

**GRADUATE STUDY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
(Formally adopted May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Amended May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015.)

The following requirements apply to those students entering the graduate program in political science in August, 2009, 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**

**1.1 COURSEWORK**

The student is expected to complete successfully 42 semester hours of advanced coursework before being considered for candidacy. Students in their first year of study are expected to complete four courses in each of their first two semesters, unless the Director of Graduate Studies approves a reduced course load. 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 two core courses, one in the major field and one in the minor 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 Midterm Review, described in Section 1.22) 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 both the general and subfield 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 Midterm Review, described in Section 1.22) 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 and pass the general preliminary exam in that field.

**1.14 Research Tools**--There are two components to the research tools requirement, the basic research tools requirement and the advanced research tools requirement.

**1.141 Basic Research Tools Requirement--** Each student must successfully complete two courses, POLI 500 (Social Scientific Thinking) and POLI 501 (Basic Research Practicum), and pass the basic research tools exam. The exam will be given only once per year, during the Spring semester. A student who starts the program in the Spring semester may take the exam after either one or three semesters of study with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. For students who enter the program with significant experience with social science research, the Director of Graduate Studies may waive the course requirements but may not waive the exam.

The basic tools exam will be prepared by the instructors for POLI 500 and POLI 501 and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate Studies Committee will be responsible for grading the exam. In the event that a member of the Graduate Studies Committee served as instructor for POLI 500 or POLI 501, the Director of Graduate Studies will appoint an alternate grader in his or her place. The Graduate Studies Committee will assign each exam a grade of pass or fail. If the committee wishes, the committee may ask a student for written or oral clarification of his or her answers before assigning a grade. Normally, students will be informed of their grades within two weeks after taking the written exam. Any student who fails the exam will be removed from the program. A student who fails may pursue an appeal via the procedures described in Section 6.

A certain proficiency in basic math is necessary to complete the advanced 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.

**1.142 Advanced Research Tools Requirement--**The advanced tools requirement for each Ph.D. student will be determined in consultation with his/her prospective Dissertation Director and with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. The specific requirement will depend on the particular student's fields and interests and must be met by completing at least 9 hours of advanced course work in any or all of the following areas:

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

All courses counted toward this requirement must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Normally 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.

## **1.2 EXAMS**

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

**1.21 Basic Research Tools Exam** on social scientific thinking—Please refer to section 1.141 (Basic Research Tools Requirement) above.

**1.22 Midterm Review:** After passing the Basic Research Tools Exam and before completing required coursework, each student will be evaluated formally to determine whether he or she will be permitted to continue in the program. This review will normally take place at the beginning of the student's fourth semester of study, but may be scheduled earlier if the student is making particularly fast progress in completing degree requirements. The review will focus on the student's past performance and expected future progress to the degree. One of the goals of the midterm review will be to outline a plan that will allow the student the best chance of developing the skills necessary to achieve his or her research and career goals.

Prior to the review, each student must declare major and minor fields and, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and relevant faculty members, select one faculty member as a prospective Dissertation Director. Fields and Dissertation Directors can be changed after this point by petitioning the Director of Graduate Studies. Each student will also be asked to provide: (1) a writing sample that demonstrates the student's independent research ability; and (2) a written statement (developed in consultation with the prospective Dissertation Director) outlining the student's general goals in the Ph.D. program (e.g., a general dissertation topic area, expected methodological skills, etc.) and a plan for obtaining the necessary training to achieve these goals. These materials will be requested at least three weeks before the formal review meetings are conducted, and they must be turned in to the Director of Graduate Studies at least one week before the formal review meeting is held.

The Graduate Studies Committee will conduct Midterm Reviews. If a member of the Graduate Studies Committee is serving as prospective Dissertation Director for a student being reviewed, that committee member will be replaced with an alternate faculty member from the same field (appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies) for that student's review.

Members of the committee will review:

- a. the student's grades.
- b. the written evaluations of the student submitted by faculty under whom the student has studied and worked as a TA/TM or RA/RM.
- c. the writing sample submitted as evidence of the student's research skills.
- d. other pertinent information regarding the student's professional development such as attendance at departmental colloquia, participation in conferences, papers prepared for presentation and/or publication, and additional skill development through summer programs, field work, etc.
- e. the student's plan for developing the background and skills to complete the Ph.D. program and fulfill his or her research goals.

The student and his or her prospective Dissertation Director will then meet with the Graduate Studies Committee to discuss the student's progress, skills, goals, and plan. The student may invite other faculty to attend the meeting as well if he or she wishes. Following the meeting, the Graduate Studies Committee, in consultation with the prospective Dissertation Director, will make a recommendation to the Department Chair. The committee will recommend one of the following:

- a. the student prepare to take preliminary examinations at a specified time.
- b. the student be re-evaluated within four months.
- c. the student complete the requirements for a terminal MA degree.
- d. the student be dismissed from the graduate program.

**1.23 Preliminary Examinations:** After successful completion of all required coursework in the major and minor fields, each student must pass three written examinations: a general exam in the major field, a general exam in the minor field, and an exam in a subfield of the major field (possible subfields are listed in Appendix A). Exams are given once per year at the beginning of the spring semester, typically in January. 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. The Director of Graduate Studies will schedule the order of the exams, but normally general exams will be given before subfield exams. Field-specific rules regarding the content and format of the exams are included in Appendix A. These field-specific rules may be changed at any time by majority vote of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in the relevant subfield 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 in the semester before the exams are to be given. Any questions of format that are not specifically mentioned in the above rules or in the field-specific rules should be considered variable and not subject to any prior notice. Students who feel that the administration of exams violated 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 preliminary exam coordinator for the field. This faculty member will be responsible for (1) soliciting questions from members of the field and providing general exams and subfield exams to the Director of Graduate Studies at least one week before the exams are scheduled to be administered; (2) appointing the committees to grade subfield exams; and (3) distributing completed exam essays to the grading committees and soliciting grades in a timely manner. All full time faculty members in a field are normally expected to participate in grading the general field exam unless they are on leave. Subfield exams must be graded by at least three full-time regular faculty members or by all the full-time regular faculty members in the subfield, whichever is smaller. The student's prospective Dissertation Director will normally be a member of the grading committee for the subfield exam.

After the written exam has been administered, the grading committee may administer an oral examination. Oral exams may cover any material in the relevant field or subfield. Each grading committee will issue one of the following grades for each exam based on the answers to the written exam and the oral exam if one was conducted:

- a. Pass with Honors
- b. Pass
- c. Conditional Pass: This option is selected when the 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 committee must specify the conditions that are to be met by the student and the procedure by which it will determine whether the conditions are met. (Often this will involve the student producing a paper in the area of concern.) Once the specified conditions are met, the student passes the exam. If the conditions are not met, the student fails the exam.
- d. Fail: A student who fails one or more exams will have the option to retake the exam(s) in the same

field or subfield under the same exam rules before the start of the following semester. Any student who fails a retake will be dismissed from the program.

**1.24 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. 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.

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

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

**1.26 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 annually early in January for the current calendar year by the Graduate Studies Committee. The committee will evaluate each student using the following criteria and inform the student in writing of his or her status.

**a. GPA:** Students with a GPA below 3.33 will not be in good standing.

**b. RA/TA Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated each semester by the faculty to whom they are assigned as research or teaching assistants, with the exception of students in their first semester of study, who will be evaluated by their faculty mentors (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 below a 3.0 average for the previous calendar year will not be in good standing.

**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 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.

If a student is not in good standing, he or she will be placed on probationary status for the spring semester and the Graduate Studies Committee will inform the student what actions will be sufficient to reinstate good standing. 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, with the exception of students in their first semester of study. 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.

## **2.1 TEACHING ASSISTANT/MENTEE 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) during each semester in which they serve as TA/TM.

## **2.2 RESEARCH ASSISTANT/MENTEE 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. Then, within the first month of the fall semester, each first year student must identify a faculty member to serve as his/her first year mentor. The student should meet with the first year mentor regularly to consult about his/her progress in the program and research agenda. This faculty member will serve as the student's advisor until the student identifies a prospective Dissertation Director at his/her Midterm Review. Changes in advisors can be made with the approval of the DGS. Following the Midterm Review, the prospective Dissertation Director is the student's primary advisor, and following the Prospectus Defense, the Dissertation Director is the student's primary advisor.

## **3.2 ANNUAL REVIEWS**

Each student will receive a written performance evaluation once per year. First year students will be evaluated by the Graduate Studies Committee at the end of their second semester following their performance on the Basic Tools Exam. Second year students will be evaluated by the Graduate Studies Committee following their Midterm Reviews. Students in their third year and beyond will be evaluated by a committee of at least three faculty members in their major field during the spring semester. The members of the evaluation committee will be chosen by the Field Coordinator (normally a member of the Graduate Committee) and should include the dissertation director. In each case, the evaluation committee will 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 Department Coordinator. The university deadline for such filings is February 1 of the year the MA is expected.

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.

## **Appendix A: Field-Specific Rules for Preliminary Exams**

### **1. Comparative Politics:**

Students majoring in comparative politics must take a general exam in Comparative Politics and a subfield exam in one of the following subfields: Comparative Political Behavior, Comparative Legislatures, Comparative Political Institutions, European Politics, Latin American Politics, Eastern European and Russian Politics, Asian Politics, or African 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.

Rules governing the Comparative Politics Subfield Exams:

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 and a subfield exam in the Scientific Study of International Conflict and Cooperation. 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 and Subfield 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 and Subfield 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.

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 and a subfield exam in their choice of three of the following subfields: Political Behavior, Institutions, Public Policy, Parties and Interest Groups, and Sub-national Politics.

Rules governing the American Politics General Field Exam and Subfield 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:

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 basic or advanced 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: 18-24 hours of coursework, Basic Tools Exam

Year Two: 18-24 hours of coursework, first teaching mentee experience, Midterm Review

Year Three: 0-9 hours of coursework, second teaching mentee experience, preliminary exams

Year Four: Prospectus Defense, advance to candidacy

Year Five: Dissertation defense, Degree completion