
Government

Professor Timothy Colton, Director of Undergraduate Studies

The Department of Government was founded and named by President A. Lawrence Lowell in 1910 but the field of political science is much older. It is by far the oldest of the social sciences and was invented when Socrates, it was said, first called philosophy down from heaven and placed her in cities.

In its oldest definition, political science was called the master science. More modern definitions are less comprehensive, but of the social sciences, political science has perhaps the least definite boundaries and the widest concerns. If political science is not the imperious master of other disciplines (as it was for so long in the Aristotelian tradition), it is their pliable servant and the most receptive to the data and methods of its neighbors and rivals. Almost anything that is not politics can be made relevant to politics, and a political scientist is almost never heard to say modestly, "That is a nonpolitical question."

Consequently, political science covers many different subjects, uses several diverse methods, and appeals to a variety of students. The department is divided into four subfields: Political Theory, American Politics, Comparative Government, and International Relations. These fields cover "area studies" of the former Soviet Union and China, political development, voting behavior in American elections, forms of regimes, urban politics, strategy, and the presidency, among many other subjects. The methods used are borrowed from history, sociology, philosophy, economics, and psychology—and then refashioned and put to work in a discipline that includes them all. Political scientists may ponder old philosophical texts or gather data from a current opinion survey. They may form inductive generalizations or construct formal deductive models. They may call themselves institutionalist, behaviorist, or anti-, proto-, or postbehaviorist, or by some other name, or by none.

Students come to political science because they are interested in politics: some of them with an eye to a political career, some with a scholarly intent, and many wishing to know more about this central, inescapable human concern. The Government Department aims to make all students aware and critical of their first opinions (since human beings are at their most opinionated in politics), to open up the possibilities of politics, to reveal permanent political problems, to impart a discipline, and to supply a guide for choice. Some people think that political science comes out of the daily newspaper. But they are wrong. Since most citizens have their judgments influenced by others, one should say rather that political science goes into the newspaper; and it is the virtue of political scientists, not their defect, that they do not see differently from citizens, but farther and maybe sooner.

To acquaint students with the different topics, issues, and approaches in the study of government, the department requires each concentrator to take a course in each of the four subfields. In addition, to provide a foundation for thinking, reading, writing, and talking about questions of politics, each concentrator is required to take one term of Government 97, the sophomore tutorial, which uses the experience of political development to investigate the fundamental political questions that confront society.

Although the department does not require a concentrator to declare any particular subfield as an area of specialization, students often focus on a specific field in their course selection guided by their individual intellectual bent and curiosity. For honors candidates this informal specialization may help to bring a focus to the senior thesis project. Because political science cannot be ordered in a system of prerequisites from easy courses to difficult ones, the appropriate choice of courses is a challenge. Students must take care to choose with a pattern of exploration and development in mind and to avoid scattering their interests. For advice on course selection,

students should consult the department website (www.gov.harvard.edu), consult a concentration adviser, or contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

There are many ways to bring a sense of summation to the undergraduate experience and the program in Government. For some, the senior year is a time to explore new possibilities by enrolling in a graduate seminar, working with a professor on a directed reading, pursuing an independent study, or seeking a transition to life beyond college by joining a political, community, or business project. For others, who have an intense interest in a particular question of politics, the senior thesis may be the best capstone of their Government program. Many thesis writers regard the thesis as one of the high points of their undergraduate education. Writing a thesis is an endeavor that calls for planning, research, sustained thought and writing, and clarity and polish well beyond any previous experience in undergraduate work. For each concentrator the decision to write a thesis is an individual and personal one, governed almost entirely by the presence or absence of a desire to pursue a particular topic in depth over many months of concentrated effort. In past years, about half of the seniors in Government have written senior theses and become honors candidates.

For information on the secondary field in Government, please see page 336 of this *Handbook* or the secondary fields website (www.secondaryfields.fas.harvard.edu/Government/program-desc-gov.htm).

REQUIREMENTS

Basic Requirements: 11 half-courses

1. *Required courses:*
 - a. *Field Requirements:* One half-course in each of the four subfields. These need not be introductory courses. The four subfields are:
 - i. Political Theory (introductory course: Government 10).
 - ii. Comparative Government (introductory course: Government 20).
 - iii. American Government (introductory course: Government 30).
 - iv. International Relations (introductory course: Historical Study A-12).
 - b. *Government Electives:* Three additional half-courses in Government.
 - c. *Additional Government Courses/Related Field Option:* Three half-courses. These three additional half-courses may all be taken in the Government Department. Alternatively, a student may take up to three half-courses in the following related fields: economics, history, sociology, philosophy, languages, or quantitative methods.

Note that not all courses in these disciplines qualify. A current list of courses that count for related field credit is available at the Undergraduate Program Office, or on the Department's website at www.gov.harvard.edu.
 - d. *Tutorial:* Government 97: Sophomore Tutorial (students will choose between Gov 97a and Gov 97b in the spring semester of their sophomore year). Letter-graded.
2. *Thesis:* Not required.
3. *General Examination:* Not required.
4. *Other information:*
 - a. *Pass/Fail:* Only one of the three additional half-courses in Government (item 1b) may be taken Pass/Fail. All other courses counted for concentration requirements must be letter-graded.
 - b. *Advanced Standing:* Advanced Standing students may enroll in Government 97, Sophomore Tutorial, in the spring term of their first year. They may also use appropriate credit from the History AP Examination to fulfill one half-course in History as a related field, if they actually graduate in three years.

Requirements for Honors Eligibility: 13 half-courses

1. *Required courses:*
 - a. *Field Requirements:* One half-course in each of the four subfields (same as **Basic Requirements**).
 - b. *Electives:* One additional half-course in government.
 - c. *Additional Government Courses/Related Field Option:* Three half-courses (same as **Basic Requirements**).
 - d. *Tutorials:*
 - i. *Sophomore year:* Government 97 (students will choose between Gov 97a and Gov 97b in the spring semester of their sophomore year). Letter-graded.
 - ii. *Junior year:* Government 98 (two terms); or Government 90 (two terms); or Government 98 (one term) and Government 90 (one term). All of these courses are letter-graded.
 - iii. *Senior year:* Government 99 (two terms), devoted to the writing of a thesis. Graded SAT/UNS. Students should consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies for more information.
2. *Thesis:* Required of all candidates for honors. A student who does not complete the thesis but wishes to receive full or half-course credit for Government 99 must submit at least thirty pages of written work in each term.
3. *General Examination:* A written General Examination is not required, however an oral examination is required under certain circumstances.
4. *Other information:*
 - a. *Pass/Fail:* Only the one additional half-course in Government (item 1b) may be taken Pass/Fail. All other courses counted for concentration requirements (except Government 99) must be letter-graded.
 - b. *Advanced Standing:* Same as **Basic Requirements**.

Joint Concentration

Requirements for Honors Eligibility: 15 half-courses, 9 in Government

1. *Required courses:*
 - a. *Government Field Requirements:* one half-course in each of the four subfields (same as **Basic Requirements**).
 - b. *Tutorials:*
 - i. *Sophomore year:* Government 97 (students will choose between Gov 97a and Gov 97b in the spring semester of their sophomore year). Letter-graded.
 - ii. *Junior year:* Two terms of junior tutorial or junior seminar, which may be drawn from either department. Government 98 or Government 90 may be used to satisfy this requirement. Letter-graded.
 - iii. *Senior year:* Government 99 (two terms), devoted to the writing of a thesis. Graded SAT/UNS. Students should consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies for more information.
 - c. *Additional Government Courses/Related Field Option:* Two half-courses (otherwise same as **Basic Requirements**). Government 98 or Government 90 may be used to satisfy this requirement as well as the junior tutorial requirement.
 - d. *Additional Courses:* Six half-courses in another concentration.

2. *Thesis*: Required.
3. *General Examination*: Required under certain circumstances.
4. *Other information*:
 - a. *Government as the allied field*: When Government is not the primary field, five half-courses in Government are required. These must include one semester of Government 97 and two half-courses in each of two of the four subfields listed under **Basic Requirements**. All joint concentrators must write a senior thesis, even if one is not required by the primary field.
 - b. *Petitions*: Properly qualified candidates for honors interested in pursuing a joint concentration must petition the Faculty Concentration Committee for approval, even if they do not intend Government to be their primary field. Further details are available at the Government Undergraduate Program Office and on the Department's website at www.gov.harvard.edu.

STUDY ABROAD

The Government Department encourages study abroad for a term, and it is also possible to study abroad for an entire academic year. Students taking study abroad should go during their junior year, as they need to be in residence for sophomore year and (if writing a thesis) for Government 99 (the senior thesis course). Many students use a term abroad to find a thesis topic and even to conduct preliminary research, and some students stay in the country after they have completed their studies or return to it after a term's hiatus in order to conduct senior thesis research. The Government Department is very flexible in granting credit towards the concentration requirements for political science courses taken elsewhere, as long as they are equivalent to courses offered at Harvard. Students must receive a grade of B- (or equivalent) or higher in order to receive final approval for courses taken abroad.

ADVISING

For information and advice about the Government concentration, students are encouraged to meet with the Undergraduate Program's concentration advisers (CAs), who hold regular office hours in the houses and in CGIS. The Government Resident Tutors in the houses serve as the official CAs in the Department. Please consult the Department's website at www.gov.harvard.edu to find a listing of CAs and their office hours.

For up-to-date information on advising in Government, please see the Advising Programs Office website: www.fas.harvard.edu/~advising/concentrations/Government.html.

RESOURCES

The Fung library at the Center for Government and International Studies has collections of books and other materials associated with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, and the Reischauer Center for Japanese Studies. There are also libraries at the Center for European Studies, the Center for Middle East Studies, the Kennedy School of Government, and the Joint Center for Urban Studies. The Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School has study groups, forums, and information about summer internships. Many of the regional and international research centers at the University, along with the Institute of Politics, have summer travel grants. The department also maintains a data center for computer and data analysis work. With a little enterprise, students will find many intellectual and convivial activities outside their courses.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

For further information concerning concentration in Government, students should visit the Government Undergraduate Program Office (617-495-3249). The office, located at CGIS Knafel Building, room N151, 1737 Cambridge Street, is open Monday through Friday, 9:30–5:30. Additional information is also available on the Department’s website: www.gov.harvard.edu.

ENROLLMENT STATISTICS

Number of Concentrators as of November

Concentrators	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Government	553	552	549	575	532
Government + another field	2	6	13	16	22
Another field + Government	4	3	6	8	6