POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJOR

Students must also complete the Undergraduate Registration Requirement (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/requirements-policies/undergraduate-registration-requirement/) and the degree requirements of their home school.

NOTE: This Catalog describes Weinberg College BA requirements that pertain to students who matriculated at Northwestern after spring quarter 2023. Refer to the Archives (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/archives/) if you are following BA requirements described in the 2018-2019 through 2022-2023 editions.

The major in political science provides an opportunity for students to learn about politics in a variety of realms and settings. Students are encouraged to begin the major with 200-level courses, which provide a general introduction to subfields of political science, as well as important background for 300-level courses. Majors should choose 200-level courses from at least two subfields: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory.

While some students choose courses from within one or two subfields, most take a wide variety across different areas. Concentrations are not required; however, majors may consult with department advisers to design programs of study. For instance, students might design concentrations around themes such as race, ethnicity, and politics; global transformation; representation and law; social and economic inequalities; conflict and national security; and citizenship studies.

Students planning to major in political science are advised to complete the 200-level gateway courses and at least one 300-level course in political science by the end of sophomore year. Majors should complete their methodology requirement by the end of junior year and before taking the POLI_SCI 395-0 Political Research Seminar. Students should plan to take POLI_SCI 395-0 in junior or senior year. Those who plan to pursue honors should take POLI_SCI 395-0 in junior year.

Course   Title
Major Requirements (12 units)
3 gateway courses chosen from:
  POLI_SCI 201-0 Introduction to Political Theory
  POLI_SCI 220-0 American Government and Politics
  POLI_SCI 230-0 Introduction to Law in the Political Arena
  POLI_SCI 240-0 Introduction to International Relations
  POLI_SCI 250-0 Introduction to Comparative Politics
1 methodology course in political science chosen from:
  POLI_SCI 210-0 Introduction to Empirical Methods in Political Science
  POLI_SCI 211-0 Introduction to Interpretive Methods in Political Science
  POLI_SCI 212-0 Evaluating Evidence
  POLI_SCI 310-0 Methods of Political Inference
  POLI_SCI 312-0 Statistical Research Methods
1 Political Research Seminar
  POLI_SCI 395-0 Political Research Seminar
7 additional 300-level courses in political science

1 Restrictions on eligible credits and substitutions include the following:

  • At most one unit of Chicago Field Studies (chosen from CFS 391-0, CFS 394-0, or CFS 397-0) may substitute for one course.
  • At most two units of POLI_SCI 399-0 may count toward the 300-level requirement for the major.
  • Only one additional POLI_SCI 395-0 credit beyond the one credit required may count towards the 300-level requirement for the major.
  • Honors thesis seminars POLI_SCI 398-1 and POLI_SCI 398-2 do not count toward the major.

Notes about substitutions and restrictions:

  • A maximum of two courses per quarter from study abroad may count toward the Political Science major. More courses may be accepted toward the major for longer study abroad programs.
  • Courses taken P/N cannot be counted toward the major (this is a Weinberg College rule; for details see Grade Requirements (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext)).
  • Receiving a 5 on an AP exam (either American Government or Comparative Politics) can place students out of the equivalent 200-level course, but test credit awarded cannot be substituted for the 12 courses required to complete the major. Thus, instead of taking POLI_SCI 220-0 or POLI_SCI 250-0, the student must take an additional 300-level course. Students receiving 5’s on the AP exams in both American Government and Comparative Politics can place out of both equivalent 200-level courses and thus need to take two additional 300-level courses. Students wishing to use their AP credit in this fashion must contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies and place the request.
  • For students completing the MMSS major, MATH 385-0 fulfills the POLI_SCI methodology requirement, and MMSS 311-2 double-counts as a 300-level political science course (for triple major limitations see MMSS Adjunct Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/mathematical-methods-social-sciences/mmss-adjunct-major/)).

Honors in Political Science

Majors (including students studying abroad) with strong academic records and an interest in pursuing honors should submit an application to the honors program in the spring quarter of their junior year. Interested students should complete at least seven of the courses required for the major, including the methodology and research seminar requirements, before senior year. Accepted students enroll in the two-quarter seminar POLI_SCI 398-1 & POLI_SCI 398-2, which provides guidance in writing a senior thesis. These courses do not count toward the major. Students interested in pursuing honors in more than one major are encouraged to pursue interdisciplinary honors.

Students whose theses and grades meet department criteria are recommended to the college for graduation with honors. For more information see Honors in the Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#academicoptionstext).

Courses

American Politics Courses

These courses examine political behavior, power, and politics in American society and in the institutions of US government at the national, state, and local levels.
Comparative Politics Courses

Some of these courses concentrate on understanding the politics of specific national systems, while others focus on certain types of political phenomena and make cross-national comparisons.

International Relations Courses

This field includes the study of major actors and arenas in the world scene, global processes through which cooperation and conflict are managed in the international system, and ways in which change occurs and resources become allocated in the global system.

Political Theory Courses

These courses examine the ideas that inform the thinking of today’s citizens, representatives, and political scientists. They are organized by historical periods and conceptual similarity.

Research Methodology Courses

Courses in this field help students engage in the research they may encounter in their 300 level courses and help prepare students to conduct original research on the causes and consequences of political phenomena. The methodological techniques are often transferable to research problems in government and business.
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<th>Course Code</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>POLI_SCI 395-0</td>
<td>Political Research Seminar</td>
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<tr>
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<td>&amp; POLI_SCI 398-2</td>
<td>and Senior Thesis Seminar</td>
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<td>POLI_SCI 399-0</td>
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