

**August 2025 Update**  
**POLITICAL SCIENCE HANDBOOK**



**ashoka**  
UNIVERSITY

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS**

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## 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.

## Programs Offered

The Political Science department offers the following academic programs:

- 4-year B.A. (Hons. with Research)
- 4-year B.A. (Hons. without Research)
- Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) Program<sup>1</sup>
- Minor in Political Science
- Concentration in Political Science

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<sup>1</sup> [Rules and Guidelines](#) of PPE program.

## Major Rules: Four-Year Programme Structure

### 1. 4-year B.A. (Hons. with Research)

POL offers two types of research in Four years (Hons.) with Research. Students have the option to pursue either of the Two Research options:

- 4-year Hons. with Field Research
- 4-year Hons. with Research Thesis

### Requirement for a 4-year Hons. with Field Research

Major: Political Science		
Degree: 4 Years (Hons.) with <b>Field Research</b>		
Duration: 4 Years		
Major Credits: 84 <sup>2</sup>		
Course Type	Credits	Courses
Required Courses	16	All of the following <b>Four (4)</b> :  1. Western Political Thought (I) <b>OR</b> Introduction to Political Theory 2. Introduction to Comparative Politics 3. Introduction to Indian Politics 4. Quantitative Research Methods <b>OR</b> Qualitative Research Method
Elective Courses	56	Any <b>Fourteen (14)</b> POL electives of range: POL-:(1000-3999)  <b>Note</b> Courses of 3000 level offered by the department could be taken by 4th-year students, but with different grading requirements than 2nd or 3rd years.
Research	12	Field Research
Total Major Credits	16+56+12 = 84	
Maximum Cross-Listed Courses Allowed	8	
Maximum ISM credits allowed	0	

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the major credits, each graduating student must complete Foundation Courses (FCs), co-curriculars (CCs), internship credits, and an additional number of open academic credits (through minors, concentrations, or other courses). The credit requirements for these might vary across batches.

## Requirement for a 4-year Hons. with Research Thesis

Major: Political Science		
Degree: 4 Years (Hons.) with <b>Research Thesis</b>		
Duration: 4 Years		
Major Credits: 84 <sup>3</sup>		
Course Type	Credits	Courses
Required Courses	16	All of the following <b>Four (4)</b> :  1. Western Political Thought (I) <b>OR</b> Introduction to Political Theory 2. Introduction to Comparative Politics 3. Introduction to Indian Politics 4. Quantitative Research Methods <b>OR</b> Qualitative Research Method
Elective Courses	56	Any <b>Fourteen (14)</b> POL electives of range: POL-:(1000-3999) <b>Note</b> Courses of 3000 level offered by the department could be taken by 4th-year students but with different grading requirements than 2nd or 3rd years.
Research	12	1. Capstone Thesis (4) 2. Capstone Research (8)
Total Major Credits	16+56+12 = 84	
Maximum Cross-Listed Courses Allowed	8	
Maximum ISM credits allowed	0	

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the major credits, each graduating student must complete Foundation Courses (FCs), co-curriculars (CCs), internship credits, and an additional number of open academic credits (through minors, concentrations, or other courses). The credit requirements for these might vary across batches.

## Research (12 credits)

1. **Field Research:** Students can opt for a practical field-work project such as working as a Research Assistant for/with a Faculty Member or research work for projects at one of the centres at Ashoka. Such projects will have to be approved by the department in advance, and will have to be monitored by the department over the year.
2. **Research Thesis:**

The thesis will be for 12 credits overall (4 in Monsoon Semester + 8 in Spring Semester).

Students will be required to submit a thesis proposal of around 3,000 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 five requirements for the year:

1. Attendance & Participation at a Year-Long Thesis Seminar
2. Presentation of Progress (End of Monsoon Semester)
3. Submission of Progress (End of Monsoon Semester)
4. Final Thesis Presentation (End of Spring Semester)
5. Final Thesis Submission (End of Spring Semester)

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).

## Requirements for a Minor

Total Credits : 24		
Course Type	Credits	Courses
Mandatory	12	<p>All of the following <b>three (3)</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Western Political Thought (I) <b>OR</b> Introduction to Political Theory</li> <li>2. Introduction to Comparative Politics</li> <li>3. Introduction to Indian Politics</li> </ol>
Electives	12	<p>Three electives in Political Science Code Range: POL-:(1000-3999)</p> <p><b>A Maximum of 2 crosslists allowed</b></p>

## Requirements for a Concentration

Total Credits : 16		
Course Type	Credits	Courses
Mandatory	8	<p>Any <b>2 courses</b> from below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Western Political Thought (I) <b>OR</b> Introduction to Political Theory</li> <li>• Introduction to Comparative Politics</li> <li>• Introduction to Indian Politics</li> </ul>
Electives	8	<p>Any two courses (Code Range: POL-:(1000-3999)</p> <p><b>Only 1 crosslist is allowed</b></p>

## Department Policies

### Course Levels and Prerequisites

Generally, 100-level courses are introductory courses, 200-level are intermediary, 300-level courses are more advanced, and 400-level courses are research courses. The department doesn't impose a sequence of courses as per the level. However, it **strongly** recommends completing introductory courses before taking advanced-level ones, and that introductory courses are cleared before your final year.

Some advanced electives will require you to take lower level courses as prerequisites. These will be communicated before the start of the relevant semester. Prerequisites need to be completed in a semester preceding that of the relevant higher level course.

### Crosslists

The department allows students to take a fixed number of cross-listed courses for each program. Such courses originate from the department aside from Political Science but are then crosslisted with Political Science as its subject matter holds relevance to both departments. *Students can take up to two cross-listed courses in any semester, provided all other rules are satisfied.* The following is a summary of the number of cross-listed courses allowed for each program:

1. 4 year degree - 8 crosslists
2. 3 year degree - 4 crosslists
3. Minor - 2 crosslists
4. Concentration - 1 crosslist

If a student wishes for a course to be crosslisted, they may communicate with the department representative and share the course syllabus. The department will then take a collective decision, communicate with the professor directly, and then inform the students.

Please note that if a course originating from the Political Science department is crosslisted with another department, it will count as an elective for your Political Science program. Rules on credits **might vary** for interdisciplinary majors and need to be clarified with the relevant department.



### Teaching Assistant (TAs) Positions

Professors choose TAs for each of their courses at the start of each semester. These positions are open to third and fourth year students, who will assist the Professor with the logistics of the course. Applications for the same will be sent out before the start of the relevant semester.

TAs provide two credits. These may count either as academic elective credits for your Political Science program (with a maximum of four credits in total), or as internship credits once they have been reported to the Office of Academic Affairs.

## Faculty at Political Science

### Permanent Faculty Members

1. Ali Khan Mahmudabad
2. Anustubh Agnihotri
3. Bann Seng Tan
4. Bastian Steuwer (Head of Department)
5. Dipin Kaur
6. Kaustav Chakrabarti
7. Malvika Maheshwari
8. Poulomi Chakrabarti
9. Saul Wilson
10. Vivek Yadav

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q1. Is there a sequence in which I should take the required courses?**

No.

**Q2. 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.

**Q3. When are each of the compulsory courses offered?**

Currently, Introduction to Indian Politics as well as the Methods Courses are usually offered once a year. An iteration of Western Political Thought **or** Introduction to Political Theory is typically offered each semester. Introduction to Comparative Politics similarly tends to be offered in alternative semesters.

**Q4. 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.

**Q5. 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.

**Q6. Can I take Political Ideologies/Introduction to Political Theory as electives if I have done WPT I as a required course and vice versa?**

Yes.

**Q7. Having completed a methods course, can I take the other as an elective?**

Yes.

**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 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.

**Q11. Can I write a thesis in the third year?**

No. Only fourth year students 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.

**Q12. 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.

**Q13. 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.

**Q14. Can parents/guardians communicate with faculty?**

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

**Q15. 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 ([polsci.rep@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:polsci.rep@ashoka.edu.in)). If that does not satisfy you, you can email the Head of Department ([hod.pol@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:hod.pol@ashoka.edu.in)) with a copy to the department manager, Pratima Kadian, at ([pratima.kadian@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:pratima.kadian@ashoka.edu.in)).

## Contacts

For any queries regarding Political Science programmes, please contact: -

### Head of Department

**Bastian Steuwer:** [hod.pol@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:hod.pol@ashoka.edu.in)

### Department Manager

**Pratima Kadian:** [pratima.kadian@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:pratima.kadian@ashoka.edu.in)

### Student Representative

**Anamta Husain:** [polsci.rep@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:polsci.rep@ashoka.edu.in)