Ph.D. Program in Political Science

The Ph.D. program in Political Science, in the College of Arts and Sciences, is characterized by several distinct features:

A. Three areas of specialization
   1. Political Psychology/Behavior
   2. Political Economy and Public Policy
   3. American Politics

B. Close student/faculty interaction

C. An emphasis on professional training of research-oriented students and the production of professional-quality articles and conference papers by Ph.D. students.

Political Psychology/Behavior
The doctoral concentration in political psychology/behavior applies contemporary psychological theories, concepts, and research methods to the study of political behavior. Students are trained in topics and methods associated with psychology as well as political science. Methodological concerns focus on experimentation and survey research. In addition to formal training in methods appropriate to the psychological study of political behavior, students are apprenticed to ongoing research projects throughout their course of training. Students become familiar with the department’s extensive and well-equipped laboratories and the regular subject pool. Opportunities are also available to take part in ongoing survey research projects.

The substantive interests of the faculty in this area include voter decision-making processes, political socialization, political values and beliefs, the mass media, political cognition, group influence, and public opinion.

Political Economy and Public Policy
The concentration in political economy and public policy emphasizes the interaction between politics and the institutions (both public and private) that shape economic policies. Students choosing this concentration analyze important issues by focusing on decision-making and organizational behavior as shaped by individual incentives and institutional structures. In addition to the foundation course in public policy required of all students, elective seminars in this field include policy evaluation, organizational decision-making, bureaucracy, regulation, institutional analysis, and urban politics.

The faculty have published research on issues such as the economic development of metropolitan areas, the political economy of suburbs, political controls over regulatory bureaucracies, and citizen responses to tax policies. A sample of other ongoing research projects in which incoming students may become involved include the effect of market-like incentives in school choice, subsidy flows in the European Union, the role of social capital in environmental decision making, and regulation of business by state governments. The economic approach is also used to investigate other political processes such as voting, party competition, and agenda setting.

American Politics
The American politics concentration provides a broad perspective on national political institutions and processes, with particular emphases on elections and courts. Courses focusing on political parties and elections, the legislative process, the American judiciary, electoral behavior, American political ideology, and public choice theory are offered. Students become familiar with the kinds of quantitative and formal analysis techniques most often applied to the study of American politics. Seminar papers allow students to go into detail on topics of special interest.

Members of the faculty are currently doing research on congressional and Supreme Court decision-making, the role of economic forces in American national elections, voting in congressional elections, issues of gender and the law, and the dynamics of American public opinion.
Methodology
Since we believe that a strong background in research methods is essential for political scientists interested in empirical research, we provide a rigorous training in the application of statistical methods and formal models to political analysis. Coursework in methods includes introductory training in research design and elementary statistics, as well as more advanced work in statistical analysis, econometrics, time series analysis, and measurement. The department recognizes that many undergraduates in political science come to graduate school without much background in statistics and math. Therefore, our courses start at an introductory level and slowly develop the skills necessary to do publishable research in political science. In addition to the classroom work, these courses all involve analysis of actual data on personal computers. We believe, however, that it is the application of research methods, first as part of faculty and class research projects and then in a student’s own dissertation research, that makes a qualified researcher with the skills required for success in research and academic careers.

Admission requirements of the Department of Political Science
The Department of Political Science Doctoral Program admits only students who intend to complete the Ph.D., although students are eligible to receive the M.A. Applicants for admission to the Ph.D. program in political science must meet the following requirements:

A. Submission of Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Test scores (verbal, quantitative, and analytic).
B. Prior training that includes basic work in at least two of the following:
   1. Political science
   2. Psychology
   3. Mathematics or statistics
   4. Economics or sociology
C. A bachelor’s degree with at least a B average in the major subject.
D. Three letters of recommendation from instructors or academic advisors.
E. In those cases where the departmental admissions committee deems it desirable, personal interviews with departmental representatives may be necessary.

Acceptance by both the Department of Political Science and the Graduate School is required.

Facilities of the Department of Political Science
The department has extensive research facilities equal to any in the country, most located on the same floor with faculty and student offices. Students routinely use the conveniently located computer facilities for writing and analysis as part of their professional training. The Social and Behavioral Sciences Data Laboratory on our floor provides access to state-of-the-art personal computers tied to a local computer network and providing connections to all computers on campus. The Stony Brook Instructional Networked Computer site one floor below the department provides additional personal computers for classroom and research work. In addition, our data lab maintains a library of reference materials, holds classes on specific software packages, provides access to the extensive data archives available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Resources, and employs computer consultants to help with student research projects. All of the resources of the data lab are available to graduate students.

The laboratories for political psychology research are designed for the experimental study of political behavior. One set of labs contains computerized equipment to monitor, control, record, and analyze multiple responses from subjects. Much of the recent work focuses on information processing and decision-making—how citizens interpret, use, and recall political information. The other set of labs contains a large survey and experiment room equipped with computerized data collection stations. Students may also take advantage of our modern, fully equipped Survey Center for public opinion studies using computer-assisted, telephone interviewing.

Requirements for the M.A. Degree
In addition to the minimum requirements of the Graduate School, the Department requires all candidates to complete 30 credits of approved graduate coursework in which a grade of B or higher has been received.

Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree in Political Science
Candidates must meet the general requirements for the Ph.D. degree set by the Graduate School. Departmental requirements are as follows:

A. Core Courses
Students take four core courses:
   1. POL 600 Research Project
   2. POL 601 Public Policy and Political Economy
   3. POL 605 American Government
   4. POL 608 Political Psychology

Stony Brook University Graduate Bulletin: www.stonybrook.edu/gradbulletin
B. Methods
Students are expected to master the methods necessary to engage in scholarly work:

1. All students take a three-course sequence in mathematics, statistics, and research methods (POL 602, POL 603, POL 604).
2. All students are required to take at least one advanced methods course either in this department or in a cognate field (e.g., economics). The student’s choice of advanced elective(s) is decided in conjunction with the student’s advisor.
3. In addition to requirements 1 and 2 above, political psychology students take POL 610, a graduate-level course in experimental design. Political economy and American Politics students must take POL 613, Game Theory.
4. Students who have attended the ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods at the University of Michigan can have the advanced elective requirement waived.

C. Electives
Students take a minimum of four advanced seminars in their area of specialization and three in their minor area. The seminars are typically at the 600 level and can be within the department or can be in cognate fields such as psychology, economics, or applied math. The course of study is selected by the student in consultation with his or her advisor and must be approved by the graduate program director.

D. Teaching and Research Apprenticeship
To ensure that all students become proficient in teaching and research, students work with the faculty on an individual basis. Funded students participate in faculty research projects and assist in teaching courses. Advanced students then prepare and teach their own undergraduate classes.

E. Evaluation
Graduate students in the Ph.D. program are formally evaluated at the end of each semester, based on grades received in the program and on evaluations by faculty familiar with the student’s work.

The evaluation committee’s charge is to make one of the following three possible determinations with regard to the student’s progress: (1) recommend continuation of graduate study toward the Ph.D., (2) recommend that the student be allowed to continue toward a terminal M.A. but not to continue in the Ph.D. program, or (3) recommend that the student not be permitted to enroll in additional graduate courses in the department.

The evaluation also serves as the basis for the decision as to whether the student is to receive financial support during subsequent semesters of graduate work.

F. Qualifying Examinations
1. Timing of Examinations: Students making normal progress toward the Ph.D. should anticipate taking qualifying examinations following the second year of coursework. Examinations in three fields compose the doctoral qualifying examinations.
2. Examination Fields: The department’s policy is to allow students to take exams only in those areas in which its faculty strengths allow in-depth training, including:
   a. Methods
   b. American Politics
   c. Political Economy and Public Policy
   d. Political Psychology/Behavior

All students are required to take the methods exam. Students then prepare two of the three other substantive areas for written examination.

3. Preparation and Evaluation of Examinations: The graduate program director appoints a committee (with a designated committee chairperson) responsible for each examination field. The committee prepares the written examination, providing sufficient options for questions on which students may write. The committee members read the student’s examination and prepare an evaluation of that performance, which is reviewed by the Ph.D. committee.

G. Dissertation
Following successful completion of the qualifying examinations, the student begins the process of preparing his or her dissertation.

The third year includes developing a directed reading course under the supervision of a dissertation director. Through the readings the student will explore specialized research literature in the area of a proposed dissertation, develop an initial bibliography, and formulate a specific question for research. The second half of the year includes working with the dissertation director and selecting a dissertation committee consisting of four faculty members—three from the Department of Political Science and one with whom the student has worked outside of the department. The third year culminates with a presentation of the dissertation proposal by the student and its acceptance by the dissertation committee.

Should the dissertation committee reject the proposal, a candidate is allowed to revise the proposal for a subsequent defense. If this second defense also results in failure, the student’s program is terminated.

Upon successful conclusion of research, the student defends the completed dissertation to the committee and the University community at large.

Courses
Ph.D. Program
The required courses for first-year students are given every year; electives are generally offered every other year. Courses are open to qualified students from other programs with permission of the graduate program director.

Required Courses
Electives: Methodology
Electives: American Politics
Electives: Public Policy
Electives: Political Psychology
Electives: General

Faculty of the Department of Political Science
Faculty information for this program can be found at https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/polisci/people/faculty.html

NOTE: The course descriptions for this program can be found in the corresponding program PDF or at COURSE SEARCH.