Master of Arts in Political Science

Why study political science?

Because political science advances our understanding of politics, power, governance, and public policy in the United States and across the globe. In the broadest sense, political science is the study of governments and governmental procedures. Political science is as old as civilization, because people always have been interested in their government and in their leaders. But political science as it is thought of today, as one of the social sciences, is a comparatively new discipline. It developed in the United States during the last century because political scientists developed an ability to make increasingly scientific observations of government. Political scientists are concerned with the origins and sources of governmental organizations, their growth, and their decline, as well as with the processes and structure of government.

What’s special about the Political Science graduate program?

Our medium size allows faculty to teach seminars on a variety of topics with individualized mentoring in and out of the classroom. Graduate students work closely with faculty on research and themselves publish independent papers and win fellowships and awards. This productivity is complemented by a diverse group of students, many coming from around the world. In addition, by the time of graduation most of our graduate students will teach their own classes. We believe teaching is an important part of a graduate education and serves our students well in an increasingly competitive job market. Our unique Thompson Summer Scholarship Research Program offers students the opportunity to engage in a genuine collaborative research project with selected faculty. Working with faculty on a variety of research topics, students maximize their potential by earning a competitive stipend and sharpening their research skills across the summer months. The program has generated many conference papers and publications as well. Our department therefore offers unparalleled access to our faculty and valuable opportunities in both research and teaching.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

Graduate Admission

Admission to M.A. or Ph.D. programs is based on the applicant’s undergraduate and/or graduate record, standardized test scores, and references from instructors. All applicants must complete a bachelor’s degree. A completed application must include:

1. Online graduate application (http://graduate.ku.edu/application-process),
2. Graduate Record Examination results — verbal, quantitative, and analytical,
3. A 1- to 2-page statement of goals and research interests,
4. 3 letters of recommendation, preferably from faculty members,
5. A nonrefundable application fee (see Admission in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog), and
6. 1 official transcript from each college or university attended.

An official transcript is one that is sent directly from the registrar of the applicant’s school to the department. All these materials must be received before the application can be considered.

An applicant who wishes to be considered for regular fall admission and for a graduate teaching assistantship must complete the application by January 7th for the coming academic year. A student who wishes to be considered for fall admission but not for a teaching assistantship should submit the application by April 15th but may do so earlier.

Submit your graduate application online (http://www.graduatede.ku.edu). For further information regarding the application process, including department-specific deadlines and required supplemental documentation, please visit the Admissions (https://kups.ku.edu/applying-graduate-program) page of the department website, or contact the department’s Graduate Academic Advisor, Megan Denison, at denisonm@ku.edu.

M.A. Degree Requirements

All candidates for the M.A. degree must complete, at a satisfactory level,

1. 30 semester hours of graduate credit, 21 of which must be earned in courses at the 700 level or above;
2. Research methods through POLS 706; and
3. A comprehensive master’s oral examination.

The student selects a principal advisor from the Graduate Faculty by the end of the first year to choose courses and prepare for the comprehensive examination. The examination is administered by a 3-person M.A. committee that includes the student’s principal advisor and 2 other members of the KU Graduate Faculty selected by the student in consultation with the principal advisor. One member of the committee may be from another department (including Special Status members of the Graduate Faculty).

Directed readings courses in excess of 5 hours cannot be counted toward the 30 hours required for the degree. With prior written approval, candidates may count up to 6 graduate hours taken outside the department (either at KU or at another institution accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools) toward the 30 hours required for the degree.

Applicants who have not completed at least 15 undergraduate credit hours in political science may be admitted with the provision that they complete additional hours of course work.

All candidates must fulfill the requirements of either the thesis or the non-thesis option for the Master of Arts degree.
Thesis Option
Upon completion and certification of an acceptable thesis, candidates may count 6 credit hours of thesis enrollment toward the 30 credit hours required for the M.A. degree.

Non-thesis Option
Candidates may substitute a minimum of two 800- or 900-level research courses plus satisfactory performance on a comprehensive written examination administered by the three-person M.A. committee before the oral examination.