

# **GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

**MA IN POLITICAL SCIENCE  
PHD IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
AT  
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

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## DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

### OVERVIEW

The Department of Politics and International Relations is comprised of approximately 36 permanent faculty members, 1,700 undergraduate majors, and 95 graduate students. It offers a variety of degree programs including four graduate degrees: a Master of Arts degree in International Studies, a Doctor of Philosophy degree in International Relations, a Master of Arts degree in Political Science, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Political Science. This Handbook provides information about the last two of these programs.

The MA in Political Science and the PhD in Political Science give students the opportunity to master the theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of politics. We prepare students to be effective researchers, teachers, and analysts of political systems in the U.S. and around the world. Toward this goal, students are required to take courses in research methods, teaching, and theoretical foundations of the discipline, in addition to breadth courses in all of the four core areas of the discipline: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations and Political Theory. We are committed to an interdisciplinary approach which involves close working relations with other Centers, Institutes, and Departments at FIU, and within the surrounding community. The Department's graduate program is nationally recognized for producing well-trained graduates in many different areas of political science. We have a high placement rate for graduating students seeking jobs as university professors or as research associates in institutes with a political science focus. The Department's parent school, the Green School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), is an affiliate member of the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs.

### LIFE AS A GRADUATE STUDENT

Students should be aware that, while there are many sources of guidance and support at FIU, the university is a large bureaucracy, and it behaves like one. There are rules, deadlines to be met, and forms to be filed at every step. While the Department makes every effort to remind students about the necessary procedures, all students are ultimately responsible for making themselves aware of the graduation requirements of the Department, College, Graduate School, and University. Students are *strongly* advised to carefully read the Graduate School's *Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual*, its *Regulations for Thesis/Dissertation Preparation Manual*, and the other materials that are available on the Graduate School web site (<https://gradschool.fiu.edu/>). Students are also urged to attend to the requirements described in this *Handbook*.

The following text incorporates policies and procedures of the State University System, Florida International University, the University Graduate School, the Green School of International and Public Affairs, and the Department itself. We have made every effort to provide accurate information. In the event that the following text conflicts with the rules and regulations of a

superceding body (such as those listed above), however, students should assume that the regulations of those bodies take precedence over Departmental rules.

## **ADMISSION TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM**

All applicants for graduate study must have BA or BS degree, or its equivalent, from a recognized institution of higher education before matriculating in the program. Applicants to the MA program must have a grade point average of 3.2, or its equivalent, in the last two years of degree work and must submit scores earned in the verbal and quantitative sections of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Applicants to the PhD program must have an undergraduate grade point average of 3.2 or a graduate GPA of 3.25 and must also submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. All applicants must submit GRE scores and transcripts of all undergraduate and previous graduate coursework. For applicants who are not native speakers of English, a minimum score of 550 (or 213 computer-based, or 80 internet-based) on the TOEFL is required for the MA and PhD programs. The Program's admission committee may make an exception to these admission requirements, when it is persuaded that a particular case warrants doing so, but it will not waive the requirement that all necessary scores and transcripts be submitted for evaluation.

A background in the social sciences, or in certain relevant fields of the humanities, is desirable but not required for admission to the graduate program. Prospective students with little or no relevant background may wish to enroll as non-degree seeking students in the Department's undergraduate and graduate courses before applying for admission. Please note, however, that undergraduate credit cannot be used for the fulfillment of graduate requirements.

If admitted to the graduate program, students can often transfer graduate credits earned at FIU or other accredited institutions of graduate education. The policies regarding transfer credits vary depending on the nature of the previous coursework and the program that it is being applied to at FIU (please see here for details: <https://policies.fiu.edu/files/128.pdf>). Transfer credit is never determined in advance of acceptance into the program. Ordinarily, matriculated students should meet with the Graduate Program Director during their first semester in the program to determine what transfer credit will be awarded.

MA students may matriculate in either the fall or the spring semester. PhD students matriculate only in the fall semester.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

Students applying for graduate study in Political Science must submit an online graduate admission application (please see here: <https://admissions.fiu.edu/how-to-apply/graduate-applicant/applications/index.html>). Students must submit the following along with their application:

- 1) Non-refundable application fee (currently \$30.00)
- 2) *Official* transcripts of all university coursework
- 3) *Official* copy of the GRE scores
- 4) *Official* copy of the TOEFL (if applicable)

- 5) Letters of recommendation from university teachers and professors who have knowledge of the applicant's academic qualifications. Two letters are required for applications to the MA program; three letters are required for the PhD program.
- 6) A personal statement of approximately 3 pages, double-spaced, explaining the candidate's interest in pursuing a graduate degree and describing the expected focus of the candidate's graduate research.
- 7) A writing sample (only for PhD applicants)
- 8) A curriculum vitae or resume (only for PhD applicants)

PhD applicants must submit all necessary materials by **January 15** to receive funding consideration (or by **March 15** if financial assistance in the form of a graduate assistantship is not requested). MA applicants seeking fall admission must submit all necessary materials by **March 15**. MA applicants seeking spring admission must submit all necessary materials by **September 1**.

The Graduate School Admissions Office formally notifies applicants once the Admissions Committee has made its recommendations and the Office of the Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs has approved. The Graduate Program Director or Secretary may contact applicants informally about the status of their applications, but official notice of admission status can come only from the Graduate School. Once admitted, applicants may defer matriculation, by written request to the Graduate Program Director, for no more than one year. Financial assistance in the form of a graduate assistantship cannot be deferred.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

The Department has a limited number of graduate assistantships that carry a stipend, tuition waiver for full-time study (9 credits in fall and spring, 6 credits in summer, and 3 credits after advancing to candidacy), and partially subsidized health insurance. The tuition waiver does not cover registration fees. Stipends are paid in the fall, spring, and summer semesters. Graduate assistants are required to register for the maximum number of credits covered by the assistantship in all semesters (9 credits in the fall and spring, 6 credits in the summer, and 3 credits after advancing to candidacy). Applicants to the Department's graduate programs who meet the appropriate deadlines and requirements are automatically considered for a graduate assistantship; continuing students may also apply for graduate assistantships by writing a letter to the Graduate Program Director requesting consideration. Non-US citizens who are receiving assistantships will need a work permit in the US and a social security number in order to receive their stipends. Non-US citizens should consult the Office of International Student Scholar Services for other policies and regulations pertaining to immigration and visa status (<https://iss.fiu.edu/>). Students who are US citizens or resident aliens, but not legal residents of Florida, are strongly encouraged to meet requirements for Florida residency as soon as possible. Eligible students should begin this process *before* they begin their first semester of study in the program.

Students receiving an graduate assistantship are assigned to faculty members, by the Graduate Program Director, for 20 hours per week as either teaching assistants or digital assistants. Graduate assistants are expected to be full-time students and may not accept other forms of employment (unless a petition has been accepted by the Graduate School). Assistantships are renewable, subject to satisfactory academic progress, but renewal is not guaranteed. Students receiving financial assistance should not carry incomplete grades for more than one semester. More information of

graduate assistantships can be found in the Department's *Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures* statement.

Graduate students, and doctoral students in particular, are encouraged to seek outside funding for their research. Students should discuss fellowship opportunities with their faculty advisors, and may also wish to consult the Financial Aid Office at FIU for student loan and other relevant information.

## ADVISING

New students should meet with the Graduate Program Director at the beginning of the semester of matriculation to plan their programs of study. The Department also conducts a graduate student orientation early in the fall, and all students should attend this orientation at least once, ordinarily at the beginning of their first semester in the program. The Graduate Program Director will make every effort to advise students on degree requirements throughout their programs of study. Nevertheless it is essential that all students take personal responsibility for being aware of the relevant degree requirements. Students are responsible for developing good working relations with members of the Department faculty who share their interests. All incoming graduate students will be assigned a first-year mentor from the faculty on the Political Science Graduate Program Committee to help guide their transition into graduate school. MA students should find an advisor for their MA research project in the semester before taking POS 6976. PhD students should select a primary faculty advisor as soon as possible, but no later than spring semester of their second year.

## ENROLLMENT

Students are encouraged to take courses on a full-time basis (9 credits per semester in the fall and spring, 6 credits in the summer, and 3 dissertation credits per semester after advancement to candidacy). While some courses are offered after regular working hours, not all courses can be offered in this fashion. Students should not assume that the Department's degree requirements can be completed by taking only courses offered at night or on the weekends.

Active status entitles student to use university resources. All students must register for at least 1 credit per semester to maintain active status (see <https://policies.fiu.edu/files/759.pdf>).

Lapses in enrollment for three consecutive semesters will result in automatic dismissal from the program, with no assurance of reinstatement, unless the student has been granted a leave of absence (see <https://policies.fiu.edu/files/759.pdf>). Likewise, once students have advanced to candidacy (an approved D-2 form on file), they must be continuously enrolled in 3 dissertation credits per semester or else they will be dropped from the program (see <https://policies.fiu.edu/files/783.pdf>). Students may apply in writing for a leave of absence by writing to the Graduate Program Director to initiate the petition process. The Graduate Program Director, the Dean of SIPA, and the Dean of Graduate Studies must approve leave requests (see <https://policies.fiu.edu/files/771.pdf>). *All students must be registered for credit, and apply for graduation, in the semester in which their degree is awarded.*

All MA students must complete degree requirements within six years of matriculation in the program. All PhD students must complete degree requirements within nine years of matriculation in the program.

## **MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

The MA program is designed to prepare students for careers in government, the business sector, non-government organizations, international agencies, or doctoral work in the social sciences and humanities. The MA degree program draws on the expertise of Departmental faculty in the areas of American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations and Political Theory. Faculty interests range from comparative political institutions, American political institutions, foreign policy, international political economy, and national security to contemporary global issues such as democratization, globalization, the environment, human rights, refugees, and social movements.

The School offers a variety of graduate certificate programs – in fields such as African & African Diaspora Studies, Asian Studies, Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building, European Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, International and Comparative Public Administration, and National Security Studies – and students may supplement their degree by earning such certificates. The Department encourages its students to pursue regional or topical certification in conjunction with their work in the MA program.

The MA degree program requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit at the graduate level. Students failing to maintain a 3.0 grade point average will be dismissed from the program. Undergraduate courses taken to satisfy prerequisites for graduate courses, or as a condition of admission, do not count toward the 30-hour minimum requirement.

### *Core Requirements*

All MA students must take three required courses (offered annually) listed below:

POS 5716      Foundations of Political Science  
POS 5706      Research Methodology  
POS 6976      Research Seminar

All MA students also must complete three of the following four courses:

POS 5045      Seminar in American Politics  
CPO 5091      Seminar in Comparative Politics  
POT 5007      Seminar in Political Theory  
INR 5007      Seminar in International Politics or INR 6604 International Relations Theory I

### *Elective Credits*

Students are required to take four elective courses (12 credits), with a maximum of two of those courses (six credits) in a related field outside the Department of Politics and International Relations.

### *Exit Requirement*

Students are required to take POS 6976, Research Seminar, in order to meet the exit requirement for the MA degree. The course must be taken in the final semester of the student's MA work. This course requires the student to complete a research project under the direction of his or her advisor. Students should be proactive about securing an advisor (near the beginning of *the semester before* they plan to take POS 6976). The student and advisor will work with the office staff to create a section of POS 6976 under the advisor's name. The advisor will guide the student toward the completion of the research project (typically 30-40 pages in length) and then the advisor will enlist two other faculty experts to aid in the evaluation of the finished project.

The evaluation will include a public defense of the MA project, which will be attended by the three-person evaluation committee (the advisor and two other faculty members from the Department, or other relevant faculty experts from FIU). The public presentation of the MA Project will also be open for attendance by the rest of the Department and University community.

## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

The Political Science doctoral program offers rigorous methodological training combined with breadth and depth across four fields, including American Politics, Comparative Politics, Political Theory and International Politics. Doctoral students have entered this program from many countries around the world, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Romania, South Korea, and Turkey. Faculty areas of specialty include American political institutions, American political thought, the comparative politics of democratization, international political economy, international relations theory, security studies and US foreign policy. Faculty also have regional interests that range across Africa, Central Asia, East Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Russia.

The Green School of International and Public Affairs offers a variety of graduate certificate programs – in fields such as African & African Diaspora Studies, Asian Studies, Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building, European Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, International and Comparative Public Administration, and National Security Studies – and students may supplement their degree by earning such certificates. The Department encourages its students to pursue regional or topical certification in conjunction with their work in the PhD program. The Political Science program offers two combined degree pathways, a MA in African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS) with a PhD in Political Science and a MA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies (MALACS) with a PhD in Political Science.

The PhD program requires a minimum of 76 semester hours of credit at the graduate level, including a minimum of 24 credits of dissertation supervision (pass/fail). Students failing to maintain a 3.0 grade point average will be dismissed from the program. Undergraduate courses taken to satisfy prerequisites for graduate courses, or as a condition of admission, will not count toward graduate requirements.

### *Required Courses (13 credits)*

All students must complete the following five courses in order to meet the degree requirements for a Political Science PhD. These courses are designed to give students a strong foundation in teaching skills, theoretical debates, and methodological approaches commonly referenced and utilized in the discipline.

POS 5702 Teaching Political Science  
POS 5716 Foundations of Political Science  
POS 5706 Research Methodology  
POS 6918 Seminar in Political Science Methodology, and

One course\* among the following:

POS 6725 Formal Political Modeling  
PAD 7707 Applied Quantitative Analysis II  
SYA 6317 Social Research Quantitative Methods II  
ANG 6497 Qualitative Research Methods  
POS 5745 Quantitative Content Analysis

\*This third methods course requirement can be waived for students with Political Theory as their major field.

#### *Common Core Courses (12 credits)*

All students are required to take the following core courses that provide a breadth of knowledge across four fields of the discipline.

CPO 5091 Seminar in Comparative Politics  
INR 5007 Seminar in International Relations (or INR 6604 International Relations Theory I)  
POT 5007 Seminar in Political Theory  
POS 5045 Seminar in American Politics

With the approval of the student's advisor and the Graduate Program Director, a core course can be waived if it conflicts with another course that will give the student better preparation for their comprehensive exam and for their future dissertation research.

#### *Two Examination Fields (6 credits each, 12 credits total)*

Students are expected to take additional courses in each of their two examination fields in preparation for taking comprehensive exams. The course plan for each student will be managed in consultation with their academic advisor, who will provide guidance and suggestions for course selection in preparation for the comprehensive exams, typically taken in the first semester of a student's third year in the program. For students entering the program with an MA degree, comprehensive exams may be taken in the second year, with the approval of their advisor.

#### *Third Area Specialization (9 credits)*

Students are expected to take courses in a designated third area of specialization, defined as a focused plan of study that consists of courses that are closely related thematically to the student's



planned dissertation research. These courses may include, but are not limited to, such themes as political economy, democratization, ethnicity/culture, political institutions, judicial politics, electoral systems, and security studies.

### *Approved Electives (6 credits)*

Students are required to take 2 elective courses, approved by their advisor or the Graduate Program Director.

### *Yearly Evaluations of Doctoral Students*

The University requires an evaluation of all doctoral students in the program on a yearly basis. At the pre-dissertation stage, students are evaluated by their advisors or by the Graduate Program Director in a face-to-face consultation. At the dissertation stage, students must be evaluated by their entire dissertation committee in a formal meeting to discuss and review dissertation progress. These meetings are supplemented with an electronic annual evaluation of the student's accomplishments and progress in the program. The electronic evaluation process is *student initiated* and requires the approval of many faculty and administrators. As a result, please begin this process in early April to ensure it is completed before faculty leave for summer. A late annual evaluation can create problems (registration holds, petitions, etc.), so please be vigilant in checking up on the approvals process (and feel free to contact the Graduate Program Director if there are any problems).

### *Foreign Language Requirement*

The Political Science program requires demonstrated competency in one foreign language or in computer and methodological skills when considered more appropriate. This requirement must be met prior to advancement to PhD candidacy.

### *Comprehensive Examinations*

Within 6 months of completing 54 credits of course work with a minimum 3.0 grade point average, students must take two comprehensive examinations (written and oral) in their first (major) and second (minor) fields of study, which correspond to two of the four fields that define the Political Science degree: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Politics, and Political Theory.

Students should begin to prepare for comprehensive examinations at least one full semester before scheduling them. They will have ample notice as to the probable membership of examining committees. In consultation with the Graduate Program Director and likely committee members, students should prepare using comprehensive reading lists for the two fields that they are to be tested on. In their first (major) comprehensive exam field, students will be expected to demonstrate written and oral capability to teach graduate courses. For their second (minor) field, students will be expected to demonstrate written and oral capability to teach undergraduate courses.

Comprehensive examinations should provide evidence of students' command of the field and its literature. It should not be thought of as a recital of bare facts or as an opportunity simply to

summarize reading list materials. Students should be prepared to synthesize and evaluate a broad range of scholarship. Accordingly, examinations test students' general training, intellectual maturity, and overall readiness to undertake a dissertation.

Comprehensive examinations consist of two written examinations and one oral examination corresponding to the two fields for which students have prepared. Each examination is graded separately, with High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, and Fail as possible grades. Students will normally take the written examinations one week apart, within a time frame of twenty-four hours for each written exam. Students must make specific arrangements to take the written exams with the Graduate Secretary or the Graduate Program Director. The written exams are administered in a take-home, open-book, open-note format. Students may consult any and all resources available in their written responses as long as they are appropriately cited and referenced. In the event of a split decision on a written exam (one reader saying it passes and another saying it fails), the Graduate Program Director will enlist a third reader to grade the exam. The oral exam is scheduled as soon as possible after a positive result on both written examinations. The oral exam committee is composed of the first and second readers in the student's first (major) field and the first reader of the student's second (minor) field. The oral exam is typically scheduled for one and a half hours.

Students, in consultation with their advisors and the Graduate Program Director, will select a first reader for each of their two comprehensive exams; the second readers will be assigned by the Graduate Program Director in consultation with members of the Graduate Program Committee. Each exam will be evaluated by two readers, with the first field including the head advisor as one of the readers. Each reader will provide a separate grade for each essay and an overall evaluation of the exam using the same categories.

If a student fails an exam, he or she will have one opportunity to retake the exam before being dismissed from the program.

On successful completion of the examination process, students should submit the necessary paperwork to the Graduate Program Director for advancement to candidacy (D-2 form). Students may only take dissertation credits after the D-2 form is approved and they have advanced to candidacy. Students who have passed their doctoral comprehensive examinations are eligible to apply for an MA degree in the course of their PhD studies. Students who wish to apply for an MA degree while continuing to pursue their PhD should consult with the Graduate Program Director about the necessary procedures and paperwork.

### *Dissertation Proposal*

Within three months of passing comprehensive examinations, students should publicly present a dissertation proposal of roughly 30-35 pages. Ideally, this proposal should serve as the "first chapter" of the forthcoming dissertation. Dissertation proposals should clearly identify a research question and explain why it is important, they should discuss the literature relevant to that question, they should spell out the student's own tentative answer to the research question, and they should formulate a convincing research plan and methodology for defending that answer.

Each dissertation proposal must be acceptable to a committee of at least four qualified scholars who agree to serve as members of that student's dissertation committee. Students are responsible

for recruiting a dissertation committee, with assistance from and approval of the Graduate Program Director. Students must provide their dissertation committee members ample time to review the proposal before the scheduled proposal defense.

The committee chair, who is primarily responsible for detailed supervision of the student's work, must be a regular member of the Department of Politics and International Relations graduate faculty and must have "dissertation advisor status," which you can check on the Graduate School website (<https://gradschool.fiu.edu/facultystaff/>). Two other members of the committee must also be drawn from the graduate faculty of the Department. A fourth member of the committee must be a member of the graduate faculty at FIU, but *not* a member of the Department of Politics and International Relations. In some circumstances, an appropriately qualified scholar or specialist not affiliated with FIU may be approved as fifth member of the committee, but students should keep in mind that the committee will be required to meet *in person* on several occasions.

Circumstances may require changes in the membership of dissertation committees. Students may request changes in committee membership, after consulting with the Graduate Program Director, by submitting the necessary paperwork to the Graduate School.

Once the dissertation proposal has been successfully defended, students must prepare a "short-form" version of the proposal in accordance with Graduate School regulations to be submitted to the Graduate School along with the D-3 form. Before submitting the D-3 form, all doctoral students must complete online training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (see <https://gradschool.fiu.edu/rcr/>) and submit the necessary certification form. Students whose research will involve human subjects must also submit certification of either IRB (Institutional Review Board) review or exemption with their D-3 form (see <https://research.fiu.edu/irb/>). Note that the IRB review process requires that both students and their dissertation advisors complete and document the necessary IRB training. Students should familiarize themselves in detail with the relevant deadlines and format for the D-3 form.

### *The Dissertation (minimum 24 credits)*

Many dissertations in Political Science involve research away from the University. Candidates may work on their dissertations wherever they choose, but they must register for 3 dissertation credits in each semester (including the summer) from the time they advance to candidacy until (and including) the semester in which they receive their degree.

Dissertations in Political Science average 200-300 double-spaced pages (this is the equivalent of a 130-180 page book). Students are encouraged to remain in close contact with members of their dissertation committee. Students can expect considerable assistance on substantive, organizational and stylistic problems that they encounter. Nevertheless, it is their responsibility to write in clear, error-free English. Students submitting poorly written draft materials may be advised to secure the assistance of a professional editor at their own expense.

All dissertations must follow the University's *Regulations for Thesis/Dissertation Preparation*. This is not a task to be taken lightly. Students are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with these guidelines *before* they begin writing and to follow them scrupulously at every stage. The

School of International and Public Affairs and the Graduate School reviews all dissertations to assure that appropriate standards are met.

### *Dissertation Defense*

A completed draft of a dissertation is ready to defend only after it has been approved for defense by the dissertation committee chair and all other committee members. At that time, candidates will submit to the Graduate School an application for a dissertation defense which dissertation committee members must sign (D-5 form). The application must be filed by the appropriate deadline, which can be found on the Graduate School website (<https://gradschool.fiu.edu/calendar-deadlines/>). When considering the deadlines and scheduling, please keep in mind that the SIPA Dean's Office will need at least a week to review the D-5 form and the complete dissertation before it is forwarded to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will publish notice of the defense in a monthly calendar distributed to the University community.

The dissertation defense is a public event. Any member of the University community may attend, and the candidate may invite guests. After the candidate makes a brief presentation of findings, members of the dissertation committee will ask questions as they see fit. The candidate and guests will then leave the examining room, and committee members may decide to accept the dissertation, to specify revisions as a condition of acceptance, or to reject the dissertation. In the last case, committee members will specify conditions under which they will participate in another defense. All such decisions are made by consensus.

If the dissertation committee requires any changes, the dissertation committee chair normally takes responsibility for insuring that the student makes them as required. All members of the committee must, however, sign an appropriately prepared first page of the final version of the dissertation to indicate their approval.

The final version of the dissertation must be submitted to the University electronically (please see here for more on the final ETD process: <https://gradschool.fiu.edu/the-final-etd-process/>).