

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
GRADUATE STUDIES MANUAL**

**I. Program**

- A. The Department of Political Science offers three programs of graduate study:
  - 1. An Option I or Option III M.A. which consist of political science training in a number of fields of political science. Students selecting either of these options are assumed to be on a Ph.D. track and may apply for doctoral training at Nebraska or some other university. Option I requires a thesis; Option III requires more course work. Option III is rarely granted.
  - 2. An Option II M.A. which consists of training in political science and research skills. This is a terminal degree; no thesis is required.
  - 3. A Ph.D. program.
  
- B. In addition, the department participates with other academic units in offering courses leading to:
  - 1. A Master's of Public Administration.
  - 2. A joint Law and Master's degree in Political Science.
  - 3. A Ph.D in Political science with a specialization in Media

**II. Areas of Specialization.** Graduate work in Political Science is offered in the following areas of specialization and subfields:

- A. American Government
- B. Biology and Politics
- C. Comparative Politics
- D. International Relations
- E. Public Policy
- F. Public Administration (In cooperation with the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Work in this subfield is likely to require taking courses on the UNO campus.)

**III. Core Seminars**

- A. Core seminars provide an introduction to the literature in the five areas of specialization and involve extensive reading.

- B. The following core seminars are offered and incorporate elements of the subfields:
1. American Government
  2. Biology and Politics
  3. Comparative Politics
  4. International Relations
  5. Public Policy
  6. Political Theory
- C. The focus of the core seminar in each area is designed by the faculty in the area (defined as the area committee).
- D. Each core seminar is taught by one instructor at any given time. However, collaboration and consultation among faculty in the area may be a part of the seminar.
- E. The core seminars are offered according to the following schedule (check with the departmental office for offerings during current and following year):
1. Every third semester – American Government, International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Public Policy.
  2. Every fourth semester – Political Theory.

**IV. Degree Requirements** (also see requirements listed in the general and departmental portions of the Graduate Studies Bulletin)

- A. M.A./Option I (with thesis) – 30 credit hours of course work, plus 6 hours for thesis.
1. Course Requirements
    - a. It is required that students take the following courses their first year:
      1. POLS 800 (Research Methods) with a grade of B or better
      2. POLS 801 (Scope and Methods) with a grade of B or better.
    - b. The following course requirements must be satisfied in a student's first three semesters of graduate studies or as soon thereafter as feasible.
      1. Three core seminars with a grade of B or better from among the following:
        - American Government
        - Biology and Politics
        - Comparative Politics
        - Political Theory
        - International Relations
        - Public Policy
    - c. Not more than three (3) graduate credits in tutorials in Political Science (\*891 Individual Readings, or 991 Minor Research Problems) shall count towards the degree.

2. Passing comprehensive examinations in two areas of specialization.
  3. Preparation of an acceptable thesis (6 credit hours).
  4. No 400/800 level courses in political science shall count toward the degree.
  5. Completion of two research seminars (one from each area in which the student takes comprehensive examinations)
- B. M.A./Option II (terminal degree, without thesis) – 36 credit hours including one or two minors of 9 hours each.
1. Course Requirements
    - a. It is required that students take the following courses their first year:
      1. POLS 800 (Research Methods) with a grade of B or better
      2. POLS 801 (Scope and Methods) with a grade of B or better.
    - b. The following course requirements must be satisfied in a student's first three semesters of graduate studies or as soon thereafter as feasible.
      1. The core seminar in American Government with a grade of B or better—why is this?.
      2. One other core seminar with a grade of B or better.
    - c. Not more than three (3) graduate credits in tutorials in Political Science (\*891 Individual Readings, or 991 Minor Research Problems) shall count toward the degree.
  2. Passing comprehensive examinations in two areas of specialization.
  3. No 400/800 level courses in political science shall count toward the degree.
  4. Completion of two research seminars (one from each area in which the student takes comprehensive examinations)
- C. M.A. Option III (non-thesis with special preparation for work towards the Ph.D.) – 36 credit hours
1. This option may be chosen only with the approval of the Graduate Committee upon recommendation of the student's advisor. The Graduate Committee, in addition to usually awarding Option III to those entering the graduate program with another M.A. involving a thesis, shall consider the possibility of awarding Option III to others when there is sufficient evidence of excellent progress in the program combined with extraordinary research and writing skills demonstrating ability comparable to that required for a thesis.
  2. Course requirement are the same as Option 1.
  3. Not more than three (3) graduate credits in tutorials in Political Science (\*891 Individual Readings, or 991 Minor Research Problems) shall count toward the degree.
  4. Passing comprehensive examinations in two areas of specialization.
  5. No 400/800 level courses in political science shall count toward the degree.

#### D. Ph.D.

1. A Bachelor's degree in political science (or closely related field).
2. A minimum of 90 credit hours, with no more than 21 credits for dissertation research.
3. Course Requirements – The requirements listed under IV.A.2. (see item IV.D.6. and section VI. below). Substitutions not permitted without the permission of the Graduate Committee.
4. Not more than a total of three (3) graduate credits in tutorials in Political Science (\*891 Individual Readings, 991 Minor Research Problems) taken at this university, including those taken at the M.A. level, shall count towards the degree.
5. Passing comprehensive examinations in two areas of specialization
6. Passing POLS 901 in which students will prepare and defend a dissertation prospectus immediately following the semester they pass their comprehensive examinations.
7. No 400/800 level courses in political science shall count toward the degree.
8. A student with a Master's degree from another institution may pass a proficiency examination in or substitute courses taken for any core seminar, POLS 800 (Research Methods) and POLS 801 (Scope and Methods). Proficiency examinations and substitutions shall require the approval of faculty responsible for the course and should be taken as soon as possible, preferably in the student's first year.
9. Students working toward the Ph.D. can apply no more than six (6) hours of work beyond a Master's degree completed at a non-Ph.D. granting academic unit/ department to the Ph.D. This requirement does not apply to courses taken to satisfy the tool requirement.
10. The Department may require candidates for the Ph.D. to teach undergraduate courses during their period of residency.

**V. Procedures Relating to Dissertation Prospectus.** In the semester immediately following the successful completion of comprehensive examinations (or when next offered), a student shall enroll and successfully complete POLS 901 in which the student will write and defend a dissertation prospectus. Among other things, the prospectus shall identify the research question and hypotheses, the topic's relevance, how it is addressed in the literature, and the methodology to be employed. Evaluation shall be based on the clarity and thoroughness of the written and oral defense, and the potential of the dissertation to make a contribution to the field. Failure to complete the dissertation prospectus in a timely manner will lead to a referral to the Graduate Committee and the student will be placed on academic probation. Continued delay of dissertation prospectus completion will result in termination of the student's program of study.

#### **VI. Content and Procedures Relating to Comprehensive Examinations**

##### A. Content

1. Master's Comprehensive Examinations. Students shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining committees thorough knowledge of the two areas of specialization in which they are examined and the ability to develop cogent and coherent arguments. Core seminars are the starting point in preparation for comprehensive examinations. Comprehensive examinations shall not, however, be limited to the content of core seminars. Students should inquire with faculty in the respective fields and who write the examinations regarding the content to be covered in comprehensive examinations.
  2. Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations. Students shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining committees thorough knowledge of the two areas of specialization in which they are examined, the ability to use knowledge to generate and evaluate research ideas in these areas, and their ability to think critically and analytically. Comprehensive examinations in each area of specialization shall consist of two parts: 1 ) A general component which covers the entire area of specialization, and 2) A specialized component which covers a subfield within the area or content specified by the examining committee in areas where there are no subfields. Criteria of evaluation shall include appropriateness, comprehensiveness, and originality. Core seminars are the starting point in preparation for comprehensive examinations. Comprehensive examinations shall not, however, be limited to the content of core seminars. Students should inquire with faculty in the respective fields and who write examinations regarding the content to be covered in the comprehensive examinations.
- B. Master's and Ph.D comprehensive examinations shall each be open-book, take-home examinations 9 hours in length that are administered on two days (one for each subfield) during a two week examination period.
- C. Examining Committees. When a student is entitled to take comprehensive examinations, the student's advisor or supervisory committee chairperson shall so indicate to the chairperson of the Graduate Committee. The Graduate Chair shall appoint a committee of at least two examiners for each area of specialization in which the student is to be examined. The examining committee shall determine the content of the examination, and each member of the committee shall evaluate the examination as stipulated in Section VI.A. Each member's evaluation shall be communicated in writing to the Graduate Chair. In cases of disagreement, the evaluation of the majority shall prevail. The group of examiners shall be made known to the student well in advance of his/her exams to assist the student's preparation.
- D. Grading Examinations. Students will receive one of four grades on their comprehensive exams.
- fail
  - pass at the MA level (fail to quality to advance in the program)
  - qualify for advancement to go into or continue in the PhD program

- qualify for advancement with distinction. Written comments from each member of the examining committee covering strengths and weaknesses of the examination shall be provided each student.
- E. Oral Examination. A student may be required to take an oral examination if recommended by the examining committee and approved by the Graduate Committee. The examining committee shall submit its recommendation to the Graduate Committee in writing along with the reason for the recommendation. Generally, an oral exam will be approved only when it can help clarify a student's performance on the written examination. If approved by the Graduate Committee, the examining committee shall set the time and place for and conduct the oral examination. The grade for the oral examination shall be Pass or No Pass and communicated in writing to the Graduate Chair.
- F. Retaking a Failed or "Pass at the MA level" Comprehensive Exam. Permission to re-take a comprehensive examination must be granted by the Graduate Committee. Retakes shall occur no later than one year after the failed examination.
- G. Time Schedule for Comprehensive Examinations
1. Comprehensive examinations are administered during approximately the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> weeks of Fall semester, and the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> weeks of Spring semester.
  2. Comprehensive examinations may not be taken prior to the semester in which program requirements are completed. Ph.D. students must complete all course requirements, excluding the research tool and POLS 901, before comprehensive examinations.
  3. All courses, excluding thesis credit, dissertation credit, and research tool, in which a student has received an incomplete must be completed and graded by July 1 in order to take comprehensive examinations in the Fall, and by February 1 in order to take comprehensive examinations in the Spring.
  4. Students who formally indicate their intention to take comprehensive examinations and withdraw after July 1 for the fall examinations and after February 1 for the Spring examinations, must petition the Graduate Committee for permission to withdraw. Withdrawing after the above dates without permission of the Graduate Committee will be treated as a failing grade on comprehensive examinations.
- H. Re-certification. In cases where a student does not finish the M.A. thesis within ten months of taking comprehensive examinations, a letter attesting to the student's currency and competence in the field from the thesis advisor shall be submitted to Graduate Studies with the application to graduate. In cases where a student does not finish the Ph.D. dissertation within three years of taking comprehensive examinations, a letter attesting to the student's currency and competence in the field from the chair of the supervisory committee shall be submitted to Graduate Studies with the application to graduate.

## **VII. The Research Tool Requirement for the Ph.D.**

- A. Each student will complete the research tool requirement consisting of nine hours of course work which shall count as part of the 90 credit hour requirement for the Ph.D. Political Science 800 and 801 may not be used toward this requirement.
- B. The supervisory committee will establish, with the approval of the Graduate Committee, tools appropriate to the research interests of the student. Such tools include but are not limited to computer science, epistemology, foreign language, game theory, logic, mathematics, research design, research methods, and statistics.
- C. Six of the nine hours must be completed in either quantitative research methods or epistemology as defined by the supervisory committee and approved by the Graduate Committee.
- D. Six hours may be waived by demonstrating proficiency in an area. Proficiency may be established by previous course work, examination, or both. Specific proficiency standards will be recommended by the supervisory committee and approved by the Graduate Committee.
- E. Students submitting foreign language as a research tool shall establish proficiency by passing an examination. Where language proficiency cannot be demonstrated by such an examination, the supervisory committee will recommend and the Graduate Committee will approve other means for establishing proficiency.
- F. A collateral field can substitute for six hours of the research tool requirement. The field must bear a strong relationship to the student's research interest, but not overlap major, minor or supporting courses. Proficiency is established by completing at least 15 semester hours of course work in a single department while enrolled in the graduate program.
- G. Courses submitted for the tool requirement must be completed with a grade of C or better.
- H. The research tool requirement must be completed by the end of the semester in which Ph.D. comprehensive examinations are taken.
- I. If research tool proficiency has been established more than three years prior to the date of comprehensive examinations, proficiency must be re-established to the satisfaction of the supervisory committee and Graduate Committee before comprehensive examinations are taken.

**VIII. Selection of Advisor for Master's Program.** Each student in the Master's program officially selects his or her advisor at the time the Memorandum of Courses form is filed with the Graduate Chair and Graduate Studies (viz., before half the program is completed). The student should consult with the faculty in the field of the thesis or

concentration before making this decision. Students pursuing the Option II Master's will have as their advisor the chairperson of the Graduate Committee.

**IX. Annual Review of All Graduate Students.** During the spring semester a review of all graduate students is conducted by the faculty. This review involves recommendations concerning the continuation of students in various degree programs and assistantships. The evaluation is compiled and recorded by the chairperson of the Graduate Committee. Recommendations concerning assistantships are forwarded to the chairperson of the department.

**X. Deficiency Requirements.** As a general rule, applicants to degree programs who have a non-political science undergraduate background will be required to take up to nine (9) credit hours of 400/800 level course work in the department on a provisional basis before a final determination will be made on acceptance to full standing in a specific degree program. Such work will not count in the degree program.

**XI. Funding and Evaluation of Graduate Students.**

A. The Department makes funding decisions on a yearly basis and can only commit to one year of funding at a time. Future funding depends on satisfactory performance in course work, satisfactory performance as a GA/TA, timely progress toward degree, and availability of funds. Future funding is also affected by the number of years a student has already received funding from the Department: funded students who enter the MA program can expect funding for no more than two years; funded students who enter the Ph.D. program with an MA degree from outside of the Department can expect funding for no more than four years; funded students who both enter the MA program and subsequently pursue a Ph.D. in the Department can expect funding for no more than a total of five years. A fellowship awarded by an agent other than the Department shall not count toward the above limits, except that no student shall receive funding from the Department if he or she has already had six years of funding from any source.

B. In funding decisions, the Graduate Committee shall evaluate new students based on their undergraduate and, if appropriate, graduate GPA, letters of recommendation, GRE scores, departmental needs, and other materials and criteria deemed relevant. For students currently in the program, the Graduate Committee shall invite all faculty to report on the performance and progress of students. The basis of the evaluation shall include performance as a GA/TA, performance in course work, number of outstanding incompletes, progress on thesis or dissertation, and other materials and criteria deemed relevant. Students who are denied funding shall receive an evaluation in writing outlining how they can improve their prospects for funding in the future.

**XI. Inactive File.** Students who have not enrolled for two successive semesters shall be informed in writing that they have been placed in the inactive file. Such students shall not be counted as part of the graduate program. Students who wish to return to active status

may request a change of status from the Graduate Committee. The request shall be in writing and include a timetable for the student's anticipated completion of the program.

## **XII. Miscellaneous**

- A. Each year the Department, if it deems warranted, will award an Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award and a Best Graduate Paper Award. A cash award will go to the award winners.
- B. Unclassified graduate students can take up to 6 credit hours of graduate-level political science courses. By the end of that time, unclassified students are expected to complete their applications and be evaluated for admission in the regular process. Graduate faculty shall inform the chairperson of the Graduate Committee of unclassified students in their classes at the start of each term.
- C. Graduate students presenting conference papers and desiring Department support shall submit a form available from the chairperson of the Graduate Committee. Support shall be awarded on a competitive basis. Students who wish to attend the ICPSR summer methods program may also apply to the Department for funds. Students who receive Department funding shall present their paper to the Department or in the case of ICPSR make a presentation to the Department on material covered in the program. It will be the responsibility of the graduate representatives to make arrangements for these presentations.
- D. The chairperson of the Graduate Committee shall conduct an orientation for new graduate students in the fall of each academic year. At the orientation, each student shall be presented with materials deemed appropriate. The Graduate Chair shall review the curriculum, core seminars, and research seminars; program requirements for the MA and Ph.D. degrees; the purpose and procedures of comprehensive examinations and how to prepare for them; sources of funding for graduate students available through the Department and University and the criteria used in allocating Department and University funds; procedures for obtaining an advisor and when this decision should be made; the role of advisor, and for Ph.D. candidates, supervisory committee; the role of Graduate Chair and Graduate Committee; services and resources available at UNL and through the Department such as computer facilities and funding for travel to professional meetings. The Graduate Chair may invite other faculty to share their thoughts on teaching, research, the profession, and other points of interest to new students.
- E. All students who teach their own courses or lead recitation sections in the department are required to take POLS 802 (Professional Development), which includes a component on teaching political science.

## **ADDITIONAL POLICIES**

**4/13/83** There will be no spring meeting to evaluate grad students. Instead, students will be evaluated by circulated memo, so as to help with funding decisions. Also, a letter will be sent to Ph.D. students informing them of their standing. [This latter has apparently been interpreted now to mean their standing in relation to funding, not their standing in general.]

**11/16/83** Alumni Funds will be used for: thesis [and dissertation?] research, \$50 cash award for best graduate paper; inter alla. [see below.]

**1/21/87** The T.A. teaching load will be 1:1.

**4/20/88** The Grad Chair will serve on the Department ExCom in place of the Undergrad Chair. Money from the sale of the Kechel home will be used to fund grad students at ICPSR. The Department shall award \$100 to the outstanding T.A. for the year with the same person nominated for the college outstanding T.A.

**9/25/91** Unclassified grad students can take up to 6 hours of graduate-level political science courses. By the end of that time, unclassified students are expected to complete their applications and be evaluated for admission in the regular process. Grad faculty shall inform the Grad Chair of unclassified students in their classes at the start of each term.

**2/14/95** Amended from (10/9/91). Grad Students presenting conference papers and desiring Department support shall submit a form available from the Graduate Chair to the Graduate Committee as indicated on the form. Support shall be awarded on a competitive basis.

**2/14/95** All students who wish to pursue the Ph.D. in Political Science, including those with an MA in another field, must complete the MA in Political Science.

**3/06/96** The Graduate Chair shall conduct an orientation for new graduate students in the fall of each academic year. At the orientation, each student shall be presented with a copy of the Graduate Studies Manual, Reading Lists for each Area of Specialization, and other materials deemed appropriate. The Graduate Chair shall review the curriculum, 400/800 courses, core seminars, and research seminars; program requirements for the MA and Ph.D. degrees; the purpose and procedures of comprehensive examinations and how to prepare for them; sources of funding for graduate students available through the Department and University and the criteria used in allocating Department and University funds; procedures for obtaining an advisor and when this decision should be made; the role of advisor, and for Ph.D. candidates, supervisory committee; the role of Graduate Chair and Graduate Committee; services and resources available at UNL and through the Department such as computer facilities and funding for travel to professional meetings. The Graduate Chair may invite other faculty to share their thoughts on teaching, research, the profession, and other points of interest to new students.

**10/16/96** Students taking comprehensive examinations in Spring 1998 and later will be required to do a dissertation prospectus. (See Article V.)

**10/16/96** Master's Reading Lists are discontinued.

**11/96** Students presenting papers at professional meetings or attending ICPSR who are funded by the Department shall present their paper to the Department or in the case of ICPSR make a presentation to the Department on material covered in the program. It will be the responsibility of the graduate representatives to make arrangements for these presentations.

**5/00** The Department will offer a new course “Teaching Political Science” offered every 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> semester and all TAs are required to take it.

**Two important Graduate Studies Rules:**

1. All forms shall be typed.
2. The memorandum of courses form (program of study) must be filed with the Graduate College prior to completion of 50% of the total credit hours required for a degree.