

POLITICAL SCIENCE - DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD)

The Department of Political Science at CU Boulder offers instruction and research in the art and science of politics and has a long tradition of excellence in training graduate students. A diverse faculty of nearly 30 professors trains graduate students to conduct original research in six areas of political science:

- American government and politics
- comparative politics
- international relations
- political theory
- public policy
- empirical theory and methodology

Admission is highly competitive, with approximately 10–12 new students enrolled each fall. This ensures a high faculty-to-student ratio and close mentoring opportunities. In addition, the department holds an outstanding placement record.

The department does not accept applications for a terminal MA in political science. Students in the PhD program earn an MA in political science after the completion of a successful qualifying paper and defense at the end of the second year in the program.

Requirements

The Department of Political Science PhD program includes coursework in six fields of study, a qualifying research paper and oral defense, comprehensive written and oral examinations, doctoral prospectus defense, final dissertation defense, and a minimum of 30 dissertation credit hours.

Students take a wide range of courses and demonstrate mastery of two different fields, the major (first field) and the minor (second field). Students take a minimum of three seminars in each field and at least three courses outside of their major and minor fields.

Students complete a minimum of 42 credit hours of coursework with a B average or better. Of these 42 credit hours, 39 must be at the 7000 level or higher and 35 credit hours must be taken in the Political Science Department.

Students take additional coursework with the consideration that they will fulfill all requirements needed to complete the program. During the first semester in residence, students are required to take three introductory courses:

- PSCI 7008 Teaching Political Science
- PSCI 7075 Scope and Methods of Political Science
- PSCI 7085 Introduction to Political Science Data Analysis

In addition, there are five majors with required core seminar coursework.

- American Politics Major - PSCI 7011 is required.
- Comparative Politics Major - PSCI 7012 is required.
- International Relations Major - PSCI 7XX3 is required (please identify an appropriate graduate seminar in consultation with your advisor).
- Political Theory Major - PSCI 7004 is required.

- Public Policy Major - PSCI 7126 is required.

As a condition of funding, all students appointed as graduate student assistants are required to enroll in a minimum of 9 credit hours per semester for their first five semesters or until they have passed comprehensive exams.

Students wishing to pursue graduate work toward the degree should carefully read the Doctoral Degree Requirements (<https://catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/degree-requirements/doctoral-degree-requirements/>) section and review the courses listed in this catalog. Requirements for the political science graduate program are clarified in more detail on the department's PhD Requirements and Handbook (<http://www.colorado.edu/polisci/graduate/phd/>) webpage.

Time Limit

Full-time students are expected to complete all requirements for the PhD degree within five years of entering the program. The maximum time allowed by the Graduate School is six years from the semester of admission.

Learning Outcomes

By the completion of the program, students will be able to:

- (Research Competence and Original Contribution) Demonstrate the ability to independently design, conduct and present original research that makes a meaningful contribution to and advances knowledge within the field of political science. Explanation: Students will engage in independent scientific thinking, designing and employing advanced research questions and methods to develop innovative studies that engage with current debates in political science. This includes mastery of research design, data collection and analysis, aiming for original research that is publication-ready or presents substantial academic value.
- (Communication, Engagement and Dissemination of Research) Communicate research findings clearly and professionally to both academic and non-academic audiences through multiple mediums, including written papers, oral presentations and poster sessions. Participate actively in the political science research community through conferences, publications and professional development activities. Explanation: Students will develop effective communication skills necessary to share their research in various settings, ranging from conferences to academic journals to classroom-based communication. This outcome emphasizes both written work as well as verbal presentation. Students will also engage with the broader academic community, contributing to scholarly discourse through venues such as publications, talks and conferences.
- (Theoretical Mastery and Breadth in Political Science) Acquire and apply in-depth knowledge of core political science theories and concepts, while also demonstrating expertise in one or more sub-fields within the discipline. Apply critical and analytical thinking in the evaluation of political phenomena, drawing upon both theoretical and empirical evidence. Explanation: Students will master key political science theories and concepts, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the discipline. Students should be able to cover a wide swath of the field, but also demonstrate in-depth expertise in their main field. Students should critically engage with the literature as well as applying theoretical frameworks to real-world problems and be able to evaluate political issues and theories from multiple perspectives.

- (Pedagogical Expertise) Demonstrate the ability to teach undergraduate political science courses, utilizing evidence-based pedagogical strategies that foster student engagement and learning. Explanation: Students will be prepared to teach at the undergraduate level, designing and delivering high-quality, evidence-based instruction that reflects both subject\ knowledge and effective teaching methods.