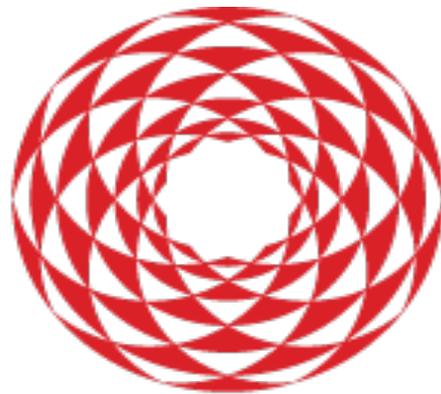


**May 2022 Update**  
**POLITICAL SCIENCE HANDBOOK**



**ASHOKA**  
UNIVERSITY

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS**

# Department of Political Science

## Introduction

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.

## Permanent Faculty Members

- Anustubh Agnihotri
- Matthew Baxter
- Kaustav Chakrabarti
- Dipin Kaur
- Sunil Khilnani
- Malvika Maheshwari
- Ali Khan Mahmudabad (Head of Department)
- Vinay Sitapati
- Bastian Steuwer
- Bann Seng Tan
- Saul Wilson
- Gilles Verniers
- Vivek Yadav

## 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 (includes 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
- Three electives in Political Science (including a 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 Thought (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 case of 4 courses in Political Science, a student can take a maximum of 1 cross-listed course. In case of 8 courses in Political Science, a student can take a maximum of 2 cross-listed courses.]

### Structure for the ASPs (4<sup>th</sup> Years)

For obtaining 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 TA 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 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.

### **Course Levels and Pre-requisites**

Generally, the 100 level courses are entry-level or introductory courses, while the 300 level courses are advanced. The department doesn't impose a sequence of course 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 be enrolled in Quantitative Research Methods 2.
- **Empirical Political Economy:** Students should have completed Quantitative Research Methods 1. They should have either completed or be enrolled in Quantitative Research Methods 2.

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

## Frequently Asked Questions

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

Western Political Thought I or Introduction to Political Theory  
Introduction to Indian Politics  
Introduction to Comparative Politics  
Quantitative or Qualitative Research Methods

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

Western Political Thought I or Introduction to Political Theory  
Introduction to Indian Politics  
Introduction to Comparative Politics

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

No.

**Q4: Is the department obligated to offer a compulsory course every semester.**

No. The political science department is obligated to offer a compulsory course only once a year. It is up to you to plan on ways to fulfill your requirements by signing up for compulsory courses when they are offered. However, the department eventually aims to offer one compulsory course per semester.

**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 not substituted by summer courses.

**Q7: I'm going on a semester abroad. What is the procedure for substituting a non-required course with a summer abroad course?**

OAA has a streamlined online portal in which you can input details of the summer abroad course you want to take. The Political Science Head of Department will then be notified and either approve or reject the substitution online. There is no need to directly contact the Head of Department.

**Q8: Are Political Ideologies and WPT II compulsory courses?**

No.

**Q9: The department is offering WPT-I, WPT-II, and Introduction to Political theory. Which of these are compulsory courses?**

All political science majors/minors are required to take either Western Political Thought I (usually offered in the Monsoon semester) or Introduction to Political Theory (usually offered in the Spring semester). Western Political Thought (WPT) I is part of a two semester-

long sequence concluding with WPT II (offered in the Spring semester), which introduces the classic texts of political philosophy in a historical order, covering thinkers from Plato to Foucault. Please note that while students taking WPT I are strongly encouraged to take WPT II, the latter is not a required course. As an alternative to WPT I, students may take Introduction to Political Theory, a standalone course that covers major themes and debates in contemporary political philosophy, such as power, justice, and liberty.

**Q10: Can I take Political Ideologies/Introduction to Political Theory (electives) if I have done WPT I (required course) and vice versa?**

Yes.

**Q11: Is WPT-1 (Western Political Thought -1) a pre-requisite for WPT II?**

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

**Q12: Can I take a methods course in any other discipline?**

Yes, you can, with validation from the Head of Department (HoD). In any case, you have to inform the HoD, the OAA and the Department Manager about this change.

**Q13: 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 course 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 **Politics and Society**: Maximum **2**

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**

**Q14: 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.

**Q 15: I took a course which 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 LMS.

**Q16: 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.

**Q17: I'm interested in TAing for the Spring semester. How should I proceed?**

Usually TA-ship are open to ASP students (though the course faculty has the discretion to choose non-ASP students). The department notifies all ASPs of TA requirement 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.

**Q18: Can 4th year students opt out of an advanced major at a later stage**

Yes, provided you fulfil other requirements meant for graduation.

**Q19: Can students re-take 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.

**Q20: Can a student's grade, given at the end of the course, be changed later?**

No. Once a student has been given a grade at the end of the course, that grade will not be changed at a later date. For example, if a student gets an 'F' for non-submission of course requirements (or an 'Incomplete' which has turned into an 'F' due to non-submission), faculty will not entertain requests for submissions at a later date, and will not agree to any grade change"

**Q21: Can parents/guardians communicate with faculty?**

Strictly no. Under no circumstances will faculty entertain parents or guardians of students emailing them with any query. Faculty will only reply to emails from the students themselves.

**Q22: Whom should I contact for further queries?**

If you have any questions that are not answered in this handbook, first contact your Department Student Representative, who may well know the answer. If that does not satisfy you, you can email the Head of Department with a copy to the department manager (Pratima Kadian at pratima.kadian@ashoka.edu.in).

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