

THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT  
M.A. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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The Department of Government at the University of West Florida offers the M.A. in Political Science. It is designed for students interested in international relations, comparative politics, American government, and public policy.

Open to all students, the program is affiliated with a consortium formed by the U.S. Navy and several civilian graduate schools. These include Memphis State University, Old Dominion University, San Diego State University, and the University of Rhode Island. Students may be allowed to transfer up to 15 sh from one member of the consortium to another.

The program at The University of West Florida consists of 33 sh. There is a thesis and a non-thesis option. Either option requires completion of a 21 sh core, with a grade of B or better in every core course. The core consists of the following courses:

POT 5602 Masters of Political Thought  
POS 6001 The Study of Politics  
POS 6704 Political Science Research Methods  
POS 6045 Seminar in American Government  
CPO 6006 Seminar in Comparative Politics  
INR 6007 Seminar in International Relations  
PAD 6275 Political Economy of Public Administration

**The non-thesis option** is capped with a comprehensive examination, both written and oral. The purpose of the examination is to help the student synthesize knowledge from different courses into a coherent whole.

**The thesis option** requires a minimum of 6 sh devoted to a thesis. The thesis defense includes a discussion of how the study fits in the field of Political Science. In effect, the thesis defense substitutes for the comprehensive examination.

Whatever the option chosen by the student, with the approval of the advisor, up to 9 sh of electives may be taken outside political science. Also with the approval of the advisor, students may enroll in an undergraduate course for graduate credit to learn the fundamentals of a field study and in a directed readings course to explore in greater depth an area of interest in Political Science. These options, however, are limited by university rules (see Master's requirements).

**Comprehensive Examination.** The examination will be administered by a three-member committee. All three examiners shall be members of the Political Science Program Faculty or have taught a class in the Political Science program and shall have had the student in a regular class or in an independent study. The student will ask one professor to serve as Chair of the examining committee. In consultation with the Chair and with his approval, two other committee members will be asked to serve. It will be the responsibility of the Chair to coordinate with the other two faculty the questions to be taken up at both the written and the oral exam and to meet with the student at least two weeks before the exam to give him or her advance notice of the general themes that may be expected to be tested. The student is to work two hours per set of questions for a total of six hours. The oral exam will be scheduled within two weeks of the written exam. Its purpose is to engage the student in a stimulating conversation about politics, in which principles are used to analyze contemporary, historical, or hypothetical situations preferably ones which the student has previously considered in the written exam and/or in a term paper. The exam should last no more than two hours. In the event of a non-pass, the committee shall decide when, or whether, the student will have an opportunity to retake the exam, in whole or in part.

**Thesis.** No more than six sh of thesis credit may be applied to the student's degree plan. However, as long as the student is working on a thesis, he or she must enroll in at least 1 sh every semester, even if this brings the total for the degree to more than 33 sh.

The thesis will include an appropriate theoretical foundation and a scholarly investigation of a significant political problem or question. The problem may be historical, contemporary, or hypothetical. The research will be conducted in accordance with a methodology suitable for studying the question. The method may be quantitative, qualitative, or some combination of both. The data may be statistical, textual, or both. What is absolutely required is a disciplined approach that involves rigorous thinking, objective examination of the available evidence or texts, and reaching conclusions that are consistent with the weight of the evidence or the logic of the argument. The object is to produce something that, in condensed form, could be presented at a state or regional conference of political scientists. There is no minimum or maximum length, although most theses will run between 50 and 100 pages.

The choice of the thesis topic lies with the student in consultation with the thesis director. Before a student embarks on a thesis, a prospectus has to be approved by a committee of three faculty. Also, the final product will be defended before a committee of faculty whose composition should, if at all possible, be identical to the first committee. The thesis will be directed by a faculty member who consents to work with the student. The thesis director will assume responsibility for guiding the student through the entire thesis cycle, from choosing or narrowing a topic, preparing a thesis prospectus, doing the bibliographic review, collecting and analyzing data, through writing one or more drafts of the thesis. It is the thesis director who decides when the proposal is ready for presentation and when the thesis is ready for a defense.

**Thesis timeline** . A thesis shall normally take two semesters. In consultation with the thesis director, the student shall draw up a timeline consistent with the university thesis calendar. The timeline shall have dates for the following milestones:

1. Selection of two or three committee members in addition to the Director (see committee members, below).
2. Submission of a thesis prospectus to the committee (see outline of thesis prospectus, below).
3. Meeting of committee with the student to approve, subject to revisions, the thesis proposal.
4. Defense of the thesis.

**Committee members.** The committee must have a minimum of three members. The thesis director, who must be a member of the Political Science program faculty, will chair the committee. At least one more committee member must be a member of the faculty. The third committee member may be an emeritus faculty, a visiting faculty member, or a member of another UWF department whose expertise bears on the thesis topic.

**Thesis prospectus.** The thesis prospectus shall contain the following parts:

1. A statement of the research problem or question.
2. A statement on the methodology to be followed in investigating the question.
3. The data set or texts to be analyzed.
4. A comprehensive bibliography to be consulted.
5. A timeline for completion of the thesis.

**Thesis.** The thesis shall consist of the following parts:

1. An abstract.
2. A statement of the research problem or question.
3. Review of the literature.
4. Description of data or texts and methodology.
5. Data or textual analysis.
6. Discussion of results of investigation.
7. Conclusion.
8. Bibliography.