 Government and Politics of the Middle East
- PS 1352 Introduction to African Politics
- PS 1367 Environmental Politics
- PS 1373 Comparative Political Economy
- PS 1374 Politics of Global Inequality
- PS 1378 Challenges to Democracy and Its Institutions
- PS 1381 Capstone Seminar in Comparative Politics

International Relations

- PS 1501 Theory of International Relations
- PS 1502 Int'l Law and Problems of World Order
- PS 1503 International Organizations
- PS 1504 Nationalism
- PS 1508 International Terrorism
- PS 1511 American Foreign Policy
- PS 1512 Politics of Migration
- PS 1513 Foreign Policies—Changing World
- PS 1514 Political Strategy and International Relations
- PS 1516 Transnational Policy Analysis
- PS 1517 US Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East
- PS 1521 Eastern Europe in World Politics
- PS 1533 Political Violence and Revolution
- PS 1534 Civil Wars
- PS 1536 Human Security
- PS 1537 Peacemaking and Peacekeeping
- PS 1550 Gender and Global Politics
- PS 1581 Capstone Seminar in International Relations

Political Theory

- PS 1602 Early Modern Political Thought in Context
- PS 1603 Contemporary Political Thought
- PS 1607 American Political Thought
- PS 1612 Marxism
- PS 1614 Theories of Justice
- PS 1619 Democratic Theory
- PS 1621 History of Feminist Political Thought
- PS 1622 Outsider Politics: Anarchist, Queer, Punk
Feminist Theories
- PS 1675 Politics of Human Rights
- PS 1681 Capstone Seminar in Political Theory
- PS 1692 Myth Propaganda and the State
- PS 1693 Political Theory and the Future

Additional Offerings

- PS 1702 Coding and Computation for Social Science
- PS 1710 Strategy and Games of Politics
- PS 1900 Internship
- PS 1901 Independent Study
- PS 1902 Directed Reading
- PS 1903 Directed Research
- PS 1910 Institute of Politics