

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES
5151 State University Drive • Los Angeles, CA • 90032-8226**

(Revised, 4/25/2022, TED)

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK, MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM

Welcome to the Master of Arts degree program in the Department of Political Science at California State University, Los Angeles. This guide is intended to answer many of your questions about the MA program.



It covers basic requirements, procedures, expectations, and student responsibilities and will help you complete the program in a timely fashion. The program has been designed to provide students with a thorough exposure to advanced graduate study in our discipline, including a rigorous means of evaluation in the form of a comprehensive exam or thesis. The goal of this structure is to prepare students for a variety of opportunities, including future academic work (Ph.D. training, law school, and other

professional schools), employment as community college professors, work in the public sector in local, state, national, and international institutions, and politics-related jobs in non-profit organizations, campaign organizations, research institutions, journalism, etc.

GETTING STARTED

Once you are admitted into the MA program, be sure to regularly check your personal email account and, once you have been assigned one, your new CSULA email account. The MA Graduate Advisor (a member of the graduate faculty) will communicate with you regularly about department requirements and any orientation programs that may be held. ***The advisor will also work with you to complete a Program Form (see Appendix A), which is a mandatory document that will be kept in your departmental file.*** The advisor will also help explain the ***Road Map plan*** for completion of your courses (see Appendix B). The name and contact information for the current advisor can always be found on the department website. The advisor can meet with students during designated office hours or by appointment, as well as communicate by phone or email.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Conditional Admission

Some students in the MA program are admitted on a *conditional* basis, which may require the completion of additional prerequisite coursework in the department before full admission to the program. Students admitted on a conditional basis will receive a checklist with their original letter of acceptance specifying the nature of the conditions which must be met. For some students, this may include the completion (with a grade of “B” or better) of some or all of the program’s undergraduate “foundations” courses: POLS 3710 - Foundations of American Politics; POLS 3720 - Foundations of Political Theory; POLS 3730 - Foundations of Comparative Politics; POLS 3740 - Foundations of Global Politics.

Course Requirements for the MA Degree

The department has designed a program of six core seminars, mandated for all MA students, which introduce students to advanced study in the main fields of the discipline. In addition, students are required to take four electives in one of three “concentration” areas: American Politics, Political Theory, and Global Studies. The total number of units necessary for completion of the program is 30 (based on 10 courses, each worth 3 units). In their last semester in the program, students will take either a comprehensive exam or complete a master’s thesis (based on working closely with a faculty advisor and committee). All of these requirements are presented in a worksheet format in the Program Form/Degree Planner in Appendix A.

The six graduate seminars (18 units) are as follows:

- POLS 5040: American Political Behavior (3 units)
- POLS 5050: American Political Studies (3 units)
- POLS 5100: Political Theory (3 units)
- POLS 5260: International Political Economy (3 units) *or* POLS 5270 Seminar: Advanced Studies in International Relations (3 units)
- POLS 5440: Jurisprudence in a Globalized World (3 units)
- POLS 5500: Comparative Politics (3 units)

Requirements for Concentrations (9-12 units)

Each concentration requires the completion of **four** elective courses (or **three** for thesis students) drawn primarily from the undergraduate curriculum (4000-level courses only) in the Department of Political Science. In addition to the 4000-level undergraduate courses listed for each concentration, students also have the option of completing POLS 5980: Graduate Directed Study. POLS 5980 requires students to complete an independent research paper or comparable project under the supervision of a faculty member (who must be ranked as Assistant Professor or above). It may also be possible to take a 4000-level or graduate-level course in *another department* as a substitute concentration elective, but this must be designated and approved by the MA advisor *prior* to enrolling in the course and added to the student's designated course plan in the department and NSS office. **Students who experience difficulties finding courses to fulfil their concentration requirements should consult with the MA Advisor.**

Students who are approved to write an MA thesis (which counts for three units) may elect to take only **three** concentration electives instead of four.

American Politics Concentration (total of four electives, except for thesis students)

- Choose **four courses** from the following: POLS 4000, 4030, 4040, 4060, 4080, 4090, 4140, 4180, 4250, 4410, 4810, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in American Politics).

Political Theory Concentration (total of four electives, except for thesis students)

- Choose **four courses** from the following: POLS 4310, 4330, 4350, 4370, 5090, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in Political Theory), or *one* course (only) in the Department of Philosophy: PHIL 4100, 4130, PHIL 5440.

Global Politics Concentration (total of four electives, except for thesis students)

- *International Relations.* Choose **two courses** from the following: POLS 4250, 4260, 4270, 4290, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in Comparative Politics).
- *Comparative Politics.* Choose **two courses** from the following: POLS 4460, 4500, 4510, 4520, 4530, 4540, 4580, 4590, 5310.
- Thesis students taking three electives should take *at least one elective* in International Relations *and one elective* in Comparative Politics.

Culminating Experience: Exam or Thesis

Students choose either to take the comprehensive examination **or** to write a thesis, the latter subject to the approval of the thesis chair and MA graduate advisor. The vast majority of students choose to take the

comprehensive exam, which for most is a more bounded and manageable endeavor, based largely (but not exclusively) on coursework already completed. Students electing to take the comprehensive examination (POL5 5960) should plan to take the examination after completing at least 15 units of graduate seminars and six units of concentration electives (typically the fourth semester of enrollment). Students will be allowed a maximum of two attempts to complete the comprehensive examination successfully. Failure to pass the comprehensive examination, or any portion thereof, will result in disqualification from the program. Students who are approved to write an MA thesis may choose to take only three concentration electives instead of four.

Students who have made one attempt to pass the comprehensive examinations may not change to the thesis option; students who have completed the POL5 5990 “thesis course” may not change to the comprehensive examination option.

Thesis students who do not complete their thesis in one semester should enroll in UNIV 9000 the succeeding semester in order to maintain continuous enrollment (which allows use of university facilities, etc.). Registration in UNIV 9000 is restricted to graduate students who have been advanced to candidacy and have completed all coursework (including all allowable research units) but need additional time to complete their thesis, project or dissertation. Although UNIV 9000 is a zero unit course, the fee is based on one unit of credit for payment purposes; no unit credit is added to the student’s program or transcript. This course is not eligible for financial aid. The deadline to enroll is the University Add Deadline. Information on how to enroll: <http://www.calstatela.edu/page/university-9000-univ-9000>.

Thesis

A thesis may be authorized for exceptional students who present a proposal the department deems worthy of study. If you are interested in writing a thesis, please consult with the MA advisor and/or relevant member(s) of the MA faculty before you begin writing a proposal. To be approved to write a thesis, you must prepare a **proposal that is at least ten pages in length (double-spaced)**, with a **bibliography** that notes relevant books and articles. You must also secure the support of an MA program faculty member who is willing to serve as chair of the thesis committee. Completing a thesis of acceptable quality is a formidable challenge, and should be pursued only by students who are committed to serious research and writing at a high academic level. In general, most students prefer to take the comprehensive exams, and if interested in writing a longer research paper do so by taking POL5 5980: Graduate Directed Study with a professor of their choice.

Students approved to write a thesis must enroll in POL5 5990 for 3 units of credits.

PROCEDURES AND MISCELLANEOUS POINTS

MA Program Form

As noted above, you are required to complete an MA program form before you can be formally classified as a graduate student in the Department of Political Science. To complete the MA program form, you must meet with the MA advisor, either individually or as part of an orientation.

Registering for Graduate Seminars

MA students are encouraged to register for seminars as early as possible so that the department can have an accurate understanding of whether sufficient students will enroll to avoid a course cancellation. If graduate courses are canceled (a rare occurrence) due to insufficient enrollment, the MA Advisor will work with students to ensure that they can still complete the program according to schedule.

Adding and Dropping Classes

Students should be aware that there are university deadlines for both adding and dropping courses. The last day of the semester on which a student may, with the approval of the instructor, *add* classes is typically at the

end of the third week of classes. Students may *withdraw* without restriction or grading penalty up to and including the sixth day of instruction. In such cases, no record of individual course withdrawal appears on the permanent academic record.

Drops between the seventh day of instruction and the end of the eleventh week of the semester are permitted only for serious and compelling reasons. The student must obtain the signatures of the course instructor and the department/division chair or school director on a drop request form, which shall state the reasons for the withdrawal.

If you have further questions about adding and dropping classes, please consult with the MA Advisor or staff in the department office.

Maintaining Student Status

A graduate degree student should maintain continuous enrollment in every fall and spring semester from the beginning of the program of study until the awarding of the degree. Enrollment during Winter or Summer Session is required only if the student plans to graduate during that particular term. All students must be enrolled during the term in which they graduate.

If a graduate student does not enroll for a semester, they must file a “Return from Educational Leave” when they wish to re-enroll (available at: <https://www.calstatela.edu/registrar/forms>). **Graduate students may request to return after no more than two semesters since their last term of enrollment.** If a graduate student has advanced to candidacy, they are not permitted to skip any semesters of enrollment. Winter and summer terms do not count towards these limits. Students must not be on Academic Disqualification and must have completed at least one semester in matriculated status (i.e. earned grades other than W or WU).

“Normal” Course Load

Two graduate seminars and an additional concentration elective is considered a normal or full course load for full-time students (see the Road Map in Appendix B). During the last semester, as students prepare for the MA exam, it is advisable to just take a single course (in addition to enrollment in POLS 5960).

Substitutions

Substitutions for any of the six required graduate seminars are strongly discouraged. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis, and only with a compelling reason and a comparable replacement course. Be advised, too, that certain sections or questions in the comprehensive exam will be difficult to pass if you do not take the corresponding graduate seminar. For the elective courses, substitutions will be considered on a case by case basis (some courses in other departments may fit well with your POLS course load).

Grading Standards

The department faculty members adhere to high, but fair, standards of evaluation. In all classes, you are expected to demonstrate mastery of course material and an ability to communicate effectively and professionally, both orally and in writing. Inadequate mastery of the course material and/or poor communication skills—especially written skills—can easily result in a grade of *B*, *C*, or lower. Understand, too, that you are as responsible for the quality and depth of your education as is the faculty. While faculty members are sympathetic to students with competing responsibilities and outside commitments, it is still your responsibility to meet the standards set by the department.

Students are required to maintain a 3.0 (*B*) grade point average for all classes on their MA program. Students who fail to maintain an average of 3.0 or above will be placed on academic probation. Students who fail to earn a GPA of 3.0 or above in all of their required classes will *not* receive a degree. A grade of *C* is allowed on the program; however, any grade *below C*, including *C-*, requires that the course be repeated with both grades computed in the grade point average.

Graduation (Degree Check)

To receive your degree, you must file for graduation. Application for graduation (a degree check or “grad check”) is made on a form that is available on the Graduation Office website at <http://www.calstatela.edu/graduation>, in the Political Science Department. Candidates must be granted permission to apply for graduation by the department before they can submit the completed application and required fee to the Cashiers’ Office for fee payment. Students are required to file an application by the deadline announced in the Schedule of Classes.

Postbaccalaureate Writing Proficiency Requirement

All postbaccalaureate students at Cal State LA who are pursuing a graduate degree are required to satisfy the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). Graduate students are **exempt** from the requirement if they hold an earned bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited college or university where English is the primary medium of instruction. Graduate students are also exempt if they have score of 41 or better on the writing portion of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) or a score of 4 on the analytic writing portion of the GRE or GMAT. Graduate students who do **not** fall into these categories will have to do one of the following:

- Take POLS 5100 (a required graduate seminar) and pass with a C grade; or
- Take and pass the Writing Proficiency Examination (WPE), a timed supervised writing assessment; or

Postbaccalaureate students must satisfy this requirement within the first two semesters of their graduate program or prior to the completion of 12 semester units, whichever comes later.

Graduate Assistant Positions

The department regularly offers positions to graduate students to work as Graduate Assistants (GA) in undergraduate courses (typically, POLS 1000: American Government and Society). This duty mainly involves helping the instructor in the grading of large numbers of papers, exams, etc., and in related tasks. In general, students should have completed POLS 5050 with a B+ or better grade prior to working as a Graduate Assistant for POLS 1000.

To apply for a GA position, contact the MA Graduate Advisor. Students who are approved by the MA Graduate Advisor will be placed on a list, and faculty will be free to either choose their own GA from this list or have a GA assigned to them by the Graduate Advisor. Grad students selected as GAs will be notified by the Graduate Advisor; students must then provide two letters of recommendation, a resume, and complete various forms (available from the department office).

Core MA Faculty

Core MA faculty members regularly teach graduate seminars and related undergraduate courses in the MA program, supervise independent studies and theses for MA students, and participate in the preparation and evaluation of the MA comprehensive examinations.

- Jared Abbott, Assistant Professor • (323) xxx • E-mail: xxx@calstatela.edu
 Ph.D. – Harvard University, 2020
 MA – New School, 2010
 Latin American Politics
 Comparative Politics
 Social Movements and Political Participation

- Emily Acevedo, Associate Professor • (323) 343-2243 • E-mail: eaceved3@calstatela.edu
Ph.D. – Claremont Graduate University, 2008
Latin American Politics
Comparative and World Politics
Terrorism and U.S. Counterterrorism
Social Movements and Revolutionary Movements
- Martin Adamian, Associate Professor • (323) 343-2236 • E-mail: madamia2@calstatela.edu
Ph.D. – Colorado State University, 2006
JD – Wayne State University Law School, 1996
Public law
Global environmental politics
Civil rights and civil liberties
International law and jurisprudence
- Gar Culbert, Professor • (323) 343-2241 • E-mail: gculbert@calstatela.edu
Ph.D. – University of Virginia, 2010
M.A. – Brandeis University, 2001
Political Behavior
Presidential Nominations and Elections
American Political Institutions and Development
Research Methods
Political Theory
- Taylor Dark III, Professor • (323) 343-2247 • E-mail: tdark@calstatela.edu
Ph.D. – University of California, Berkeley, 1993
M.Sc. – London School of Economics, 1984
Political Parties and Interest Groups
Congress and the Presidency
Labor Policy
European Politics
- Timothy C. Lim, Professor • (323) 343-2243 • E-mail: tclim@calstatela.edu
Ph.D. – University of Hawaii, Manoa, 1996
MA – Columbia University, 1987
Transnational Migration
Human Trafficking and Smuggling
Comparative Politics and Development
Comparative and International Political Economy
International Relations and US Foreign Policy
East Asian Politics/Korean Politics
- Michael McLendon, Professor • (323) 343-2284 • E-mail: mmclend2@calstatela.edu
Ph.D. – University of Texas, Austin, 2001
MA – Columbia University, 1993
Ancient Political Thought
Modern Political Thought
American Political Thought
Critical Theory
Postmodernism

APPENDIX A

PROGRAM FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

NAME	CIN#
------	------

A. PREREQUISITE/CONDITIONAL COURSEWORK* *if any* (indicate course #, semester completed, and grade)

Course 1: POLS 3710	Course 2: POLS 3720	Course 3: POLS 3730	Course 4: POLS 3740
semester /grade semester	/grade semester	/grade semester	/grade semester

*Prerequisite courses **do not** count toward units in the MA program. *Classes noted as a prerequisite, however, must be satisfied with a grade of "B" or better.*

B. OFFICIAL MA COURSEWORK (must maintain cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher; no credit for grade of C- or below). **Total of 30 units required.**

I. Required Core (18 units)	UNITS	GRADE	SEMESTER	↓ Course Substitutions or Transfer Coursework ↓
American Politics				
1. POLS 5040 Seminar: Quantitative Methods and American Political Behavior	3			
2. POLS 5050 Seminar: American Political Studies	3			
Political Theory				
3. POLS 5100 Seminar: Political Theory ("C" grade satisfies GVAR requirement)	3			
Global Politics (Intl Relations/Comparative Politics)				
4. POLS 5260 Seminar: International Political Economy <i>or</i> POLS 5270 Seminar: Advanced Studies in IR	3			
5. POLS 5440 Seminar: Jurisprudence in a Globalized World	3			
6. POLS 5500 Seminar: Comparative Politics	3			
II. Concentration (9-12 units) Choose one concentration → <input type="radio"/> Political Theory <input type="radio"/> American Politics <input type="radio"/> Global Politics				
1.	3			Concentration Electives Political Theory: POLS 4310, 4330, 4350, 4370, 5090, 5980. Or one course in Philosophy: PHIL 4100, PHIL 4130, PHIL 5440. American: POLS 4000, 4030, 4040, 4060, 4080, 4090, 4140, 4180, 4250, 4410, 4810, 5980. Global: IR, Choose 2: POLS 4250, 4260, 4270, 4290, 5980. Comparative, Choose 2: POLS 4460, 4500, 4510, 4520, 4530, 4540, 4580, 4590, 5310. Note: Thesis students with Global Concentration can take three courses, but with at least one in IR and one in Comparative.
2.	3			
3.	3			
4.	3			
Note: MA Thesis students need only three concentration courses.				
III. Comprehensive Exam or Thesis (0-3 units)				
OPTION A				
POLS 5960: Comprehensive Examination	0.0	CR/NC		*maximum of two attempts*
OPTION B (requires MA advisor approval)				
POLS 5990: Thesis. Students who write an MA thesis may substitute 3.0 thesis units for one concentration elective.	3.0	CR/NC		*no equivalent transfer credit allowed*

C. UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS WPE/GWAR:

Exempt ___ Required ___ Semester & Year satisfied _____

Student _____ Date _____

Advisor _____ Date _____

Semester Classified (G2)

Semester Candidacy (G3)

REQUIREMENTS FOR CONCENTRATIONS (9-12 UNITS)

Each concentration requires the completion of **four** elective courses (or **three** for thesis students) drawn primarily from the undergraduate curriculum (4000-level courses only) in the Department of Political Science. In addition to the 4000-level undergraduate courses listed for each concentration, students also have the option of completing POLS 5980: Graduate Directed Study. POLS 5980 requires students to complete an independent research paper or comparable project under the supervision of a faculty member (who must be ranked as Assistant Professor or above). It may also be possible to take a 4000-level or graduate-level course in *another department* as a substitute concentration elective, but this must be designated and approved by the MA advisor *prior* to enrolling in the course and added to the student's designated course plan in the department and NSS office. **Students who experience difficulties finding courses to fulfil their concentration requirements should consult with the MA Advisor.**

Students who are approved to write an MA thesis (which counts for three units) may elect to take only **three** concentration electives instead of four.

American Politics Concentration (total of four electives, except for thesis students)

- Choose **four courses** from the following: POLS 4000, 4030, 4040, 4060, 4080, 4090, 4140, 4180, 4250, 4410, 4810, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in American Politics).

Political Theory Concentration (total of four electives, except for thesis students)

- Choose **four courses** from the following: POLS 4310, 4330, 4350, 4370, 5090, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in Political Theory), or **one** course (only) in the Department of Philosophy: PHIL 4100, 4130, PHIL 5440.

Global Politics Concentration (total of four electives, except for thesis students)

- *International Relations.* Choose **two courses** from the following: POLS 4250, 4260, 4270, 4290, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in Comparative Politics).
- *Comparative Politics.* Choose **two courses** from the following: POLS 4460, 4500, 4510, 4520, 4530, 4540, 4580, 4590, 5310.
- Thesis students should take *at least one elective* in International Relations *and one elective* in Comparative Politics.

REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION AND THESIS

Students choose either to take the comprehensive examination *or* to write a thesis, the latter subject to the approval of the thesis chair and MA graduate advisor. Students electing to take the comprehensive examination (POLS 5960) should plan to take the examination after completing at least 15 units of graduate seminars and six units of concentration electives (typically the fourth semester of enrollment). Students will be allowed a maximum of two attempts to complete the comprehensive examination successfully. Failure to pass the comprehensive examination, or any portion thereof, will result in disqualification from the program. Students who are approved to write an MA thesis may choose to take only three concentration electives instead of four.

Students who have made one attempt to pass the comprehensive examinations may not change to the thesis option; students who have completed the POLS 5990 "thesis course" may not change to the comprehensive examination option.

Thesis students who do not complete their thesis in one semester should enroll in UNIV 9000 the succeeding semester in order to maintain continuous enrollment (which allows use of university facilities, etc.).

APPENDIX B**Recommended Course Sequence - MA Program****Program: Political Science (30 units)****Concentration** 3-4 courses in a selected concentration field: American Politics; Political Theory; Comparative Politics.¹

Fall	Units	Spring	Units
YEAR ONE			
Core Seminar 1	3	Core Seminar 3	3
Core Seminar 2	3	Core Seminar 4	3
Concentration Course 1	3	Concentration Course 2	3
TOTAL		TOTAL	
9		9	

YEAR TWO

Core Seminar 5	3	POLS 5960 (Comps) + Concentration Course 4 <i>or</i> POLS 5990 (Thesis) ¹	3
Core Seminar 6	3		
Concentration Course 3	3		
TOTAL		TOTAL	
9		3	

TOTAL UNITS 30**NOTES (current in Fall 2022):**

1. If students take the Comprehensive Exam, the fourth concentration course is *required*. If students write a thesis, the fourth concentration course is *optional*.