



# PRINCETON POLITICS

## UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

Information for Prospective Concentrators



## CHAIR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the Politics Department!



Professor Alan Patten  
Department Chair

My role as Chair is to provide general oversight for all our programs and policies, to manage the Department's finances, and to oversee all personnel (faculty, preceptors, staff) issues.

As you will see from the other items contained within this booklet, we have a lot of information we want to share with you about the

Department. Among others, you will find information from:

- **Professor Kristopher Ramsay**  
Associate Chair  
(responsible for our curriculum)
- **Professor Matias Iaryczower**  
Director of Undergraduate Studies;  
Advisor for Seniors
- **Professor Patricia Kirkland**  
Advisor for Juniors;  
Cognate Approval Advisor
- **Professor Germán Gieczewski**  
Advisor for Tracks in Political Economy  
and Quantitative and Analytical Political Science
- **Professor Keith Whittington**  
Advisor for Track in American Ideas and Institutions
- **Professor Corrine McConaughy**  
Advisor for Track in Race and Identity
- **Professor Guadalupe Tuñón**  
Study Abroad Advisor

Thank you for your interest in the Department of Politics at Princeton University.

This brochure provides a range of information about being a Politics major, including information on independent work, course requirements including prerequisites, and different tracks within the Department, which we hope prospective concentrators will find useful.

Before giving way to my colleagues, I wanted to share with you three reasons why I think Politics would be a good choice of major:

**1** With almost 60 faculty members, we are an unusually *large* department both by Princeton standards and by standards of political science departments around the world. This might not seem like a very interesting or exciting fact, but from the point of view of an undergraduate it is actually quite significant. Princeton faculty around the University are often busy and over-committed. Because of our large size, our faculty/student ratios are very favorable for students, and many of our lectures and seminars are quite modest in size. I think you'll find you get a lot of attention from faculty and staff.

**2** A second point is about the *quality* of the department. Princeton Politics is consistently ranked in the top three departments in the country, and is known for the deep and rigorous education we are able to offer our students. A number of faculty in the department are prominent voices in national and international conversations about pressing political questions, and all are leaders in their scholarly fields. I don't need to tell you that the world is facing a number of extremely important and difficult political challenges. But there are fundamental, longer-term issues that political scientists seek to study, as well: persistent racial and economic inequalities; the fraying of institutions of constitutional democracy; the fractures of international institutions like the EU; climate change; U.S. relations with China and Russia, just to mention a few. We have faculty experts who can help you to think rigorously and knowledgeably about all of these issues and problems and many others.

**3** Finally, the third point I would note is about the intellectual *breadth* of our undergraduate curriculum. In a sense our program is kind of a microcosm of a liberal arts education in which you are encouraged to sample from a number of different approaches to knowledge, and to specialize to some extent in one or two of them. Our courses cover a very wide spectrum of different styles of political science, from country and area-specific knowledge based on history and language; to sophisticated quantitative analysis; to economics-style formal modeling; to intellectual history and political philosophy – and everything in between. So if you're anything like me when I was your age – and you're still figuring out what you want to do with the rest of your life – studying political science in the Politics Department is a good way of keeping your options open while getting a rigorous education at the same time.

## WHY STUDY POLITICS?



Professor Kristopher Ramsay  
Associate Chair

### What can you do with a Politics degree?

At the most basic level, studying Politics will help you get a deeper and more systematic understanding of the contemporary world. Many of the world's most pressing challenges – from wars and terrorism to global warming and pandemics – need to be addressed (at least in part) politically. If we cannot fix our politics, then no amount of economic analysis or technical and scientific advances will help us with these challenges. And before you can fix anything – including politics – you need to understand it first.

We offer courses that are geared to giving you tools and methods that are useful to a range of different problems in political science. We believe that these tools will help you to think better and to analyze information about the political world in ways that are more sophisticated than what you hear among pundits or journalists or people just hanging out at the coffee shop.

Furthermore, the analytical tools you will acquire will be helpful not only in your academic pursuits but can be applied to a broader set of problems in the real world. Many of our students explore such opportunities during their summer jobs, which include a wide range such as legal work for the American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights Watch, the office of your Congressperson or a White House internship, and of course many of our students also take internships at places like Morgan Stanley. This diversity of options is also reflected in the post-graduation career paths of Politics

concentrators, which in the past couple of years have ranged from jobs at the State Department and The Wilderness Society to analyst careers at top investment banks and consulting firms to the pursuit of graduate degrees (including JDs, MPAs and PhDs).



### What are differences between POL and SPIA?

While there is a fair degree of overlap between the Politics Department (POL) and the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA), there are two key differences. First, SPIA is much more focused on the policy side of things, whereas in the Politics Department policy implications are just one facet of our approach to studying politics. Second, SPIA is explicitly multi-disciplinary, and requires courses in several disciplines besides Politics, whereas the Politics Department encourages you to explore a greater variety of topics and methods within Politics to deepen your understanding of politics. Our curriculum also covers certain areas of the discipline that don't really figure in the SPIA curriculum, such as political theory, law, quantitative methods, and formal methods.





## WHAT TO EXPECT AS A POLITICS MAJOR

To declare Politics as your major, prospective students must have taken for a grade any two Politics courses by the end of their sophomore Spring semester. Students may still choose Politics as their concentration even if they have not taken any 200-level introductory Politics courses. For more information on prerequisites, go to: <https://politics.princeton.edu/prerequisites-and-transfers>.

When signing into the Department, you will be asked to designate a primary field from the following: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, or Political Theory. Please be aware that in choosing your primary field, you must be prepared to take three courses in that field and also will need to write your senior thesis on a topic related to that field. You may opt to change your primary field no later than January of junior year, however.



Professor Matias Iaryczower  
Director of Undergraduate Studies

Politics concentrators must take eleven departmental courses, which includes two prerequisites and POL 300 (a required course that must be completed Fall semester of junior year).

Three courses must be in the primary field, two in a secondary field, and one in a tertiary field. We refer to this as the 3-2-1 field distributions. More information about departmentals and field distribution requirements can be found here: <https://politics.princeton.edu/course-selection>. You can also view courses by subfields here: <https://politics.princeton.edu/undergraduate-courses-subfield>.

All Politics majors are required to take a course that satisfies the analytical requirement no later than the Fall semester of junior year. For more information about fulfilling this requirement and to view the list of courses that satisfy it, go to: <https://politics.princeton.edu/analytical-requirement>.

For the remaining three departmental courses, students may opt to take only Politics courses and/or seek approval for up to two cognates.

Cognates are courses outside of the Department that are not cross-listed with Politics but have substantial political science content of more than 50%. To seek cognate approval, students must do so from the Cognate Approval Advisor, no later than the last day of classes within the semester they are taking the course. Cognate approvals are not retroactive to freshman or sophomore years. You can learn more about cognates here: <https://politics.princeton.edu/cognates>.

### Junior Independent Work

Effective with the Class of 2025, all Politics juniors will be required to take POL 300 (Conducting Independent Research in Political Science) for departmental course credit, in addition to being assigned to a Junior Practicum in which students will both learn more about a specific topic and write a Research Prospectus (roughly 12-15 pages). Students will be required to block out the time that POL 300 is offered in order to complete this requirement. To view our current list of Junior Practicums, see: <https://politics.princeton.edu/junior-practicums>. Instructions on how to select practicum preferences will be sent soon after the sophomore declaration period and students will need to take their practicum selections into account when choosing the subsequent Fall semester courses.

In the Spring of junior year, every Politics concentrator will write an independent research paper under the supervision of a faculty member. A Junior Paper (JP) is an essay of roughly 20-35 pages that is clearly focused on one – or a few related – political questions, problems, or issues. Some students may even opt to use their Research Prospectus as a starting point to expand upon ideas in their JP.

For more information on both the Fall and Spring junior independent work requirements, see: <https://politics.princeton.edu/undergraduate/independent-work/junior-independent-work>.

### Senior Thesis

During the senior year, each Politics concentrator writes a thesis. The senior thesis is expected to make an original contribution to broader knowledge in the field in which the student is working. The length of a senior thesis is generally between 80-100 pages. For more information on the senior thesis requirement, see: <https://politics.princeton.edu/undergraduate/independent-work/senior-thesis>.

### Senior Thesis Poster Session

Seniors must also submit and present a professional poster describing their senior thesis research. For more information, visit: <https://politics.princeton.edu/senior-thesis-poster-session>.

NOTE: If you are unsure about Politics and/or haven't taken the required number of prerequisites, please feel free to email Professor Iaryczower at: [miaryc@princeton.edu](mailto:miaryc@princeton.edu) to discuss your options.

## HOW TO CHOOSE A PRIMARY FIELD

Once you have taken a few Politics courses, you will probably have an idea of what topics and world regions interest you most and are ready to choose a primary field.

The Department organizes its undergraduate teaching into four primary fields. They include:

- **American Politics**
- **Comparative Politics**
- **International Relations**
- **Political Theory**

You will take at least three classes in your primary field (but you can of course also take as many in another field), and you will write your senior thesis in your primary field.

If you are interested in international politics, please note that International Relations tends to cover topics involving relationships and events between countries (e.g., Why do countries go to war with one another?; What explains trade openness?) while Comparative Politics is about domestic politics within countries (e.g., Why do some countries democratize while others don't?; What leads to partisan polarization?). Some topics (e.g., civil war; the effect of domestic politics on trade policies) can be pursued within either field.



Professor Patricia Kirkland  
Juniors Advisor,  
Cognate Approval Advisor



For more information about the various primary fields, please contact Professor Kirkland at: [p.kirkland@princeton.edu](mailto:p.kirkland@princeton.edu).





## WHY DEPARTMENTAL TRACKS MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO YOU

The Department of Politics offers four optional departmental tracks that provide more focused guidance to students who wish to address themes that bridge the sub-fields.

The departmental tracks are:

- **American Ideas and Institutions**
- **Political Economy**
- **Quantitative and Analytical Political Science**
- **Race and Identity**

Students who pursue a track will still need to fulfill the requirements of a Politics concentrator. Courses may simultaneously fulfill both the track requirements and the Politics concentration requirements.

Students must inform the Undergraduate Program Manager, Gayle Brodsky ([gbrodsky@princeton.edu](mailto:gbrodsky@princeton.edu)), of their intention to pursue a track no later than February 1st of their junior year.

Please note that unlike University certificates, a student's track will not appear on their transcript. Concentrators who successfully complete the track's requirements will receive a departmental attestation on Class Day.

Here you will find information about each track:

**1 The Track in American Ideas and Institutions** is available for students who have a particular interest in the three branches of the American government and the ideas, principles and laws that undergird them. This specialized track within the Politics concentration easily meshes with American politics as a primary field and provides a departmental certificate for those who complete its requirements. The track helps students navigate through this subject matter by specifying a set of courses that meet this requirement. Students are expected to take a total of five courses from the designated list, with at least



**Professor Keith Whittington**  
*Advisor for the Track in American Ideas and Institutions*

one course in each of four topic areas: the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, the Constitution and the Courts, and American Political, Legal and Constitutional Thought. In addition, the student's senior thesis must incorporate a significant amount of content related to the themes of the track.

For more information about this track, go to:  
<https://politics.princeton.edu/program-american-ideas-and-institutions>.

Interested students should contact Professor Whittington ([kewhitt@princeton.edu](mailto:kewhitt@princeton.edu)) to schedule a meeting.

**2 The Track in Political Economy** is a cross-disciplinary field for students who wish to further their understandings of social phenomena and individual behavior by combining the perspectives of its two constituent disciplines. The track allows and encourages students to use analytical tools from game theory, microeconomics and statistics to study political behavior, and to incorporate a thorough analysis of politics and collective decision-making into economic analysis.



**Professor Germán Gieczewski**  
*Advisor for the Tracks in Political Economy and Quantitative and Analytical Political Science*

For more information on Political Economy prerequisites and track requirements, please visit: <https://politics.princeton.edu/program-political-economy>.

**3 The Track in Quantitative and Analytical Political Science** is designed for students who wish to deepen their understanding of quantitative and analytical methods to study key questions in political science. For more information on track requirements and the prerequisite, please visit: <https://politics.princeton.edu/program-quantitative-and-analytical-political-science>.

If you are interested in pursuing either the Political Economy and/or the Quantitative and Analytical Political Science track(s), please contact Professor Gieczewski ([germang@princeton.edu](mailto:germang@princeton.edu)) to schedule a meeting.

**4 The Department of Politics also offers the Track in Race and Identity** for Politics concentrators seeking a deeper understanding of the politics of race and identity. Completion of the track attests to a student having successfully taken a range of courses examining the role of race and identity in politics. The track offers courses dealing with moral, ethical, and legal issues relating to race and identity in the United States and around the world, such as hate speech, discrimination, and civil rights. The track also encompasses courses in international relations and



**Professor Corrine McConaughy**  
*Advisor for the Track in Race and Identity*

comparative politics focusing on human rights, ethnic conflict, and social movements.

For more information about this track, go to:  
<https://politics.princeton.edu/track-race-and-identity>.

Interested students should contact Professor McConaughy ([corrinem@princeton.edu](mailto:corrinem@princeton.edu)) to schedule a meeting.





## STUDY ABROAD

The Department encourages students to consider studying abroad during the Spring semester of junior year pending approval from the Office of International Programs. Requests to study abroad in the Fall of senior year will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Here are what we think are the top-five reasons to study abroad:

- #5 One can only learn so much in the setting of a classroom. The abroad experience is far more enriching;
- #4 Cultural immersion and experience;
- #3 Enhance second/third language;
- #2 Establish and maintain new collegial and professional networks;
- #1 Fun!

With pre-approval from the Study Abroad Advisor, a student may receive departmental credit for up to two, Politics-related courses in a given semester.

NOTE: Our new Fall Junior Independent Work requirement will prevent students from studying abroad during the Fall semester of junior year, beginning with the Class of 2025.



Professor Guadalupe Tuñón  
Study Abroad Advisor

For more information on studying abroad, please visit:  
<https://politics.princeton.edu/study-abroad>.

Questions should be directed to Professor Tuñón at:  
[tunon@princeton.edu](mailto:tunon@princeton.edu).



More information about the Department of Politics Undergraduate Program can be found on our website (<https://politics.princeton.edu/undergraduate>).

Feel free to contact the Undergraduate Program Manager, Gayle Brodsky, with any questions via email ([gbrodsky@princeton.edu](mailto:gbrodsky@princeton.edu)) or by phone (609-258-4770).