

**GRADUATE HANDBOOK
FOR THE
MASTER'S DEGREE
in
Political Science**

**Texas A&M University-Commerce
Department of Political Science**

Introduction

The Department of Political Science offers both a Master of Arts (requiring foreign language courses) and a Master of Science (without foreign language requirement with increased emphasis on quantitative analysis). In addition, the Department of Political Science shares a program with the Department of History to prepare students to teach U.S. History and U.S. and Texas Government in community colleges and in dual credit courses in high school.

The graduate program in political science is research intensive and designed to meet the needs of students preparing for advanced graduate work in political science leading to the Ph.D., in addition to those students interested in public service careers, community college and dual credit teaching, research, and administrative careers.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide students with a set of guidelines for graduate education in political science. It should not be considered the final arbiter of all matters relating to graduate school generally. The definitive source of all standards, requirements, and deadlines remains the Texas A&M-Commerce Graduate School. In all such matters, consult the current Graduate Catalog, or contact the Graduate School directly.

Please read over the information provided in this handbook and feel free to contact the graduate advisor with any questions you may have. The department looks forward to the possibility of working with you to enhance your education and pursue your academic goals!

Graduate Advisor

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Admission into the Graduate Program

Details of the admission policy and procedures for the Texas A&M University-Commerce Graduate School are clearly outlined and explained at the Graduate School website (<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/default.aspx>).

Necessary forms for admission to the graduate school may also be obtained through this site.

Interested students must first apply to the graduate school of Texas A&M University-Commerce. Once all materials have been compiled, a student's file is forwarded to the department for review.

To be admitted to the graduate program in Political Science, the applicant must:

1. Earn a minimum of a 2.75 grade point average at the undergraduate level.
2. Have maintained a GPA of 3.0 in their undergraduate major.
3. Confer with the Graduate Advisor in the Department of Political Science who will help the student to:
 - a. Initiate preparation of the degree plan prescribing courses to be taken,
 - b. Interpret relevant guidelines as necessary, and
 - c. Otherwise direct the progress of the student through the program

Once accepted into the program, students must attend a mandatory orientation and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0. If a student drops below this threshold they will be given a probationary semester in which to improve their GPA. If they fail to do so they will be suspended from the program for a minimum of one year. In addition, students are obligated to complete orientation to the program with the graduate advisor.

Comprehensive Written Examination

Students should take this written examination one semester prior to the semester in which they graduate. All Political Science Master's students are required to take this examination. Students enrolled in the joint PSCI/HIST M.S. program are required to take an oral examination prior to the semester before beginning the 595 paper.

The written examination will consist of essay questions covering each of the areas in the program (Research Methods, Comparative Politics, International Relations, American Government and Politics, and Political Theory). The comprehensive written examination will be offered each long semester on the fourth Thursday of October and March, and in Summer I in June of each year. The student's written examination is graded by the members of the graduate teaching faculty in the department. Results of the examination include:

- (1) **Pass:** the student has demonstrated competency in all areas of the exam.
- (2) **Conditional Pass:** the student has demonstrated deficiencies in knowledge in one or more areas of the exam. The graduate advisor will recommend additional work that the student must complete to the satisfaction of the graduate committee. If the student is unable to demonstrate proficiency in the

- makeup work, the student must re-take the exam.
- (3) **Fail:** the student has not convincingly demonstrated sufficient knowledge in several areas of the exam. The student must re-take the exam.

The exam will cover various aspects of Political Science as a discipline and the student is expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the breadth and scope. Students in the program are required to take foundational courses that will provide the necessary breadth of knowledge for students to succeed on the examination. Comprehensive examinations are not linked to classes and instructors, but are rather oriented toward the specific areas of the discipline covered in the foundational courses.

It is also important to note that students choosing the non-thesis option are required to submit to an oral examination in addition to the written comprehensive examination.

A student will not be allowed to take this examination more than twice.

Options Available in Master's Degree Programs

The Master's program provides two options. **Option I** requires less coursework but includes a thesis. **Option II** requires more coursework and a shorter 595 research project and an oral examination. Students enrolled in either option will be required to take a written comprehensive examination. Students should discuss which option is the most appropriate for their career goals. Students intending to continue graduate studies in a PhD program are strongly advised to take the thesis option.

Option I: Thesis Option **MA/MS Program of Study (30 SCH)**

PSCI 518 Thesis (6 SCH)

Research Methods (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 512 Qualitative Research Methods *or*

PSCI 540 Applied Data Analysis for Political Science

Foundational Courses (12 SCH total, 4 courses)

Comparative Politics (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 503 Proseminar in Comparative Politics

PSCI 504 Seminar in Area Studies

International Relations (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 506 Proseminar in International Relations

PSCI 508 Foreign Policy

American Government and Politics (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 509 Proseminar in American Government and Politics

PSCI 510 Seminar in American Political Behavior
PSCI 511 Seminar in American Political Institutions

Political Theory (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 513 Proseminar in Political Theory
PSCI 5** Problems in Political Philosophy and Theory

Electives (9 SCH, 3 courses)

Any of the above not used as a foundational course and/or any of the following

PSCI 505 Topics in Comparative Politics
PSCI 507 Topics in International Relations
PSCI 514 The Ideology of the Third Reich
PSCI 515 Select Topics in the Holocaust
PSCI 522 The Holocaust and Genocide
PSCI 541 Contemporary Issues in American Public Policy
PSCI 597 Special Topics
PSCI 5** Special Topics in Political Theory

Total Hours: 30

The student must select a graduate faculty member to serve as their thesis advisor prior to registering for PSCI 518. The student and his/her advisor will also select two additional faculty members who will serve as thesis committee members. Depending upon the project itself, graduate faculty from other departments may serve on a thesis committee although the thesis advisor must be a member of the graduate faculty in Political Science.

Check with your thesis advisor, the graduate catalog and the graduate website for helpful information on the required format, sections and expectations of the thesis.

The Thesis

A. Thesis Proposal

A thesis proposal is the initial step in the writing of a thesis. The prospectus must set forth the research planned, including the following:

- (1) Introduction to the problem
- (2) Review of the literature
- (3) Clear statement of hypotheses or research question(s) and anticipated findings
- (4) Methodology
- (5) Bibliography

It is the responsibility of the student to distribute copies of the proposal to all members of his or her committee for approval. A meeting will be called by the thesis advisor with the student his or her committee. This meeting serves as an opportunity for everyone to discuss the research, highlight any potential problems or limitations of the study, and also give approval for the collection of data to commence. Students who have had their thesis proposal approved by the committee should fill out the appropriate form and forward it to the department head for proper signatures.

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the Graduate School's guidelines for Master's students posted on the Graduate School website under "current students".

B. The Role of the Thesis Advisor

The thesis advisor will play a key role in supervising the student's research during all phases of writing the thesis, and is responsible for coordinating advice from other committee members. The initial drafts of the thesis should be produced under close direction of the thesis advisor.

Students must follow the American Political Science Association (APSA) style manual and guidelines provided by the Graduate School in preparing his or her thesis drafts.

The final copy of the thesis must be submitted to the student's committee at least one full week prior to the date of the thesis defense.

C. Thesis Defense

The Thesis Advisor will determine the date, time, and the place of the thesis defense in consultation with the student and committee members. The thesis defense will be announced at least one week in advance and is open to faculty and students in the department.

During the thesis defense, the student should be prepared to discuss their research, highlighting the significance of the study, relevant literature on which the study was based, the methodology used and the overall findings and conclusions of the research. Students are expected to be able to articulate, clarify, justify and defend their research, if necessary. Students should also be prepared to also answer other questions reflecting general knowledge they are expected to have mastered at the graduate level in the discipline of political science. So, questions relevant to substantive areas of political science that the student has studied are possible and may be asked by members of the thesis committee.

On the basis of the student's overall work and performance during the thesis defense, the committee will render one of the following decisions:

- 1. Pass:** This outcome signifies that the student has demonstrated competence in all areas to the extent that awarding the Master's Degree is recommended.
- 2. Conditional Pass:** In this situation, the student is considered to have demonstrated general ability, but lacks adequate preparation in one or more areas. The student will be required to attend a second thesis defense at a later date over the revised thesis. At least one month must lapse before the second examination can be taken. As a result of this second examination the student is either passed or failed.
- 3. Fail:** This may result in the student being dropped from the Master's degree program.

Option II Non-Thesis
MA/MS Non-thesis Program of Study (36 SCH)

PSCI 595 Research Project (3 SCH)

Required Courses (6 SCH, 2 courses)

PSCI 512 Qualitative Research Methods

PSCI 540 Applied Data Analysis for Political Science

Foundational Courses (12 SCH total, 4 courses)

Comparative Politics (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 503 Proseminar in Comparative Politics

PSCI 504 Seminar in Area Studies

International Relations (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 506 Proseminar in International Relations

PSCI 508 Foreign Policy

American Government and Politics (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 509 Proseminar in American Government and Politics

PSCI 510 Seminar in American Political Behavior

PSCI 511 Seminar in American Political Institutions

Political Theory (3 SCH, 1 course)

PSCI 513 Proseminar in Political Theory

PSCI 5** Problems in Political Philosophy and Theory

Electives (15 SCH, 5 courses)

Any of the above courses not used as a foundational course and/or

PSCI 505 Topics in Comparative Politics

PSCI 507 Topics in International Relations

PSCI 514 The Ideology of the Third Reich

PSCI 515 Select Topics in the Holocaust

PSCI 522 The Holocaust and Genocide

PSCI 541 Contemporary Issues in American Public Policy

PSCI 597 Special Topics

PSCI 5** Special Topics in Political Theory

Total Hours: 36

The 595 Non-Thesis Project

The Option II student must select and advisor prior to registering for 595. Please note that students writing the 595 paper must write on a topic that is being taught by faculty in the department, either at the undergraduate or graduate level, in the semester in which they are writing the 595 paper.

A student who chooses this option is also required to pass an **oral examination** which will be administered during the last semester of his or her study. The student's 595 advisor will issue a notice of the time and place of the examination. The oral examination committee will consist of the student's 595 advisor and two other members of the graduate faculty.

During the oral examination, the student should be prepared to discuss their research, highlighting the significance of the study, relevant literature on which the study was based, the methodology used and the overall findings and conclusions reached. Students are expected to be able to articulate, clarify, justify and defend their research. Students should also be prepared to answer other questions reflecting general knowledge that they are expected to have mastered at the graduate level in the discipline of political science. Questions relevant substantive areas the student has studied might be asked by the thesis committee.

On the basis of the student's overall work and performance during the oral examination, the committee will render one of the following decisions:

1. **Pass:** This outcome signifies that the student has demonstrated competence in all areas to the extent that awarding the Master's Degree is recommended.
2. **Fail:** This may result in the student being dropped from the Master's degree program.

A. Grading

The 595 project is graded like any other course taken in your graduate program. That is, you will receive a letter grade upon completion of the project. If necessary, and with the approval of your 595 advisor, you may take one additional semester to complete the non-thesis research. A grade of "X" will be given. This particular grade provides the student with one additional semester to complete all course requirements, but failure to do so results in an automatic grade of "F" on the transcript.

Master of Arts

- A. Language:** Students wanting to earn the Master of Arts must demonstrate language proficiency. This can be accomplished with 12 consecutive undergraduate hours of a foreign language with a grade of C or higher taken at the undergraduate level.

Master of Science

- A. Course options:** Students wanting to earn the Master of Science must demonstrate analytical, statistical, mathematical, competencies through any combination of nine hours (three courses) from the courses listed below. If the student has these courses in their undergraduate transcripts, they will count toward the M.S.
- ECON 309 Forecasting
 - ECON 331 Intermediate Macroeconomics
 - ECON 332 Intermediate Microeconomics
 - BA 475 Statistics for Decision Making

- MATH 401 Introduction to Mathematical Statistics
- MATH 436 Introduction to Analysis
- MATH 453 Essentials of Statistics
- PSCI 347 Introduction to Research Methods
- PSCI 348 Applied Data Analysis for Political Science
- SOC 331 Introduction to Social Research

M.S. in Political Science with History Track (18/18 Program)

This is a non-thesis option

Students enrolled in the M.S. in Political Science with History Track are required to take 18 hours in Political Science and 18 hours in History. Students must complete their PSCI 595 paper in Political Science.

A. Political Science (18 SCH)

Methods (6 SCH, both of the following courses):

- PSCI 512 Qualitative Research Methods
- PSCI 540 Applied Data Analysis for Political Science

American Politics (9 SCH, 3 courses) from the following:

- PSCI 508 Foreign Policy
- PSCI 509 Proseminar in American Government and Politics
- PSCI 510 Seminar in American Political Behavior
- PSCI 511 Seminar in American Political Institutions
- PSCI 541 Contemporary Issues in American Public Policy

And 3 SCH:

- PSCI 595 (see information about completing this in this handbook [6].)

B. History (18 SCH)

Methods (6 SCH, both of the following courses)

- HIST 590 Historiography and Historical Theory
- HIST 591 Historical Research and Writing Methods

12 SCH of Graduate level history courses

Comprehensive Oral Examination: Students in the dual track program are required to pass an oral examination over their course work in the discipline. It is advisable that you schedule this exam in the semester prior to graduation and the completion of your 595 paper. This exam is graded Pass/Fail. No student will be allowed to take this exam twice. Students should work with their PSCI 595 advisor to arrange both the exam committee and the exam.

Conclusion

As noted at the outset, this handbook is intended to help the graduate student in Political Science to navigate the program, but it does not cover every possible contingency. If the student has any questions or is unclear about what they are doing or need to do, please consult the graduate advisor.

