

AY 2026-2027
GRADUATE STUDY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
(as amended on April 17, 2024)

The following requirements apply to those students entering the graduate program in political science in August, 2016, and thereafter.

The Department of Political Science offers a graduate program leading to the Ph.D. Advanced study is offered in the fields of American Government, Comparative Government, and International Relations. The goal of the program is to prepare the student to conduct independent, original research in political science and to teach at the university level. To this end, all Ph.D. students are expected to develop a high level of competence both substantively and methodologically. The following requirements represent the minimum preparation necessary for the Ph.D. Some students, depending on background and research interests, may be expected to complete additional work in order to prepare adequately for a career in political science.

1. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Upon consultation with relevant faculty in the field or the graduate committee, the Director of Graduate Studies may waive any individual course requirement if it is determined that the student's background and goals warrant it. In no instance, however, may the DGS waive more than 12 hours of courses for any individual student.

1.1 COURSEWORK

The student is expected to successfully complete 54 semester hours of advanced coursework before being considered for candidacy. No more than four directed readings courses will be counted for graduate credit, except with permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. Courses below the 500 level will not count for graduate credit except with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. Credit for courses taken in other departments at Rice or at the University of Houston will be granted with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. Up to 12 hours of credit can be granted for graduate work at another institution, subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies (see Appendix B for procedures for approval of transfer credit). Graduate credit will not be given for any course in which a student receives a grade of C- or below, but such grades will be included in the computation of the student's GPA. In addition, the student must meet the following requirements:

1.11 Core Courses--Each Ph.D. student must successfully complete three core courses, one in each field. The core courses are POLI 530 (American), POLI 520 (Comparative), and POLI 540 (International Relations).

1.12 Major Field-- Each Ph.D. student must declare (by the end of the second year) either American Government, Comparative Government, or International Relations as a major field. The student must successfully complete at least three courses beyond the core course in the major field and pass a major-field preliminary exams in that field. Additional coursework may be required of those with insufficient background in their major field.

1.13 Minor Field--Each Ph.D. student must declare (by the end of the second year) either American Government, Comparative Government, or International Relations as a minor field. The student must

successfully complete at least two courses beyond the core course in the minor field.

1.14 Research Tools- Each student must successfully complete five courses in research methods. These must include POLI 500, 502, 506, and 511.

The fifth research methods course should be chosen in consultation with his/her prospective Dissertation Director. The specific requirement will depend on the particular student's fields and interests and must be met by completing at least 3 hours of course work in any or all of the following areas:

- Statistics
- Game Theory and Social Choice Theory
- Experimental Methods
- Qualitative Methods
- Survey Methods

The 3-hour requirement is a minimum standard. Most students will, in consultation with their advisors, elect to take additional courses in these areas.

Specific courses that count toward this requirement include POLI 504, 505, 507, 512, 513, 574, and 575. Other courses counted toward this requirement must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Normally approved courses will fit into one of the five categories listed above. Courses in some areas may not be offered on a regular basis by the department, but directed readings courses and courses taken in other departments and at other universities may be counted for this requirement if they are approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Courses taken in summer programs such as the ICPSR summer methodology program may not by themselves substitute for full semester courses.

For students who enter the program with significant experience with social science research, the Director of Graduate Studies may waive these course requirements or approve substitutions.

A certain proficiency in basic math is necessary to complete the research tools requirement. Thus, additional basic coursework may be required of those with insufficient background in mathematics before they enroll in advanced research tools courses. Students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and methods instructors to be sure that they are sufficiently prepared.

1.2 EXAMS

In addition to coursework, each student must pass a series of examinations.

1.21 Preliminary Examinations: After successful completion of all required coursework in the major and minor fields, each student must pass two written examinations: a major-field exam and a pre-dissertation exam.

1.21.1 Major-field exam: The major-field exam is intended to examine the student's preparation for teaching and research in the major field. Major-field exams may include an oral examination. Rules governing the format and exam period of the major field exams are described for each field in Appendix A.

1.21.2 Pre-Dissertation Exam: The pre-dissertation exam is intended to examine the student's preparation for conducting dissertation research on a specific topic. In preparation for this exam, the student must declare a prospective dissertation committee of at least three full-time regular faculty members from within the department of political science, including the student's prospective Dissertation Director. This should be done no later than the beginning of the sixth semester of study and a written acknowledgement by the faculty members must be provided to the Director of Graduate Studies. The faculty on this committee will serve as the exam committee for this exam and will determine its content and format subject to the following rules:-

1. Students will have up to 10 hours (and no less than 6) to complete the exam.
2. The exam may not include an oral component.
3. Students may work at any convenient location.
4. Students may take a lunch break of no more than one hour during the exam that does not count against their time, but they should not work on the exam during this period.
5. Exam answers must be typed, and electronic versions of answers must be made available if requested.
6. Students may consult books and articles if properly cited.
7. Students may refer to notes in preparing their answers but may not use pre-prepared text in their answers.
8. Students must be prepared to turn in any notes that they referred to during the exam if they are asked to do so.

1.21.3 Administration and Scheduling of Exams: The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for scheduling exams. Exams are given once per year at the end of the spring semester, typically in May. Most commonly, students will take these exams during their third year of study, but exams can be taken in the second year or in the fourth year if this is the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee in consultation with the prospective Dissertation Director.

The *exam period* will begin when the first exam is made available to students and will last no more than five business days. Each exam may last no more than ten hours and exams may not be scheduled on consecutive days. Normally, major-field exams will be given before the pre-dissertation exams.

Field-specific rules governing the major-field exam may be changed at any time by majority vote of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in the relevant field and by providing written notification of the changes to the Director of Graduate Studies. The field-specific rules that will govern the administration of the exams will be those that are in force on the last day of classes of the Spring semester the year before the exams are to be given.

Any questions of format that are not specifically mentioned in these rules or in the field-specific rules (in Appendix A) should be considered variable and not subject to any prior notice. In the case of a conflict between the field-specific rules in Appendix A and the rules specified in this section (1.2), the rules in this section shall prevail. Students who feel that the administration of exams violates the rules in force may appeal the results of the exam via the usual appeals process (see section 6).

The Director of Graduate Studies will appoint one faculty member from each field (i.e., American, Comparative, International Relations) to serve as the exam coordinator for the major field exam. This faculty member will be responsible for working with other members of the exam committee to prepare and grade the major-field exam in accordance with the rules in this section, section 1.21.4, and in

Appendix A.

The Director of Graduate studies will solicit the content of the pre-dissertation exams from the relevant prospective dissertation chairpersons. Each of these chairpersons is responsible, along with the associated prospective dissertation committee, for producing the exam as described in section 1.21.2.

1.21.4 Preparation and Grading of Exams: Exams should be graded, and students informed of the decision, within two weeks of the end of the exam period.

Each exam is prepared and graded by the relevant exam committee with the either the field coordinator or the prospective dissertation chairperson acting as chair. All tenure-track faculty members in a field are expected to serve on the major-field exam committee unless on leave. Likewise, all faculty members designated in section 1.21.1 are expected to serve on the pre-dissertation exam committee unless on leave.

However, the official exam committee for each exam – the names of whom should be included on the exam provided to students -- will include only those faculty members designated above who are willing and able to fully participate in preparing and grading the exam. Full participation includes preparing and submitting questions to the exam committee chair, grading exams by the relevant deadlines, working with other committee members to reach consensus on an outcome, and participating in evaluating conditional passes and in preparing and grading retakes.¹ Only faculty members who commit to fully participate should be included on the exam committee and listed as such on the exam provided to students. All members of the exam committee should be listed on the written exam instructions that are provided to students.

If fewer than three faculty members are available to serve on a given exam committee, the Director of Graduate Studies will appoint appropriate alternative members.²

Each exam committee will issue one of the following grades for each exam, based on all parts of the exam in whatever format (e.g., oral and written components):³-

a. Pass with Honors: requires the unanimous consent of the exam committee.

b. Pass

c. Conditional Pass: This option is selected when the exam committee feels that there are deficiencies in the student's performance on the exam that can be corrected with a modest amount of additional work. The exam committee must specify, in a letter to the student (cc'd to the Director of Graduate Studies), the specific conditions that are to be met to pass the exam, as well as the procedure by which

¹ In the event of a dispute about the composition of the exam committee, a final determination will be made by the Department Chair.

² This provision also applies if one or more faculty members become unavailable after having been previously designated as members of the exam committee (as listed on the exam) and, as a result, fewer than three members remain on the exam committee.

³ Decisions by the exam committee should be made by consensus or by a simple plurality vote over the options in this section (after specifying the conditions of any conditional pass options – more than one such option may be included). If the exam committee cannot reach a decision in this way, then the Director of Graduate Studies (even if a member of the relevant exam committee) will, after consulting with each member of the exam committee, make the decision.

it will determine whether the conditions are met. These conditions may include rewriting specific questions or parts of the previous questions, producing an essay on a different or related question or topic, or some other reasonable remedy. Once the specified conditions are met (in the judgment of the exam committee), the student passes the exam. If the conditions are not met, the student fails the exam.

d. Fail: Students who have failed an exam will have the option to retake the failed exam under the same exam rules.⁴ Any exam retake should be completed before July 15 following the exam period. Each exam committee will issue either a Pass or Fail for the retaken exam, based on all of its parts in whatever format (e.g., oral and written components). Any student who fails a retake will be dismissed from the program.

1.22 Dissertation Prospectus Defense: Upon successful completion of the preliminary examinations, the student will select a Dissertation Committee, subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies. This committee will consist of the Dissertation Director, at least two additional full-time, regular faculty members from within the political science department, and at least one full-time, regular Rice faculty member from outside the political science department. The faculty members from within the political science department will typically be those selected prior to the preliminary exams as part of the prospective dissertation committee. Additional faculty (from Rice or other institutions) may also serve on the committee, but the committee must include at least three faculty members from the Rice political science department and at least one faculty member from another department at Rice. Faculty members may decline to serve on the Dissertation Committee. It is advisable for the dissertation committee to meet with the student at least once per semester, but it is the student's responsibility to seek feedback from the committee, and especially the Dissertation Director, regularly.

The student must produce a written dissertation prospectus and pass an oral defense conducted by the members of the dissertation committee from within the Rice political science department. The student must also present the prospectus in a departmental colloquium. The particular content and length of the prospectus will vary with the type of research the student plans to conduct. That being said, every dissertation prospectus should include the following:

- a. A statement of the research question to be addressed in the dissertation.
- b. An outline of the argument to be made and an explanation of how it builds upon and goes beyond existing research.
- c. An explanation of the research to be completed; that is, information about the research design.
- d. An explanation of what the student expects to learn from the project and why this is important.
- e. A timeline for completing the project and an explanation of the resources necessary to do so.

The prospectus should persuade the committee that the student has a meaningful research topic, that the student has a good grasp of what is involved in the research and a compelling plan for conducting it well, and that there is a high probability the student can complete the work with the time and resources available.

1.23 Advancing to Candidacy: In order to advance to candidacy, a student must:

- a. Complete all required coursework
- b. Pass all preliminary exams

⁴ Retakes of major-field exams must be taken in the same major-field.

- c. Pass the dissertation prospectus defense
- d. Be in good standing

Students must complete the requirements for candidacy, including approval of the prospectus, within one year of completing their preliminary exams and before the beginning of their ninth semester. If a student has not successfully defended a dissertation prospectus one year after he or she completed preliminary exams, the student will be withdrawn from the Ph.D. program unless the DGS grants an exception. If a student is withdrawn, the student may apply for readmission.

1.24 Dissertation Defense: The dissertation must present original research and must be approved by the Dissertation Committee. Any changes to the Dissertation Committee after the approval of the prospectus must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. The final requirement for the Ph.D. is the public oral defense of the dissertation. The procedures for this defense are outlined in the General Announcements catalog of Rice University. The dissertation must be deposited with the graduate school by the end of the sixteenth semester and within ten years of initial enrollment in the graduate program.

1.3 MAINTENANCE OF GOOD STANDING

Students must not only complete coursework and pass exams, but must remain in good standing with the university and with the department.

1.31 Good Standing with the University: The university requirements and regulations are provided in the General Announcements catalog of Rice University. The university rules in effect at the time a student enters the program will be in force throughout his or her tenure.

1.32 Good Standing with the Department: Good standing will be determined at the end of each semester and at the end of the summer by the Graduate Studies Committee. The committee will evaluate each student using the following criteria:

a. GPA: Students with a cumulative GPA below 3.33 will not be in good standing and students with a GPA of 3.0 or below for the semester immediately preceding the evaluation (not including summer) may be removed from good standing by the graduate committee.⁵

b. RA/TA Evaluation: Students will be evaluated each semester (including over the summer) by the faculty to whom they are assigned as research or teaching assistants (see Section 2). In addition to a written assessment, faculty will assign a letter grade summarizing the overall performance of the student. Students who earn B or less on any evaluation may be removed from good standing by the graduate committee.

A copy of the evaluation will be provided to the student. Students may submit a written response to the evaluation to the graduate committee.

c. Professional Development: Since matriculation into the graduate program marks the beginning of the student's career as a political scientist, it is expected that students be actively engaged in their own professional development from this point onward. The extent and nature of these activities will vary

⁵ For example, the semester immediately preceding an evaluation occurring at the end of May is the SPRING semester.

depending on how far along in the program a student is. At minimum, students are expected to attend departmental colloquia, workshops, and functions. The Graduate Studies Committee will also consider attendance and participation in professional meetings, publications, and other skill development. If in the judgment of the graduate committee a student has failed to meet expectations regarding professional development, he or she will not be in good standing.

Any student determined not to be in good standing will be placed on probationary status for the following full semester. Further, the Graduate Studies Committee will provide such students a written notice of his or her status as well as a detailed description of what must happen to reinstate good standing.⁶

The Graduate Studies Committee will evaluate the student again at the end of the probationary semester. After one probationary semester, if the student is not in good standing at any later review, the committee may take any of the following actions:

- a. Terminate or reduce the student's financial aid.
- b. Dismiss the student from the program.
- c. Dismiss the student from the program and award the student a terminal MA degree.
- d. Return the student to probationary status.

2. TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS AND MENTEESHIPS

All students receiving a stipend from the department are expected to provide departmental service. Each semester, some students will be assigned as teaching assistants or teaching mentees. The remainder will be assigned to work for individual faculty members as research assistants or as research mentees. In addition, all students will be assigned as research assistants during the summer unless this obligation is waived by the Director of Graduate Studies. Students receiving a stipend in a given semester are expected to be available for department service from one week before classes begin until grades are due to the registrar, with the exception of official university holidays. Exceptions must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, who will generally require that the student obtain approval from the faculty member serving as his or her RA/RM or TA/TM supervisor.

Students receiving a stipend during the summer are expected to be available for department service from June 1 through August 1. However, summer service requirements are intended to be flexible enough to accommodate students who are not in Houston in the summer and those that wish to pursue alternative activities that will benefit their graduate training. The Director of Graduate Studies will provide specific guidance on how summer research mentee assignments will be made and how students can request specific assignments or alternative arrangements.

2.1 Teaching Assistant Obligations

Each student will be required to serve as a teaching assistant or teaching mentee for at least two semesters, regardless of whether the student is receiving a department stipend. This requirement can be waived by the Director of Graduate Studies. The requirement will only be waived under special circumstances, for instance if the student has extensive prior teaching experience. All students who are assigned to serve as teaching assistants must also enroll in POLI 599 (Teaching Political Science)

⁶ Written notices need not be sent to students who are in good standing.

during each semester in which they serve as TA/TM.

2.2 Research Assistant Obligations

Research assistants and research mentees are expected to complete an average of ten hours of work per week during the semester. It is the student's responsibility to contact his or her faculty supervisor to obtain assignments and to report back frequently on his or her progress. Students who are not receiving a department stipend may be assigned as research mentees as part of their professional development.

3. STUDENT ADVISING AND ANNUAL REVIEWS

3.1 Student Advising

First year students should meet with the Director of Graduate Studies upon arrival at Rice to discuss their planned research program and receive advice about course selection for their first semester. Each student must identify a prospective Dissertation Director prior to his/her Preliminary Examination. Following the Preliminary Examination, the prospective Dissertation Director is the student's primary advisor, and following the Prospectus Defense, the Dissertation Director is the student's primary advisor. Changes in advisors can be made with the approval of the DGS.

3.2 ANNUAL REVIEWS

Each student will receive a written performance evaluation once per year. The Graduate Studies Committee will evaluate all students in the spring of each year. In the third year and beyond, the members of the student's dissertation committee will evaluate the student and provide advice to the DGS on the content of the review. The yearly review will cover academic performance and progress to degree, completion of RM and TM responsibilities, and professional development.

4. M.A. PROGRAM

The political science department has no M.A. program as such and students seeking only a master's degree will typically not be admitted. Students admitted to the Ph.D. program may seek an M.A. as an interim step in their studies.

The Master of Arts degree requires 30 semester hours of course work, all of which must be taken at the graduate level (500 level or above except with permission of the Director of Graduate Studies), and the completion of two research papers in seminars taken over the course of study. A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for awarding the M.A.

In the beginning of the fourth semester of study, students should turn in an Application for Degree (found in Esther) to the Office of the Registrar. The university deadline for such filings is the second Friday of the spring semester of the year the MA is expected. Students should refer to the Academic Calendar for the deadline.

The Political Science Department requires that not more than three years elapse between the time the student is admitted to the graduate program and the completion of the M.A. degree, unless an extension is approved by the Graduate Studies Committee. The university requires that students complete their program for the Master's degree within five years of initial enrollment.

5. LEAVES OF ABSENCE/TIME OFF

The department follows the university policy for leaves of absence and other interruptions of study. Students should refer to the General Announcements for more information. Any student wishing to take a leave of absence or short term medical or parental release should inform the DGS (who will inform the Department Chair) and follow the instructions for requesting the leave or release from the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Students who have not scheduled time off but nonetheless are not fulfilling their responsibilities may be withdrawn from the program and/or have their financial aid terminated or reduced.

6. APPEALS PROCESS

Problems or conflicts may arise during a student's graduate education. The General Announcements provides a discussion of Problem Resolution, and we follow the procedures listed there. All parties involved should work together amicably with the goal of resolving the problem informally if at all possible. When attempts to resolve a problem informally do not meet with success, the procedure described in the General Announcements should be followed. A student may base an appeal on procedure and/or substance. Accordingly, the Department Chair will appoint a standing committee of three tenured faculty members each academic year. This committee is responsible for hearing graduate student appeals. In situations in which a faculty member who is actively involved in a student problem has a designated role in this appeal procedure, that role should be transferred to a suitable senior faculty member. The Department Chair or the Divisional Dean should choose this substitute, and the substitute should be acceptable to all parties immediately involved in the dispute.

7. TITLE IX NOTICE

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available both on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university.

Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety, and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.

If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support:
3311/(713) 348-3311

Policies, including Sexual Misconduct Policy and Student Code of Conduct, and more information regarding Title IX can be found at safe.rice.edu.

Appendix A: Field-Specific Rules for Preliminary Exams

1. Comparative Politics:

Students majoring in comparative politics must take a general exam in Comparative Politics.

Rules governing the Comparative Politics General Field Exam:

1. Students will have 10 hours to complete the exam.
2. Students may work at any convenient location.
3. Exam answers must be typed and electronic versions of answers must be made available if requested.
4. Students may consult reference books and articles if properly cited.
5. Students may not use pre-prepared text in their answers.

Any questions of format that are not specifically mentioned in the above rules or in the rules governing all exams should be considered variable and not subject to any prior notice.

2. International Relations:

Students majoring in international relations will take a general exam in International Relations. Each exam will consist of a written portion and an oral portion. The oral portion of the exams will normally be scheduled in the week following the written portion when possible.

Rules governing the written portions of the International Relations General Field Exam:

1. Students will have 6 hours to complete each exam.
2. Students may work at any convenient location.
3. Students may take a lunch break of no more than one hour during the exam that does not count against their time, but they should not work on the exam during this period.
4. Exam answers must be typed and electronic versions of answers must be made available if requested.
5. Students may consult books and articles if properly cited.
6. Students may refer to notes in preparing their answers, but may not use pre-prepared text in their answers. Students must be prepared to turn in any notes that they referred to during the exam if they are asked to do so.

Rules governing the oral portions of the International Relations General Field Exam:

1. Students will be scheduled for one oral exam session-- for majors the single session will cover material from the general field and the subfield.
2. At least two of the faculty members grading the exam must be present for the oral exam.
3. Oral exams will last no more than two hours.
4. Oral exams may cover any material in the field or subfield.
5. Students may have a copy of their answers to the written portion of the exams with them during the oral exam, but may not refer to other books, articles, or notes.
6. Any questions of format that are not specifically mentioned in the above rules or in the rules governing all exams should be considered variable and not subject to any prior notice.

3. American Politics:

Students majoring in American Politics will take a general exam in American Politics.

Rules governing the American Politics General Field Exam:

1. Students will have 6 hours to complete each exam
2. Students may take a lunch break of no more than one hour during the exam that does not count against their time, but they should not work on the exam during this period.
3. Students may work at any convenient location.
4. Students may consult books and articles, if properly cited, and may also refer to notes in preparing their answers

Any questions of format that are not specifically mentioned in the above rules or in the rules governing all exams should be considered variable and not subject to any prior notice.

Appendix B: Procedures for Approval of Transfer Credit

The decision to award transfer credit will be made according to the following procedure, subject to university rules:

1. The student seeking transfer credit must submit a letter to the Director of Graduate Studies requesting transfer credit for one or more graduate courses taken at another university and provide a copy of the syllabus for each course. The letter must indicate which Rice courses are equivalents. If no Rice course is equivalent, then credit will not normally be given. Transfer credit will not normally be given for a course with no syllabus.
2. The Director of Graduate Studies will forward the request and the syllabi to either (a) all the faculty in the subfield that he or she judges to be most relevant to the Rice course in question, or (b) at least three faculty members in that subfield. In the case of methodology courses, the relevant pool of faculty from which the Director of Graduate Studies will choose will consist of those tenure-track faculty who have taught, within the last three years, any courses meeting the research tools requirement as defined in section 1.14.
3. The faculty chosen in step 2 will advise the Director of Graduate Studies as to whether he or she should accept the transfer course in place of the Rice course indicated in the student's letter.
4. After having received the advice of the faculty chosen in step 2, the Director of Graduate Studies will decide whether or not to accept the transfer course in place of the Rice course indicated in the student's letter.
5. Students may appeal any decision by the Director of Graduate Studies about transfer credit using the usual appeals process discussed in section 4.

Appendix C: Example Degree Timeline

Keep in mind that students arrive in our program with different levels of preparation, and that different research projects require different paths through the program. Some students, for instance, will spend a year doing fieldwork. Below, however, is a very general example of a possible timeline to degree.

Year One: 18 hours of coursework

Year Two: 18 hours of coursework, first teaching mentee experience

Year Three: 18 hours of coursework, second teaching mentee experience, preliminary exams Year

Four: Prospectus Defense, advance to candidacy

Year Five: Dissertation defense, Degree completion