

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Department Objectives

- To contribute to the student's development as a liberally-educated person, not only by a broad exposure to political theory and practice, but also by encouragement of intellectual curiosity and critical thinking;
- To prepare students for graduate studies or professional studies in political science, public administration, international affairs, or law;
- To prepare students for careers in politics and government, survey research, journalism, and some aspects of business such as public relations, marketing and lobbying.

Political Science Major

Three options are available in this major:

1. Political Science (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/political-science/political-science-ba/>) - Bachelor of Arts Degree
or Political Science (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/political-science/political-science-bs/>) - Bachelor of Science Degree
2. Political Science 7-12 Teaching Subject Endorsement (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/political-science/political-science-7-12-teaching-subject-endorsement-bae/>) - Bachelor of Arts in Education Degree

The Political Science major may take the form of a General BA or BS degree in Political Science or one of two career-oriented concentrations; majors are strongly encouraged to consider their career interests in choosing one of these options.

Minors in Political Science (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/political-science/political-science-minor/>), Public Administration (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/political-science/public-administration-minor/>), and Environmental Science (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/political-science/environmental-science-minor/>) are available for students pursuing majors in other disciplines, especially business, journalism, philosophy, economics, sociology, social work, and criminal justice.

Political Science participates in the Social Science 7-12 Teaching Field Endorsement (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/history/social-science-7-12-teaching-field-endorsement-bae/>).

A Pre-Law (<http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/departments-programs/political-science/pre-law/>) emphasis is available for the Political Science Major (Option 1 above) and all pre-law students, including those choosing not to major in Political Science, are invited to seek the assistance of the department's pre-law advisors.

Political Science (PSCI)

PSCI 110 – Introduction to American Politics 3 credit hours

An introductory study of the constitutional framework of American politics, and how it has evolved. Contemporary institutions and processes of the American federal democratic republic are also examined in considerable detail.

PSCI 126 – First Year Seminar 1 credit hour

The First-Year Seminar provides students with a multidisciplinary experience in which they approach an issue or problem from the perspective of three different academic differences. The First-Year Seminar will consist of three 1-credit hour courses taken as co-requisites in a single semester. The successful completion of all three courses satisfies the General Studies LOPER 1 course requirement. Students may take the First-Year Seminar in any discipline, irrespective of their major or minor. Students admitted as readmit students or transfer students who transfer 18 or more hours of General Studies credit to UNK are exempt from taking a LOPER 1 course.

PSCI 140 – Democracy and Global Citizenship 3 credit hours

Compares how democracy is practiced in various countries around the world, compares democratic governance to non-democratic, and considers the prospects for democratizing non-democratic countries.

PSCI 156 – Regional Field Study 1-4 credit hours

Designed to provide the student with a firsthand knowledge of the political culture and governmental institutions of a U.S. region other than the Midwest or foreign country or region. Students wishing to take this course must obtain written approval in advance from the Department Chair.

Total Credits Allowed: 4.00

PSCI 168 – Introduction to International Relations 3 credit hours

A study of contemporary international relations, the changing global system, the role of the nation-state and other actors, the means and ends of power, the causes and consequences of war, and the perennial pursuit of peace.

PSCI 170 – Democracy as a Political Idea 3 credit hours

Examines the contested meanings of the concept "democracy", such as contestation between liberals and conservatives and socialists, and traces democracy's development as a political ideal.

PSCI 188 – GS Portal 3 credit hours

Students analyze critical issues confronting individuals and society in a global context as they pertain to the discipline in which the Portal course is taught. The Portal is intended to help students succeed in their university education by being mentored in process of thinking critically about important ideas and articulating their own conclusions. Students may take the Portal in any discipline, irrespective of their major or minor. Satisfies the General Studies Portal course requirement. Students may take their Portal course in any discipline. Students who transfer 24 or more hours of General Studies credit to UNK are exempt from taking a portal course.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

Prerequisite: First year freshman standing or sophomore standing only.

PSCI 212 – Introduction to Public Administration 3 credit hours

An introduction to the core functions of public administration in the United States. Includes analysis of the controversies involved in organizing, staffing, and making public policy in executive branch agencies. Explores how executive branch agencies operate and interact within the broader political system (composed of Congress, the presidency, the courts, interest groups, political parties, and the news media). Assumes basic knowledge of American politics and government.

PSCI 252 – The Courts and the Judicial Process 3 credit hours

A broad examination of the judicial branch, including the relevant legal and constitutional concepts, institutions, and processes. Assumes basic knowledge of American government.

PSCI 269 – The Institutions and Processes of the United Nations 3 credit hours

This course examines the role of the United Nations within the international system. We will explore its history and structure as well as the various opportunities and challenges that it faces in shaping the international system today. Emphasis will be placed on the main bodies (Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC, UN Secretariat and Secretary-General) and agencies that operate within the United Nations and analyzing how well the UN has addressed issues such as international peace and security, human rights, the environment, global poverty, genocide and peacekeeping, among others. Attention will be given, in particular, to how the United Nations might be reformed to improve its overall effectiveness.

PSCI 280H – Special Topics 3 credit hours

A General Studies course for Honors students. Interdisciplinary course that examines the connections between disciplines.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 281 – Political Analysis 3 credit hours

How do we know what causes wars? Whether public policies are effective? How campaign donations affect legislators? If judges are influenced by ideology? How voters reason? This course introduces students to the basic methods that political scientists use to answer questions like these about how political processes and systems work and how political actors behave. The primary objectives are to develop students' capabilities to read and understand political science scholarship in upper-level courses and to participate in undergraduate research. Topics include: development of questions, preparation of research designs, selection of cases and evidence, and techniques for analysis. This is not a statistics course, and no previous knowledge of statistical methods is necessary. Recommended preparation: PSCI 110, PSCI 140, and PSCI 168; sophomore standing. Spring term only.

PSCI 300 – American Constitutional Law 3 credit hours

A study of landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on American institutions, policies, and processes. Assumes basic knowledge of American government and judicial process.

PSCI 320 – Politics and Law of International Human Rights 3 credit hours

This course explores the emergence and development, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, of an international movement dedicated to the promotion and enforcement of human rights around the world. Beginning with the UN Charter (1945) and the subsequent Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the international community sought to create a system of norms, laws and institutions focused on not only preventing the horrors of the Holocaust from happening again, but to also establish a set of universal rights and protections for all individuals, regardless of nationality, race, religion, gender, etc. With this in mind, we will examine the broader goals and accomplishments of this movement from its inception to today, the obstacles that remain, and the various actors and institutions, at both the national and international levels, that have been involved in influencing the evolution and character of the movement. In particular, we will address the importance of states, IGOs, NGOs and other local actors (scholars, judges, citizen activists, etc.) and explore how state sovereignty, concerns over national security, the issue of enforcement and cultural relativism have served as barriers to the broader human rights movement.

PSCI 325 – Individual Liberties and Civil Rights 3 credit hours

An investigation of criminal, political, and racial justice with emphasis on the role of the Supreme Court in the protection of the basic freedoms in American society. Selected case studies will examine areas of conflict between the rights of the individual and of society. Assumes basic knowledge of American government and constitutional law.

Prerequisite: PSCI 300 or permission of instructor

PSCI 332 – Environmental Politics & Policy 3 credit hours

This course examines the environment as a public policy issue. Contemporary case studies of environmental policy concerning water, air, land use, habitat protection, climate change, and the like will be used to develop an understanding of the political, legal, and ethical aspects of public policy on environmental matters.

PSCI 333 – The Politics and Policy of Health Care 3 credit hours

An examination of current government policies, policy alternatives, and political interests that complicate the development and implementation of health policies in the United States.

PSCI 340 – Topics in Comparative Politics 3 credit hours

This course is an in-depth examination of a special topic in the subfield of comparative politics (e.g., Comparative Electoral Systems). May be repeated with different topics, up to 6 hours.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 341 – Politics of the Drug War 3 credit hours

This course examines theoretical frameworks and empirical research about the interaction between illegal drugs and politics. It provides an overview specifically of the U.S. war on drugs, its history and consequences for democratic politics and development in the United States, Latin America and other regions of the world. The course also examines potential alternatives to U.S. drug policy, including drug legalization and drug decriminalization.

PSCI 342 – Politics of Globalization 3 credit hours

This course explores the process of globalization - the various political, economic, cultural, and social changes that have, and continue to, transform our world. The goal of the course is to clarify what globalization is and how it is affecting societies around the world. For instance, the course focuses on issues such as global trade, the global spread of western values and ideas, threats to the power of nation-states as well as the existence of transnational social movements.

PSCI 344 – Politics of the Developed World 3 credit hours

A comparative study of politics and government in the major industrial democracies. The United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan are featured; assumes basic knowledge of American government.

PSCI 345 – Politics of the Developing World 3 credit hours

The course is essentially a comparison of the political systems of developing nations in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. Problems and challenges in developing national institutions; patterns of socialization and national identities; building viable national institutions; the nature of political participation and exit strategies; and economic influences on political stability/instability will be analyzed and investigated.

PSCI 346 – Latin American Politics 3 credit hours

A study of politics and government in contemporary Latin America. Case studies focusing on particular Latin American nations will be used to illustrate broader patterns and trends. Attention will also be given to issues related to economic development and political economy as well as the varied role that U.S. policy has had in the region.

PSCI 347 – Comparative Political Behavior 3 credit hours

A study of mass political behavior from a cross-national perspective. Topics addressed include: political participation, voting behavior, social capital, nationalism, cultural shifts, support for democracy, and world culture.

PSCI 348 – Military Politics and Civil-Military Relations 3 credit hours

The military stands among the most significant actors within the politics of countries in the developed and developing world. Historically, the armed forces have played multiple roles, including nation-builder, defender of the state and national heritage, government, ideological indoctrinator, social reformist, repressor, interest group, vocational trainer, and business class. This course examines this varied political role of the armed forces in developing and developed countries with a specific focus on its role in constructing democratic or nondemocratic regimes.

PSCI 351 – The American Congress 3 credit hours

A study of the operation of the legislative branch of the US government, the motives and methods of legislators, the interactions between the two houses of Congress, and the interplay of checks and balances in relations between the legislative branch and other branches. This course is often taught using a joint simulation on legislative policymaking with students in PSCI 366: Political Parties and Interest Groups. Assumes basic knowledge of American government.

PSCI 352 – The American Presidency 3 credit hours

A study of the executive branch of the U.S. government, with particular attention to the presidency, its evolution and its constitutional roles in the system of checks-and-balances. Special attention is given to leadership style and to the functions of the modern presidency. Case studies will be used to illustrate how different presidents have interpreted their powers and discharged their duties.

PSCI 353 – Race & Politics 3 credit hours

A comparative and analytical study of race and politics in the United States. Theories of race and their role in shaping public understandings, social mobilization, and governmental policy. Particular attention will be given to the social construction of race and the political implications of theories of whiteness, African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos.

PSCI 355 – Public Budgeting 3 credit hours

Government budgets are statements of social value. What kind of economic activity a government chooses to tax, and how those resources are spent, both reflect a government's priorities and the political pressures it must accommodate. This class examines how governments in the United States make budgetary decisions. Special attention will be paid to the political influences on budgeting, the budget-making processes employed by executives and legislatures, and the social, political and economic consequences of those decisions.

PSCI 356 – Public Personnel Administration 3 credit hours

This course examines the politics and policies that govern human resources management in United States governments. In particular, the course surveys the major functions of public personnel administration: recruitment, hiring, compensation and evaluation, and analyzes how these are adapted in the public sector to reflect political influences. The course also reviews the historical development of civil service systems.

PSCI 357 – Public Management 3 credit hours

This course uses a case-study approach to understand how leaders in executive branch agencies navigate their organizational environments to implement public policy. Specific topics include: organizational structure and culture, accountability to elected officials and the rule of law, and tools for managerial analysis.

PSCI 360 – Topics in American Politics 3 credit hours

This course is an in-depth examination of a special topic in American politics (e.g., Presidents and the Press). May be repeated for different topics, up to 6 hours.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 361 – State and Local Government 3 credit hours

A comparative study of state and local governments in the United States. Case studies are used to illustrate important variations; Nebraska's unique unicameral legislature and nonpartisan state elections are given special attention. Assumes basic knowledge of American government.

PSCI 362 – Dynamics of Humanitarian Crises and Global Society 3 credit hours

The main goal of this course is to systematically examine the psychological impacts of these crises on global society. By revealing psychological dynamics surrounding humanitarian crises, this proposed course examines the flaws of global society. Furthermore, this course encourages students to propose possible solutions to the problems of global society through a variety of exercises and assignments.

PSCI 365 – Campaigns and Elections 3 credit hours

A study of the structures and processes that affect the selection of elected officials in the United States, focusing on congressional and presidential elections. Special attention is given to the mass media as the primary intermediaries between citizens and candidates for political office.

PSCI 366 – Political Parties and Interest Groups 3 credit hours

A study of the voluntary associations that serve as primary sites for political participation in American politics. The functions of organized interests in representation and lobbying are the primary focus, as well as the functions of political parties in coordinating officials within and between branches of government. This course is often taught using a joint simulation on legislative policymaking with students in PSCI 351: The American Congress. Assumes basic knowledge of American government.

PSCI 367 – Human Security and Global Peacekeeping 3 credit hours

This course introduces students to the issues of human security and global peacekeeping. By examining a series of topics that are closely related to these matters, this class intends to promote the ability to critically analyze various conflicts around the world. Through class exercises and writing assignments, students are expected to develop their skills in constructing arguments and making political judgments in the field of international security.

PSCI 368 – International Law and Organization 3 credit hours

This course focuses on the role of law in international politics, as well as on the key international organizations. The evolution, structure, functions, problems and performance of the United Nations and its specialized agencies are emphasized.

PSCI 369 – International Political Economy 3 credit hours

This course explores the linkages between politics and economics in the international arena. Topics include: origins of a world economy, American hegemony, theories of cooperation, East-West relations, North-South relations, multinational corporations, and global interdependence.

PSCI 370 – American Foreign Policy 3 credit hours

A study of foreign policy decision making processes with special emphasis on the role of the President, the Congress, the various bureaucratic actors (i.e. National Security Council, the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA) as well as several case studies focusing on contemporary diplomatic problems.

PSCI 371 – Religion & Politics 3 credit hours

This course examines the relationship between church and state. The first half of the course considers arguments over how religion and politics should relate to one another and how those arguments have changed over time. The second half explores contemporary issues, focusing primarily on American politics.

PSCI 372 – Theoretical Foundations of American Politics and Law 3 credit hours

This course explores the writers, thinkers, religious fanatics, political radicals, poets, statesman, slave masters, and slaves that have made America not only a political community, but a fraught, potent, evocative, and ambivalent symbol of everything from freedom to its opposite. Along the way we will critically examine abstract ideas such as freedom, equality, representation, labor, rights, and citizenship as they develop in the United States alongside histories of colonization, slavery, industrialization, immigration, and war.

PSCI 373 – Ancient Political Thought 3 credit hours

A survey of political thought from Plato to Rousseau.

PSCI 374 – Modern Political Thought 3 credit hours

A survey of political thought from Hobbes to the present.

PSCI 375 – Democratic Political Thought 3 credit hours

An introduction to political thinking relevant to the inception and maintenance of democratic forms of government. Much of the work centers upon American political thinkers like James Madison and John Dewey; but students will also learn more about classical, modern and postmodern approaches to forms of popular government. Some emphasis is given to the special role of education in democratic thought.

PSCI 376 – 20th & 21st Century Political Thought 3 credit hours

This course traces the development of political thought from the end of the nineteenth century to the present.

PSCI 377 – Topics in Political Thought 3 credit hours

This course is an in-depth examination of a special topic or theorist in the subfield of political philosophy (e.g., Marx, Feminist Political Thought). May be repeated with different topics, up to 6 hours.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 378 – Feminist Political Thought 3 credit hours

An introduction to the major theorists and defining ideas for various types of feminism, e.g., liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, eco-feminism. The course considers common ideas and differences across the types of feminism and uses the theoretical perspectives as lenses through which to examine contemporary political issues and events.

PSCI 380 – Topics in International Relations 3 credit hours

This course is an in-depth examination of a special topic in World Politics (e.g., Human Rights in World Politics). May be repeated for different topics, up to 6 hours.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 382 – Public Opinion and Political Problems 3 credit hours

A study of the process of public opinion formation and change among mass public and elites in the United States. Normative and empirical issues involving the measurement of public opinion and its impact on public policy will also be considered.

PSCI 385 – Foundations of Public Policy 3 credit hours

An examination of policy-making processes at the national and state levels. Case studies will emphasize the many variables that influence policy formulation.

PSCI 388 – GS Capstone 3 credit hours

An interdisciplinary experience where students apply the knowledge, cognitive abilities, and communication skills they have gained from General Studies in designing and completing an original project or paper. Students employ methods and interpretive means of two or more disciplines to integrate knowledge and synthesize their results. Satisfies the General Studies capstone course requirement. Students may take their Capstone course in any discipline.

Prerequisite: Junior or senior level standing or within 6 hours of completing general studies requirements.

PSCI 390 – Politics & Culture of Asia 3 credit hours

A study of politics and culture in Asian countries. Particular attention is given to Japan and China and case studies of other countries in the region are also used to illustrate general patterns and trends. Democracy as it is practiced and developing in Asia is a significant theme, and the course examines other key concepts in the field of comparative politics, including ethnic conflict and economic development.

PSCI 400 – Public Administration 3 credit hours

This course looks at the natures, structures, functions and problems of public administration in the United States. Major emphasis is placed on the relationship between the bureaucracy and the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of national and state government. Assumes basic knowledge of the American bureaucracy and American politics.

PSCI 410 – Advanced Study in American Government: Special Topics 3 credit hours

A senior-level seminar in a special topic in the subfield of American government, e.g., Presidents and the American public. May be repeated up to 6 hours with a different topic.

Department Consent Required

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 420 – Advanced Study in Political Behavior: Special Topics 3 credit hours

A senior-level seminar in a special topic in the subfield of political behavior, e.g., voting in the American electorate. May be repeated up to 6 hours with a different topic.

Department Consent Required

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 434 – U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East 3 credit hours

Since World War II, few regions in the world have been as important to the United States and its interests as the Middle East. From the Cold War to the post 9/11 era, strategic, economic and moral imperatives have brought about considerable U.S. involvement in the region. This class examines the Middle East through the lens of American foreign policy. Our lectures, readings and discussions will focus on the development, implementation and effects of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East from 1945 to the present. We will also examine how American foreign policies are perceived, understood and treated through Middle Eastern perspectives. Some of the topics we will cover in the course will include: the politics surrounding the birth of Israel, U.S.-Soviet competition for influence in the region during the Cold War, the rise of Arab nationalism, the conflicts in Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt, issues of resources and economic development in the Middle East as they relate to U.S. interests, terrorism, and the ongoing violence in Syria and Iraq.

PSCI 440 – Advanced Study in Comparative Politics: Special Topics 3 credit hours

A senior-level seminar in a special topic in the subfield of comparative politics, e.g., cross-national political behavior. May be repeated up to 6 hours with a different topic.

Department Consent Required

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 450 – Nations in Transition 3 credit hours

This course examines the nations that are going through significant transformation. Covering a wide range of countries around the world, this class considers how these countries struggle to move toward stable democracies despite different obstacles. Furthermore, we will critically explore the roles that the United States and the international community should assume in these transitional societies.

PSCI 456 – Field Study 1-3 credit hours

Field study is designed to combine classroom study with experiences outside the classroom to give students opportunities for discussions with public officials or other firsthand knowledge of the subject. Field studies in the past have focused on study of the actors and processes of foreign policymaking with a one-week trip to Washington, DC, to meet with policymakers. The topics for subsequent field studies may vary. Students may repeat the field study course up to 6 hours credit with different topics.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00

PSCI 468 – War in World Politics 3 credit hours

This course examines the causes and consequences of war in world politics, as well as those methods by which states and other actors attempt to manage it and provide for peace.

PSCI 475 – Internship in Political Science 1-6 credit hours

Designed to provide an on-the-job learning experience that will enhance the student's understanding of politics and provide a glimpse of government-in-action. Internships are usually student initiated. Students wishing to take this course must obtain written approval in advance from the Department Chair.

Total Credits Allowed: 12.00

PSCI 486 – Policy Analysis 3 credit hours

Introduction to the skills needed to conduct analysis of policy options and policy evaluations. The course will include an introduction to methods of policy analysis, including cost/benefit analysis; analysis of political environment; and analysis of externalities.

Prerequisite: PSCI 281 and PSCI 385

PSCI 489 – Senior Seminar 3 credit hours

This capstone course reviews and details the sub-fields in political science and addresses the normative, empirical and legal methodologies appropriate for graduating seniors. Grading method: letter grade.

Prerequisite: Senior status

PSCI 490 – Directed Research 1-3 credit hours

Independent original research of a topic in political science selected by the student. Done under the direction of a political science faculty member. Proposals must be student-initiated. Students wishing to take this course must obtain written approval in advance from the department chair.

Total Credits Allowed: 3.00

PSCI 499 – Readings in Political Science 1-3 credit hours

Independent readings in political science for the advanced undergraduate or graduate student. Done under the direction of a political science faculty member. Student initiated. Students wishing to take this course must obtain written approval in advance from the Department Chair.

Total Credits Allowed: 6.00