

The Department of Political Science

Graduate Student Handbook
2008-2009



The University of Connecticut

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1947-2008

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

PURPOSE

This handbook intends to provide a convenient compendium of rules, guidelines, and useful information pertaining to the Ph.D./M.A. programs in political science at the University of Connecticut. Students should also consult with their advisers, the Graduate Director, other faculty, and their fellow students about courses, requirements, PLANS OF STUDY, and the like. Students are urged to learn both the departmental guidelines and university regulations as stipulated in the Graduate School Catalog. The Graduate School Web (www.grad.uconn.edu) and the Registrar Home Page (www.registrar.uconn.edu) also contain vital information. This handbook will serve as a reminder and checklist of the most pertinent information.

GUIDELINES, RULES, AND REQUIREMENTS

MASTERS DEGREE

As with most graduate programs, M.A. and Ph.D. students in political science must deal with a host of university and departmental regulations. In fact, our regulations are less complicated than those at most universities. SEE DEPARTMENTAL GUIDELINES for full details. We have two routes to earning an M.A. The most common requires **24** hours of coursework and the defense of two seminar-length papers before a three-person faculty advisory committee. The other route requires **15** hours of coursework, plus the successful defense of a nine-credit MA thesis (also before a three-person faculty advisory committee). The student's advisory committee will decide on the basis of the quality of the papers or thesis, in addition to the overall performance of the candidate in his or her program, whether (1) the Masters Degree will be awarded and (2) whether the student is accepted into the Ph.D. program in the department. All M.A. students must also take two of the following: POLS 5600 (393), 5605 (395) and 5610 (396) and received a grade of B or better. M.A. students may take courses with a broad or narrow focus, depending on their interests and goals. University rules permit students to take six credits of coursework outside specific departments in attaining an M.A. degree in a particular discipline. We adhere to this rule. Students should discuss their options and plans with their major adviser and advisory committee. Such discussions should take place early in the student's program. Students should also be aware that they **MUST FILE A PLAN OF STUDY** with the Graduate School and have it approved before they can schedule their M.A. defense.

Ph.D. DEGREE

The Ph.D. program involves two distinct stages. Doctoral students first prepare for a comprehensive written and oral general examination in two fields within political science. In order to take the general examination, students must fill out a form and obtain approval (signatures) from their committees, from the chairs of the two fields, and from the Graduate Director (see attachment). After passing this examination, they devote themselves to research and the writing of a dissertation. All doctoral students must prepare in two of the following areas: international relations, comparative politics, American politics, public law and political theory. Each field has a set of recommended courses and options for students choosing to be examined in these fields. These required and recommended courses are listed on the departmental Web site (www.polisci.uconn.edu). Only the field committee may waive a requirement or approve substitutes. General exams, it should be emphasized, cover the broad fields, not just courses taken.

All doctoral students are required to take POLS 5600 (393), POLS 5605 (395), POLS 5610 (396) and POLS 6610 (493). Ph.D. students must also take six hours of coursework in a “breadth area.” Only the departmental Graduate Committee can waive these requirements or approve substitutes. Doctoral students must demonstrate a competent reading knowledge of at least one foreign language, OR, upon recommendation of the advisory committee, take at least six hours of advanced coursework in a related discipline. Ph.D. students **MUST FILE A PLAN OF STUDY** with the Graduate School before they can take their general exams.

- Please note that doctoral candidates admitted to the program beginning in fall 1998 must also sign up for 15 hours of dissertation research before earning their degree; it is best to enroll for these credits (GRAD 6950 (495)) while students are teaching assistants and thus eligible for tuition waivers.
- Also be aware of the Graduate Schools’ residency requirement, which stipulates that all Ph.D. students must be full-time (9 hours, or 6 hours plus assistantship) for two consecutive semesters, or one semester and a contiguous 12-week summer period.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The bookcase in HRM 119 offers eloquent testimony to the accomplishments and professional standing of many of our alumni and alumna. Our job placements in the past few years have included positions at Baylor University, University of South Dakota, Umass/Dartmouth, Clark University, and University of Hartford, among others. (See the departmental website (www.polisci.uconn.edu) for a full listing of our Ph.D. graduates and where they are.

Because presentation of papers at professional meetings and publications in top journals are the best way to gain credentials in the academic marketplace, we greatly value and encourage research from our graduate students, many of whom present papers and publish even before they take general exams. Since 1998 the department gives monetary awards for Graduate Scholarly Publications and Presentations to graduate students in our department. The department and Graduate School also has modest funds available to defray student expenses in connection with travel to conferences. Graduate students are strongly encouraged to attend university and departmental colloquia as an essential part of their professional development.

Students should also note that the department awards several named fellowships to outstanding graduate students in specialized area. See the Graduate School Catalog for a list of these awards. Once Ph.D. students have passed their general exams and have a dissertation proposal accepted by the Graduate School, they are eligible to apply for the university doctoral dissertation fellowship of \$2,000, as well as \$500 for non-routine expenses. In addition, students researching their dissertations are encouraged to apply for outside financial assistance, and several political science students have won Fulbright, NEH, NSF, and other fellowships in national and international competitions. Merit-based financial aid in the form of assistantships and predoctoral fellowships are awarded by the department. Students must apply each year for such assistance.

GRADUATE TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Many graduate students are awarded assistantships and thus become TAs for the department. Less often, faculty members receive grants that include funds for research assistants. (See attached Faculty-Teaching Assistant Guidelines.) In order to maximize support for a larger graduate student pool, most of our grad assistantships are of the 10-hour variety, in that the student is expected to work approximately 10 hours per week or about 200 hours during the semester. These assistantships also include tuition waivers and generous medical benefits. TA duties often involve teaching discussion sections once a week for the large introductory lecture courses. Most TAs work with faculty by helping to grade, keeping attendance, and assisting with audio-visual, library, and other course-related matters. Most grad assistantships are awarded to those graduate students while they are taking their coursework. Veteran TAs occasionally have a chance to teach their own courses as a lecturer at Storrs or at the branches, sometimes during the summer. The department head will announce such opportunities via the departmental Web site (www.polisci.uconn.edu) or by email. Political science TAs are strongly encouraged to participate in teaching programs sponsored by the university's Institute for Teaching and Learning. All international teaching assistants must pass SPEAK and TEACH tests, administered by the university's ITAP program, before they can become classroom teachers.

COMMUNICATIONS

The department maintains an e-mail list for political science graduate students. All students should send their e-mail addresses (as well as phone numbers and home addresses) to Christine Luberto, the graduate coordinator, at christine.luberto@uconn.edu. Many general notices to graduate students will be sent by e-mail. Any changes in e-mail addresses need to be sent to Christine. Furthermore, graduate student notices and information will be posted on the department Web page (www.polisci.uconn.edu). The department head's MONDAY MORNING newsletter will also be posted weekly on the Web page. Such announcements will alert students to brown bag talks, visiting lecturers, births, deaths, alumni news, student stars, and other matters. Thus students should check the Web site frequently to keep abreast of departmental activities and requirements.

GRADUATE POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Graduate students in political science have their own organization, the purpose of which is to provide an organized forum for graduate students to discuss their mutual interests and concerns; to provide an official structure to represent and advocate their own interests; and to conduct activities and sponsor colloquia which promote the spirit of scholarship and which enhance the academic and social environment in which graduate students live, work, and study. Officers of the graduate student association help the Graduate Director in planning and running fall orientation. Graduate students often serve on departmental committees and on job searches. Political science graduate students have served as well on the university-wide Graduate Student Senate.

**GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS AND FACULTY ADVISORS
IN MASTERS AND DOCTORATE PROGRAMS, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

I. Advising and Counseling Procedures

A. Advisors and Committees

1. As soon as an applicant is admitted to the Graduate Program, the Director of Graduate Studies, taking into account student interests and the relative advising loads of members of the Graduate faculties, will assign an advisor to the student.
2. No later than one month prior to the end of the student's first semester of graduate work, the student shall either register this advisor as a permanent advisor, or shall, together with the Graduate Director, seek another permanent advisor. As soon as a permanent advisor is chosen, the student will work with the advisor to establish a supervisory committee.
3. Supervisory committees for MA and Ph.D candidates shall consist of a Major and two Associate Advisors. Doctoral candidates shall select the advisors so as to represent the two sub-fields offered in preparation for the Ph.D degree.
4. The Director of Graduate Studies will generally oversee this process of selecting advisors and supervisory committees.

B. Counseling Procedures

1. The student, in consultation with her or his advisor, will select members of an advisory committee as soon as possible, but no later than the second week of the semester in which Master's degree examinations are to be taken.
2. At the initiative of the major advisor, all Master's and doctoral committees shall meet with their student advisees at least once in each semester.
3. Such meetings should involve the entire supervisory committee and the student in detailed review of the student's work. Committees should normally meet at least once a year without the student's presence to review and coordinate committee guidance.
4. Supervisory committees will work with the student to develop a Plan of Study, recommend courses both as to content as well as\ the different modes of instruction (seminars, etc.), discuss with students (particularly with doctoral candidates) the relevance of sub-field reading lists, and offer other relevant guidance on course preparation.
5. Committees will be especially vigilant concerning students' fulfillment of departmental curricular standards, especially as regards methodological and conceptual courses.
6. Committees will remind students of the Graduate School's language requirement of one foreign language or six credit hours in a related areas(unless amended by the committee).

B. Counseling Procedures (Contd.)

7. Committees will pay strict attention to Graduate School rules regarding submission of a Plan of Study.
 8. Foreign students, especially those with substantially different cultural and language backgrounds, need special advising services, including explication of local academic norms, the possibility of an initially light course load, special remedial language work, and other aids.
- C.** Upon completion of half of the minimum credit hours needed for a graduate degree (normally 12), a written report shall be drawn up by the committee and submitted to the Department Head and the Director of Graduate Studies, and then discussed with the student. (This should not replace an annual report on progress filed with the Director of Graduate Studies.) In the event a student is judged not to be making satisfactory progress toward the degree, the committee should consider, and discuss with the student, methods of improving performance. It should not exclude the option of recommending withdrawal from the graduate program.
- D.** Students who have passed their Ph.D. general examinations should consider reconstituting their supervisory committee to provide the best possible supervision of the dissertation. Such committees need not be limited to three persons.

II. Examinations

A. Scheduling

1. No examination for the MA or Ph.D. will be scheduled without an explicit written recommendation that such an examination be administered, being given by the supervisory committee to the Director of Graduate Studies. This notice must be received at least one month prior to the date of the examination.
2. Examinations will normally be scheduled during the time classes are held in the fall and spring semesters. Exceptions must be approved by the Department Head and Director of Graduate Studies. As noted above, examinations must be held with at least one month's prior notice. Committees shall observe relevant Graduate School scheduling guidelines for receipt of degrees in scheduling examinations.

B. Master's Degree Examinations

Upon completion of 24 credits of Masters level work, students will submit two seminar-length papers to their 3-person Masters committee. It is assumed that prior to submitting the papers to the committee, the candidate will make any and all revisions necessary to ensure that they are of sufficient Ph.D. quality. After review by the committee, the candidate will meet with the committee for an oral presentation/examination concerning the merits of the papers. The committee will decide on the basis of the quality of the papers, in addition to the overall performance of the candidate in his/her program, the following:

1. Whether the Masters Degree will be awarded;
2. Whether the student is accepted into the Ph.D. program in the department.

B. Master's Degree Examinations (Contd.)

It is presumed that to be admitted to the Ph.D. program, the student will have earned a majority of grades of A- (minus) or better.

All MA students must also take two of the following: POLS 5600 (393), 5605 (395) and 5610 (396) and received at least a grade of B or better.

C. Ph.D. Examinations

1. The purpose of the PhD examination is to show that the student
 - a. Has mastered the basic concepts essential to an understanding of the subfield;
 - b. Understands the major controversies within the subfield and can articulate and defend a position regarding each of these controversies;
 - c. Has read, and is able to cite, the important literature in the field;
 - d. Is able to write a coherent essay dealing with the Elements listed above.
2. After satisfactory completion of the Ph.D. Plan of Study, and fulfillment of language and/or skill requirements, each doctoral candidate shall take the general examination.
3. All general exams will cover the two areas of concentration previously selected by the student with the advice of the committee and registered in the Plan of Study. Examinations will cover fields and not just course work. Therefore, each committee shall review areas to be covered and the materials on the area reading lists before scheduling examinations.
4. Ph.D. students shall have two examination fields, a breadth area, and a dissertation research field.

Examination Fields: A maximum of fifteen required hours, including mandated and optional courses, to be established by the subfield committees. These requirements will be published as part of the departmental graduate regulations. Examinations shall be field-wide and not tied to specific courses.

Breadth Area: Six hours agreed to by the student's advisory committee and satisfied by passing courses with a grade of B or better. These courses may be in different departments. The six hours may also be used to satisfy the Graduate School's requirement for a foreign language substitution.

Scope/Methods/Skills Courses:

1. Completion of PolS 5605 (395) with a grade of B or better is required of all M.A. students and of all Ph.D. students who have earned a master's degree elsewhere.
2. Completion of PolS 5610 (396) with a grade of B or better required of all Ph.D. who have earned a master's degree elsewhere.

Scope/Methods/Skills Courses (Contd.)

3. Completion of Pols 6610 (493) with a grade of B or better is required of all Ph.D. students.
4. Graduate students are strongly urged to take both 5605 (395) and 5610 (396) during their first year of graduate studies. Graduate students planning to earn a Ph.D. are strongly encouraged to take Pols 5600 (393), 5605 (395), 5610 (396), and 6610 (493) during their first year.
5. Waivers of the requirements for 5600 (393), 5605 (395), 5610 (396), and 6610 (493) may be granted by the Graduate Committee. Students requesting a waiver of any of these requirements must petition the graduate committee in writing explaining the reason they wish a waiver. The petition must be unanimously endorsed by the student's advisory committee.
6. Examinations will be given twice a year, at times to be determined by the graduate committee during the Spring semester of the preceding academic year and published at that time.
7. By the end of the second week of the semester, students planning to take exams will notify the Director of Graduate Studies of the intention and identify the specific fields of testing. By the end of the third week of the semester the DGS will publish the list of students taking the exam and the members of the field exam committees. All students taking an exam in a field will have the same exam committee. Each semester, fields shall appoint an exam committee consisting of three of its graduate faculty members. They will be charged directly with drafting and evaluating the field Ph.D. exams. Students taking exams should be notified of who is on the field panel approximately one week after students have declared that they will take the exam that semester. Students are encouraged to talk to members of the field informally prior to the exam.
8. Each student will write answers to two or three questions, as directed by the subfield, of his/her choosing from each of the subfields. Students will be told a month in advance as to the number of questions to answer.
9. The exams will be take-home in the sense that students may write their answers at home or in the library or with notes and books in a classroom. All exams begin at 8:30 a.m. and must be completed by 4:30 p.m. on the day they are given. Written essays should not exceed ten pages, double-spaced, per question.
10. Each field exam is to be evaluated by the respective exam committee for that field. Each member of the panel will assign one (and only one) of the following marks for each question:
 - 3=high pass (distinction)
 - 2=solid pass
 - 1=marginal pass
 - 0= fail

Scope/Methods/Skills Courses (Contd.)

11. Evaluators will also be asked to provide brief written comments in addition to their numerical evaluation. In evaluating exams, panelists may consult with others in the evaluation who are not on the field exam panel, but only the panel's votes are ultimately counted.
12. The overall evaluation for a question is simply the average of all scores. The following thresholds for the averaged scores will also exist:
 - Above 2.5 = pass with distinction (no oral exam required)
 - 2 to 2.5 = solid pass (no oral exam required)
 - 1 to 1.999 = marginal pass (oral exam required)
 - Less than 1 = fail; written exam must be re-taken
13. The oral exam, if needed, will be scheduled in a timely manner after the written exams in consultation between the field panel and the student. If the student fails, the student may decide when to retake the exam.

D. Results

1. The exam evaluations should be compiled by the appropriate field chair and reported, in writing, to the DGS in a timely manner. The DGS will communicate the committee's evaluation of the written examination to the student and provide him or her with any written comments.
2. Failed examinations may be repeated once in whole or part. Further re-examination must be justified by special circumstances and be approved by the student's committee, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Head.

III. Other

A. Dissertation Prospectus

1. The dissertation prospectus is an important document. The quality of the document is likely to influence the speed and quality with which the student completes the dissertation. Students who are trying to develop a prospectus while preparing for exams may not have sufficient time or knowledge to prepare a quality prospectus. Therefore, the development and evaluation of the dissertation prospectus will be separate from the exam process. The prospectus will be developed in conjunction with and approved by the dissertation committee.

B. Committees

1. Students are required to defend their prospectus orally to their dissertation committee within six months after passing their field exams. Two other faculty members beyond the dissertation committee should also be present at the defense and will be required to approve the prospectus before it is submitted to the Graduate School for advancement to candidacy.

B. Committees (Contd.)

2. If a student does not complete the prospectus within the six-month time limit, a letter will be sent from the DGS urging prompt completion of the prospectus draft and also stating that the student may be in jeopardy of losing his or her funding and standing within the department's graduate program. In such a letter, students will be informed that they may discuss with the DGS and the dissertation committee extraordinary reasons for the delay in completion of the prospectus.
3. Copies of all approved dissertation prospectuses will be kept on file in the Department, and may be consulted by doctoral candidates.

C. Orientation

1. The Department will schedule an annual orientation session for incoming graduate students immediately prior to the registration period preceding the fall semester.
2. This orientation will be planned and executed in close coordination with the Graduate Students' Association.

D. Student Affairs

1. The Department will encourage the formation and active participation in graduate affairs of a Graduate Students' Association.
2. Graduate students will be expected to attend educational activities outside the classroom and to participate in professional meetings.

Two Examination Field Option
Requirements Check-Off*

Student: _____

1. Examination Field # 1 (List 5 or more courses)

2. Examination Field # 2 (List 5 or more courses)

3. Breadth Area (List 2 or more courses)

4. Scope/Methods/Skills Course: (List 4 courses, including POLS 5600 (393), 5605 (395), 5610 (396) and 6610 (493))

_____ 5600 (393) _____ 5605 (395) _____ 5610 (396) _____ 6610 (493)

Student: _____ (sign)

Faculty signatures: (not approved without all signatures)

Major Adviser _____ Field Chair _____

Associate Adviser _____ Field Chair _____

Associate Adviser _____

Approved to take general examinations:

Graduate Director _____ Date _____

*Waivers of field requirements may only be made by the field committee; waivers of general requirements may only be made by the graduate committee.

FACULTY-TEACHING ASSISTANT GUIDELINES

1. TA responsibilities should be course-related; that is, teaching, advising, and grading students in the assigned course. The TA is not a research assistant except when he/she gets library material for the course or puts reading matter on reserve.
2. The faculty instructor should obtain desk copies of all reading for the TA; TAs should not have to buy books at the COOP.
3. TAs are expected to attend all lectures and keep abreast of all required readings.
4. Except possibly in cases of TAs teaching their own sections, the faculty instructor has responsibility for preparing exam questions and working with the TAs to ensure proper grading. If the faculty instructor reserves the right to change grades in the event of student complaints, the instructor should accept blame for any grading errors.
5. TAs are expected to hold office hours for 2-3 hours per week. Talking to students about the course will be their main responsibility; TAs should also familiarize themselves with college and political science major requirements in case students seek broader advice.
6. TAs who wish experience in lecturing to large classes should consult with the faculty instructor early in the course; ordinarily TAs are not expected to lecture.
7. TAs are expected to supervise the university's teaching evaluations at the end of the semester, occasionally in other courses as well. If TAs do not wish to take part in such evaluations, they should find another TA to substitute.
8. TAs may be asked to keep attendance, to help with audiovisual aids, and to monitor regular and make up exams.
9. TAs should not date students in their classes.
10. Faculty who have TAs teaching sections should spend sufficient time advising TAs about the materials to be covered in sections, teaching techniques, grading, etc. Ideally, faculty should be professional mentors to their TAs. A set time each week for consultation is suggested.
11. If cheating, plagiarism, sexual harassment, and similar problems arise, the TA should be aware of university regulations and seek further guidance from the faculty instructor and/or department head.