



the **u**niversity of south dakota.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

PhD Program Handbook

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I. Program Overview

The curriculum of the PhD program in Political Science is designed to strengthen the knowledge and research competencies of its candidates. Our goal is to advance understanding and explanation in the fields of public administration, public policy and American political institutions. This will enhance professional practice in the state and region through the placement of well-trained practitioners and academics.

The delivery of the Political Science PhD is designed to accommodate non-traditional students maintaining full-time employment, as well as traditional students who make doctoral studies their primary professional focus. All PhD courses adopt a blended face-to-face and distance delivery method to insure the greatest possible flexibility and student/faculty collaboration. Courses will be held throughout the state and additional travel to professional conferences is encouraged.

The PhD in Political Science is a 60 credit doctoral degree program, including 18 credits of independent thesis hours. The Department expects all PhD students to take two courses in their first semester of study. These classes are POLS 801: History of Knowledge and POLS 802: Graduate Research Methods. Taking these classes together is intended to promote the socialization of PhD candidates to the enterprise of doctoral work and to initiate a professional networking experience for students. Full time students will take one additional course, amounting to nine credits total in the first semester. Part-time students may take a few as three credits in following semesters to maintain engagement in the program and progress toward completion of the degree.

The PhD program offers three fields of specialization:

- Public Administration
- Public Policy
- American Political Institutions

Students must complete a comprehensive examination in two of these three specialization fields after 42 hours of course work. Immediately after the comprehensive examination, students must design and then execute a PhD dissertation project. The program concludes with the successful defense of a student's dissertation, which is overseen by a committee of PhD faculty.

PhD candidates will be socialized to think of the empirical and normative implications of the material they face in their work in public advocacy, policy and administrative contexts. Students will be trained to frame research questions in conceptual terms, to identify and apply relevant theories in applicable disciplines, and to operational employing appropriate analytical

techniques. This capacity will be developed through coursework, preparation of grant requests to appropriate federal, state or private funding agencies, participation in professional conferences and through the design and execution of a publication-quality dissertation.

II. Program Admissions

Ph.D. Applicants will be required to demonstrate their likelihood of success and productivity in the program to the Department's Graduate Committee. The Committee will consider the following when making admissions and assistantship awards decisions:

- Prior graduate education.
- Relevant work experience.
- Performance on the Graduate Record Examinations General Exam (GRE).
- Prior undergraduate record.

Along with admissions decisions, the Graduate Committee also uses this information to consider full-time students for graduate assistantships. Graduate assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis and are funded at a level consistent with other leading research universities throughout the region. To be considered for an assistantship, prospective Ph.D. students must have their full application materials submitted to the Department before January 15th.

Competitive candidates for the Ph.D. program will have previous undergraduate GPA of greater than 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. If prior graduate work was complete, competitive Ph.D. candidates will have graduate GPA of greater than 3.5 on 4.0 scale. The Department expects competitive applicants to the Ph.D. program to have GRE scores greater than 500 on both the verbal and quantitative sections of the test (>1000 total in these two sections).

Applicants holding a baccalaureate degree from an accredited university or college are eligible to seek admission to a graduate program at the University of South Dakota. Applications are available through the Department of Political Science website or the University's Graduate School. Additional information about graduate studies at the U can be found by visiting the Graduate School web site.

III. Degree Requirements

The Ph.D. program curriculum is designed to socialize students to the specific work, ethics and professional responsibilities in their areas of specialization. Students are required to engage in studies related to the history of knowledge and research methods appropriate to the fields of political science, public policy, and public administration. This will ensure that they are prepared with the requisite knowledge to view social and political phenomena in a scholarly manner once their doctorate is completed.

| Doctoral Competencies | Required Course(s) |
|---|---|
| Scope and Methods 3 Credit Hours | POLS 801 – History of Knowledge (Political Science and Public Administration) |
| Research, Analysis, and Synthesis 9 Credit Hours | POLS 802 – Advanced Issues of Research Methodology POLS 803 - Quantitative II POLS 804 - Qualitative |
| Core Knowledge 9 Credit Hours | POLS 810 – American Political Institutions POLS 811 – Public Policy Process and Evaluation POLS 812 – Public Administration Core Seminar |
| Organizations and Management 6 Credit Hours | POLS 724 – Organization and Management POLS 824 – Ethics and Political Thought |
| Electives (related to Specialization) 15 Credit Hours | Five courses approved in the Study Plan |
| Dissertation Research and Writing 18 Credit Hours | POLS 880 - Prospectus Prep Class POLS 898 - Dissertation Research |
| Total Credit Hours | 60 Credit Hours |

The above table outlines the required courses in scope and methods (POLS 801), as well as research, analysis and synthesis competencies (POLS 802, 803, and 804). Students will be required to complete these courses at the beginning of their doctoral studies, moving into the

more field-specific training in the core seminars once they have sufficient understanding of these essential competencies.

A. First Year Curriculum, Semester One

All doctoral students in the department are required to take POLS 801: History of Knowledge and POLS 802: Graduate Research Methods.

- Both courses (POLS 801 and 802) are delivered as hybrid courses, with both face-to-face and online instruction.
- Both courses have four face-to-face sessions during the course of a regular 15 week semester. Face-to-face sessions will be supplemented by regular online course requirements, discussions and assignments. Students should contact their instructor with any questions about course content, but should contact the USD Technology Helpdesk (605-677-5028) for technical questions including access to the D2L online learning environment and computer connectivity concerns.

Students engaged in full-time PhD work will be expected to also take one 3 credit core seminar during their first semester (e.g. POLS 810, 811, or 812). Thus, the full-time Ph.D. candidate will take 9 credits in their first semester.

B. Additional Semesters

In the second semester of the program, and all semesters beyond the first, part-time students may take a minimum of 3 credits to stay active in the program. Thus, a part-time student might only take one class in their second semester. Full-time students will take at least 9 credits (three classes), as in all semesters.

Courses in the second semester and beyond will be delivered in the same hybrid fashion described above, although, in some semesters, students may be offered seminars that meet in half-semester rotations. While the normal PhD seminar will be offered with four face-to-face sessions and online components over the course of a 16 week semester, half-semester classes will begin and end in 8 weeks. Half-semester seminars will be offered in three intensive sessions that include a Friday afternoon and all day Saturday face-to-face meeting, supported by additional on-line course work and independent learning expectations.

PhD students should concentrate on completing the three core seminars as soon as possible, though it is expected that this may take three or four semesters to do. In all semesters beyond the first, however, additional graduate seminars should be pursued (beyond the core seminars) should be pursued to fill in a semester's coursework. These seminars will be offered by the

political science department in each of the three specialization areas. There will also be courses in other department's at the University of South Dakota that may be of interest to PhD students in this program. Examples of these courses include additional methods and substantive courses in Education Psychology, Psychology and Economics.

The selection of courses outside of Political Science should be discussed with the Director of Graduate Studies. Students should present a brief justification of how those classes fit with their program of study.

C. Completion of Coursework

Upon completion of all 42 course credits, students will be required to pass a comprehensive examination, demonstrating their mastery of core material and specialized knowledge in their chosen subfields. After the comprehensive examination, students must complete 18 credits of thesis (or dissertation) hours, leading up to the defense of their dissertation and completion of the program.

Further, students will be expected to disseminate their research and findings through presentations at national or regional research conferences. Students will be strongly encouraged to publish at least some of the research papers they produce as graduate students, as well as contribute to the publication of collaborations with faculty and other students in the program.

IV. Transfer Credits

A student may request to transfer a limited number of well-matched credits from accredited graduate programs in similar fields of study. Candidates may be able to transfer up to nine credits. However each individual request must be approved by the Graduate Director. If the request to transfer credits is to replace a required core PhD course, the instructor of the course those credits are intended to replace must also approve the transfer.

If the transfer credits are for elective courses within specific specializations, there must be a close fit of that course to the student's specific program of study. The fit of requested transfer courses shall be considered in the context of the student's dissertation or more general research interests.

Beyond the substantive fit of transfer course requests, transfer credits must be from a

regionally accredited institution of higher education at the graduate level taken fewer than seven (7) years prior to admission into the Ph.D. program.

Transfer requests made to the Director of Graduate studies must be accompanied by an official transcript (if one is not on file with the University) and should be accompanied by both the catalog description and course syllabus for the course the student is petitioning to transfer. The student must be in good standing in the institution from which the credit is being transferred and the grade for the petitioned course must be the equivalent of “B” or better.

The Director of Graduate Studies must recommend by letter to the Dean of the Graduate School, and by signature on the student’s Program of Study, that such credit is to be used on the student’s Program of Study. The student initiates this request for transfer by completing a transfer request form and submitting it, along with a cover letter, to the Director of Graduate Studies.

The transfer request form can be found online at <http://www.usd.edu/registrar/OnlineForms/TransferEquivRequestForm.pdf> (8/23/06).

V. PhD Advisory Committee

Prior to the completion of coursework, each PhD candidate must develop an advisory committee to oversee that student’s coursework completion and dissertation topic selection. Once a student successfully completes the PhD comprehensive examination, the advisory committee becomes the main resource for students and shall be responsible to oversee the student’s progress through the 18 thesis credits.

This all-but-dissertation stage, or ABD as it is commonly called, is focused on the researching and writing of a publishable-quality dissertation project. ABD students should provide regular updates to their advisory committee chair. Updates should be, at minimum, bi-monthly and should present detailed information on the progress of the student’s dissertation project.

The graduate committee shall be comprised of three-members. At least two members of this committee must be faculty from the Department of Political Science and also members of the Graduate Faculty at the University of South Dakota. The third member may be from another department or university in rare occasions. When at issue, the selection of outside faculty readers should be discussed thoroughly with the chair of a student’s PhD advisory committee.