

POLITICAL SCIENCE

HANDBOOK



ASHOKA
UNIVERSITY

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

MONSOON 2021

Department of Political Science

The Department of Political Science at Ashoka University aims to provide students with a conceptual foundation in the discipline, with an ability to critically analyse the omnipresence of the “political.” Through various courses, we shall examine the nature, distribution and dynamics of power – both at the macro level of national and international politics and also at the micro level of the individual, family and community. We will map the ways in which knowledge systems and challenges to particular power relations have been constructed over specific vectors of time and space. We will study both Aristotle and Plato, Gandhi and Iqbal; complementing studies on comparative politics with an exploration of Indian national and state politics.

The Political Science major puts significant emphasis on methods learning, both quantitative and qualitative. Several courses teach how to do research, using data analysis, statistics or the ethnographic method, to explore the politics that surrounds us. Students are thus equipped with practical skills they can use outside the classroom.

The Department of Political Science encourages students to explore the connections between the major and other disciplines, by cross-listing courses across departments and by encouraging students to ask questions that are not constrained by disciplinary boundaries.

Undergraduate Programme in Political Science:

Ashoka University’s Department of Political Science aims to provide students with a strong foundation in the discipline, combined with the acquisition of practical research skills.

The Department of Political Science encourages students to explore the connections between the major and other disciplines, by cross-listing courses across departments and by encouraging students to ask questions that are not constrained by disciplinary boundaries.

Structure & Curriculum:

The Department of Political Science’s curriculum is organized around the four conventional pillars of the discipline: Political Theory, Comparative Politics, Indian Politics and Research Methods. This is complemented by a variety of elective courses.

Each course category has an entry-level course, which is required for the major. Beyond that, students can choose their courses according to their inclinations.

Ashoka Scholars Programme in Political Science

Ashoka University offers a year-long Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research (DipASR) to students who have completed the three-year Bachelor’s Program. Students can choose among a wide range of elective options across a variety of subjects, as well as gain valuable research experience in specific disciplines. Students must complete 32 credits to graduate from the ASP and may choose to complete an advanced major by writing an undergraduate thesis, or complete the ASP by taking courses across disciplines. Students

who do not opt for the thesis can use the ASP to complete a minor or double major programme.

Faculty Members:

- Ali Khan Mahmudabad
- Bann Seng Tan
- Gilles Verniers
- Malvika Maheshwari
- Sunil Khilnani
- Matthew Baxter
- Neelanjan Sircar (Visiting)
- Vinay Sitapati (Head of Department)
- Priyamvada Trivedi (Visiting)
- Rahul Verma (Visiting)
- Kaustav Chakrabarti (Visiting)
- Julien Levesque (Visiting)
- KK Kailash (Visiting)

Requirements for Major:

Each student will take a total of 12 courses towards the major. For completing a major in Political Science, one must take the following courses (4 required courses +8 electives):

- Western Political Thought (I) or Introduction to Political Theory
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Introduction to Indian Politics
- Quantitative Research Methods or Qualitative Research Methods
- Eight electives in Political Science (including a maximum of three cross-listed courses)

Requirements for Minor:

Each student will take a total of 6 courses towards the minor. For completing a minor, a student has to take the following courses (3 required courses + 3 electives):

- Western Political Thought (I) or Introduction to Political Theory
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Introduction to Indian Politics
- 3 electives in Political Science. (including maximum of 2 cross-listed courses)

Requirements for Concentration:

Each student will take a total of 4 courses towards the concentration. For completing a concentration, a student has to take any two of the required courses and two other electives (2 required courses + 2 electives):

- Two required courses other than the methods' courses
- Two electives in Political Science (including a maximum of 1 cross-listed course)

Requirements for Major in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE):

Each student needs to take a total of sixteen courses, out of which one needs to take a minimum of four courses in Political Science. If a student takes a minimum of eight courses in Political Science, then it would qualify for a Degree in PPE with a specialization in Political Science. The mandatory courses from the Political Science side are (3 + 1/5):

- Western Political Thoughts (I) or Introduction to Political Theory
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Introduction to Indian Politics
- One elective in Political Science (4)/Five electives in Political Science (8)

Note: In the case of 4 courses in Political Science, a student can take a maximum of 1 cross-listed course. In the case of 8 courses in Political Science, a student can take a maximum of 2 cross-listed courses.

Structure for the ASPs (4th Years):

To obtain an Advanced Diploma in Political Science, students need to submit an initial statement of interest in April in their 3rd year, with the name of the preferred advisor(s). This statement of interest should approximately be of two pages, highlighting preliminary details about the project. By the beginning of the ensuing summer break, students will be matched to an advisor, who may assist in structuring a thesis project over the summer.

In the first week of courses in the Monsoon semester of the 4th year, students will be expected to submit a thesis proposal that is 3000-5000 words. These proposals will be assessed by the appointed advisor and a department-selected second reader (who is not an advisor) for quality, feasibility and clarity. Students will be given feedback on the proposal by the second week of courses, with one of three decisions: (i) reject, (ii) revise and resubmit, or (iii) pass. If the student is given a pass, then she or he may continue to the thesis program without qualification. If the student is given a revise and resubmit, then she or he may continue to the thesis program conditional on completing the requested revisions within one week. If the student is given a reject, then she or he may not continue into the thesis program.

Upon gaining entry into the thesis program, there are four requirements for the year:

- Attendance at a Year-Long Thesis Seminar
- End of Monsoon Semester Presentation
- Final Thesis Presentation (End of Spring Semester)
- Final Thesis Submission

The grading scheme across these requirements and relevant schedules will be shared with students before course enrollment commences for the Monsoon Semester. The final thesis will be graded by the advisor(s) and a department-selected second reader (who is not an advisor).

The thesis will be for 8 credits overall (4 in each semester). Students are expected to take at least three courses (12 credits) in Political Science during their advanced major. They can also choose to TA for Political Science courses instead of an elective and gain credits. Beware that TAs are either for 2 credits or 4 credits so make sure that your credits tally properly. The number of credits for TAship is determined by the faculty before the term.

The department advises students to TA for only one course in a semester.

Additionally, each student will be provided with a fixed research budget, which can be claimed upon incurring the expenses. Additional budget can be provided upon request to the advisor and the Head of the Department.

Prof Gilles Verniers (gilles.verniers@ashoka.edu.in) will be the ASP Coordinator 2021-22. If you have any questions, kindly reach out to him and you can also copy Anjali Panwar (anjali.panwar@ashoka.edu.in).

Course Levels and Pre-requisites:

Generally, the 1000 level courses are entry-level or introductory courses, while the 3000 level courses are advanced. The department doesn't impose a sequence of courses as per the level but strongly recommends that you clear entry-level courses before taking advanced-level courses. Some advanced electives will require you to take Quantitative Research Methods as a prerequisite.

For example (non-exhaustive list):

- **Quantitative Research Methods 2:** Students must have completed Quantitative Research Methods 1.
- **Theoretical Political Economy:** Students should have completed Quantitative Research Methods 1. They should have either completed or been enrolled in Quantitative Research Methods 2.
- **Empirical Political Economy:** Students should have completed Quantitative Research Methods 1. They should have either completed or been enrolled in Quantitative Research Methods 2.

In the event that a course apart from these has some prerequisites, it will be communicated at the starting of the semester.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What are the compulsory courses for a Political Science major?

1. Western Political Thought I or Introduction to Political Theory
2. Introduction to Indian Politics
3. Introduction to Comparative Politics
4. Quantitative or Qualitative Research Methods

Q2: What are the compulsory courses for a Political Science minor?

1. Western Political Thought I or Introduction to Political Theory
2. Introduction to Indian Politics
3. Introduction to Comparative Politics

Q3: Is there a sequence in which I should take the required courses?

No.

Q4: How often will these compulsory courses be offered by the political science department?

The political science department is obliged to offer each compulsory course only once an academic year (i.e. we are not obliged to offer it every semester), and this will be announced at the beginning of the academic year. There can be a situation where a compulsory course is not offered in consecutive semesters (if each of those semesters is in different academic years). It is the sole responsibility of the student to keep track of the completion of requirements, and any request for relaxation, later on, will not be entertained.

Q5: How many 100/200/300 level courses do I need to take?

There is no such requirement to take a specific number of courses of each level. Only the required courses are mandatory and can be taken in any sequence, irrespective of levels.

Q6: I'm going on a semester abroad. Can I substitute the required courses with a summer abroad course?

No. Required courses cannot be substituted by summer courses.

Q7: How do I apply for credits for courses done during semesters abroad?

You have to email the Head of Department (with a copy to the department manager) with a list of courses you are studying during the semester abroad for which you want credit. Please also submit the course outline/readings for the courses.

Q8: Can the Head of Department (or anyone else) intervene when it comes to grading or course structure taught by faculty in a political science course.

'No'. Political science faculty (like other faculty at Ashoka) enjoy autonomy when it comes to teaching courses. So please don't email the Head of Department (or anyone else) requesting that your grades etc. be changed in a political science course. The course faculty has freedom and autonomy in this regard.

Q9: Are Political Ideologies and Western Political Thought II compulsory courses?

No.

Q10: What if I have done Dynamics of State Formation in the past as a part of the requirement?

If you have done Dynamics of State Formation with Prof. Vinay Sitapati in the past, you fulfill the requirement for Introduction to Indian Politics. However, if you pursue these courses in any other semester, they will count only as electives and not as requirements, except for Introduction to Political Theory.

Q11: Can I take Political Ideologies/Introduction to Political Theory (electives) if I have done WPT I (required course) and vice versa?

Yes.

Q12: Is WPT a pre-requisite for WPT II?

No. We do recommend that you take WPT II after WPT I, but it's not a prerequisite.

Q13: Can I take a methods course in any other discipline?

Yes, you can, with validation from Prof. Sircar for quantitative courses and from the HoD for qualitative courses. In any case, you have to inform the HoD, the OAA and the Department Manager about this change.

Q14: How many cross-listed courses can I take?

Cross-listed courses are those courses which arise out of a discipline different from Political Science but are cross-listed with Political Science. Students can take upto two cross-listed courses in any semester, provided all other rules are satisfied. The

following is a summary of the rules around cross-listed courses:

- **Pure Major** in Political Science: Maximum **3**
- ID Major in **PPE with 8 courses** in Political Science: Maximum **2**
- ID Major in **PPE with 4 courses** in Political Science: Maximum **1**
- **Concentration** in Political Science: Maximum **1**
- **Minors** in Political Science: Maximum **2**

Q15: How can I get a course from another department cross-listed?

Write to the professor teaching that course to express your individual interest. Request the professor to directly email the course syllabus to the Head of Department, Political Science. The department will then take a collective decision, communicate with the professor directly, and then inform the students.

Q16: I took a course that was cross-listed with Political Science. It is being offered again but is not showing as cross-listed. Is this a problem?

No. It is normal for courses to not be cross-listed with other departments in every semester that they're offered. If you took a course, which was cross-listed in the semester that you took it, it will count towards your degree. Please cross-check the course code of such courses in your AMS.

Q17: Can I write a thesis in the third year?

No. Only ASPs can write a thesis with the department. But you can do an ISM (Independent Studies Module) with faculty. Some faculty offer ISMs – individual or group-based – others take proposals from students.

Q18: I'm interested in TAing for the Spring semester. How should I proceed?

Only ASP students are eligible to TA for courses. The department notifies all ASPs of TA requirements at the beginning of the semester and calls for applications. But in recent years there has been a scarcity of courses available for TA-ship. So students are advised not to depend upon it.

Q19: Can 4th year students opt out of an advanced major at a later stage?

Yes, provided you fulfil other requirements meant for graduation.

Q20: Can students retake the same course to get a higher grade?

Yes, but this is at the discretion of the professor offering the course. In case the new course is being offered by another professor (for example, because the original professor has left), the decision lies with the professor of the new course.

Q21: Whom should I contact to answer questions other than those in this FAQ?

First, email your query to the Student Representative Priavi Joshi priavi.joshi_asp22@ashoka.edu.in and the department manager. It is likely that your question has been asked before, and they know the answer. If that does not answer your query, please email the Head of Department.

