

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Department Description

The discipline of political science examines the relations of people and organizations as they seek to order their world. Special attention is paid to the development of explanations of the political process and to the effects of politics on social life and social values.

At Saint Mary's College the study of political science emphasizes two concerns: the basic characteristics of politics and the theories and methods for the rigorous analysis of political phenomena. To satisfy these concerns the departmental program provides a wide variety of courses in the traditional subfields of political science: American politics and law, comparative politics, international politics, and political theory. Students are also encouraged to experience politics directly in the world's "laboratory" of political activity. Opportunities for experiential learning exist in certain courses, in the Washington Semester program, and through the department's internship program.

Graduates of the department enter a wide variety of careers. Majors routinely enter law schools and paralegal programs, business schools, and graduate schools in public administration, international politics, and political science. They begin careers as legislative aides, public administrators, teachers, journalists, or managers in the private sector.

Study Abroad

Saint Mary's has a long history of providing quality international programs as an essential part of our educational mission—forming women leaders who will make a difference in the world. As this world becomes increasingly interdependent, the College offers an expanding range of semester, year, semester break, and summer study and service programs in a wide variety of countries, and encourages students to take advantage of them. Learn more about the various Study Abroad opportunities (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/academic-life/international-programs/>).

Teacher Preparation

The Political Science Department in conjunction with the Education Department offers courses leading to state licensing for History/Social Studies.

Washington Semester Program

The department participates in a program designed to let students spend a semester in Washington, D.C. studying the operations of the national government. The program, a cooperative arrangement between over 100 colleges and the American University, features seminars, an internship, and a supervised research project. Acceptance in the program is restricted to political science majors with at least a 2.5 cumulative GPA. Completion of POSC 201 American Politics (and, for Foreign Policy, Peace, and Conflict Resolution, and International Law and Organization programs, POSC 206 International Politics) is required for candidacy. Selection is based on the quality of the student's work in the department and the soundness of the proposed research project. The department makes the final determination concerning acceptance into the program. Completion of the program fulfills one of the elective courses in the major, and the research project can fulfill the senior thesis requirement.

International Study

Students may elect to attend other international study programs with institutional approval. The department reserves the right to approve international study courses that students wish to apply to major or minor requirements, up to a maximum of three hours.

Programs

- Political Science, Bachelor of Arts - POSC (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/programs/political-science/political-science-bachelor-arts/>)
- Political Science, Minor - POSC (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/programs/political-science/political-science-minor/>)

Department Chair

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Faculty

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Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will understand the basic philosophical concepts of politics and examine politics and political issues in philosophical terms.
- Students will understand the major principles, institutions, processes, functions, and behavioral patterns of the American political system.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the theories underpinning the study of international and cross-national politics.
- Students will apply the tools of political analysis to analyze national, cross-national, and international political outcomes.

Political Science Courses

Introductory Courses

The following survey courses are offered regularly for students who are fulfilling General Education requirements or initiating the study of politics.

POSC 116 United States Foreign Policy (3)

An introductory survey of the internal and external forces that influence the formulation and execution of the foreign and defense policies of the United States. Studies major issues, values, purposes, methods, and events of U.S. foreign policy.

POSC 120 Congress and the Legislative Process (3)

An analysis of the structure, processes, and behavior of the United States Congress as a representative institution.

POSC 122 The Presidency (3)

POSC 122 is an introductory study of the U.S. presidency. It focuses on the role of the American president in the political system, including the expectations of the Constitution and the public of the presidency, the different duties and powers of the president, presidential selection, presidential achievements, and uses of power.

POSC 140 Digital Politics (3)

This course explores the intersections between politics and the digital world. Together, we'll consider such questions as: Whom do our digital technologies include (or exclude)? How does the digital world – including social media – impact elections? Do digital technologies negatively impact any of our constitutional rights? How do such technologies impact our expectations about privacy? Do digital technologies have any implications for the way(s) we think about bias, equality, and access? As we explore these questions, students will have the opportunity to develop research skills that will enable them to gather, analyze, and interpret data gathered from digital sources (e.g. web pages, Twitter feeds, location data, etc.). These skills will assist students in answering their own questions about digital technologies and their political impact(s).

POSC 150 Politics and Film (3)

In Politics and Film, students will learn how to identify, understand, analyze, and communicate political ideas as portrayed and presented in films. While most of the films, readings, and class discussions focus on American politics, some content will pertain to the political science fields of political theory, international relations, and comparative politics.

POSC 151 Political Issues (3)

An analysis of various political ideas, systems, issues, and/or phenomena designed to introduce students to political thinking.

POSC 160 Global Political Issues (3)

This course will introduce students to some of the most important contemporary global political issues such as the impact of economic globalization on politics and culture, the sources of war and political conflict, gender inequality, poverty, United States foreign policy, and the role of international institutions.

Advanced Introductory Courses

All of the following courses are required for majors in political science, and are open to students in other majors. The courses are offered every other semester.

POSC 201 American Politics (3)

This course serves as an introductory survey of the major principles, institutions, processes, functions, and behavioral patterns of the American political system. It helps students to develop a broad, diverse, and articulate base of knowledge and understanding of American politics and government.

POSC 204 Political Thought (3)

The evolution of Western political theories surveyed through a discussion of leading political thinkers and their values.

POSC 206 International Politics (3)

An introduction to the theories which attempt to explain the ways nations interact with each other, and an application of these theories to selected problems of the contemporary international scene.

POSC 207 Comparative Politics (3)

An introduction to the use of theory, analytic concepts, and evidence to compare political history, processes, institutions, and outcomes in select nation-states.

Elective Courses

The elective courses are grouped by subfield, but students are free to select any course in any subfield if prerequisites are fulfilled. Normally these courses are taught every other year.

I. American Politics and Law**POSC 307 Introduction to American Law (3)**

A study of American law examining the Common Law tradition, federal and state court systems, criminal and civil law and procedure, and current legal issues.

POSC 320 Congress and the Legislative Process (3)

An analysis of the structure, processes, and behavior of the United States Congress as a representative institution. Prerequisite:

POSC 322 The Presidency (3)

The course focuses on the role of the American president in the political system, including the expectations of the Constitution and public about the role of the president, presidential selection, presidential achievements, and uses of power.

POSC 323 The United States Constitution (3)

A study of the interpretation of the Constitution by the U.S. Supreme Court, with emphasis on the judicial interpretation of presidential and congressional powers, judicial review, federalism, the role of government in the economy, and a broad survey of individual rights.

II. Comparative Politics**POSC 360 The Politics of Race (3)**

This course will examine the political uses of race as a social and political idea through comparative study of selected case studies from the around the world. The course will emphasize the diverse ways race has been used to build political power.

POSC 365 Gender and Politics (3)

This course will combine theoretical and empirical analysis of gender as a political issue. Case studies will permit comparative analysis of the diverse ways in which gender emerges as a political issue within distinct social, economic, cultural, and political contexts. The course will also assess the value of gender analysis in the field of political science. This course may be repeated with a different instructor.

III. International Politics**POSC 319 The Global Politics of International Development (3)**

This course will examine the historical roots of the inequality between the Global North and Global South as well as some of the principle theories and policies which have been put forward to address it over the past century. We will analyze competing conceptions of "development" present in academic writings as well as the policies of national governments, international lending institutions, and non-governmental organizations carrying out development projects. With this historical and theoretical foundation, we will look more closely at several major policy issues facing the Global South today, including economic development, poverty, gender justice, and the environment.

POSC 416 United States Foreign Policy (3)

Studies major issues, values, purposes, methods, and events of U.S. foreign policy.

IV. Political Theory and Methodology**POSC 301 Human Rights (3)**

This course discusses the history of conceptions of rights. It also looks at the strategies involved in political debates about rights.

POSC 340 Digital Politics (3)

This course explores the intersections between politics and the digital world. Together, we'll consider such questions as: Whom do our digital technologies include (or exclude)? How does the digital world – including social media – impact elections? Do digital technologies negatively impact any of our constitutional rights? How do such technologies impact our expectations about privacy? Do digital technologies have any implications for the way(s) we think about bias, equality, and access? As we explore these questions, students will have the opportunity to develop research skills that will enable them to gather, analyze, and interpret data gathered from digital sources (e.g. web pages, Twitter feeds, location data, etc.). These skills will assist students in answering their own questions about digital technologies and their political impact(s).

POSC 341 Politics and Religion (3)

This course engages students in thinking critically about the relationship between religion and politics in the U.S. and in selected other countries. How religion and politics ought to relate, and how they relate in actual practice will be considered.

POSC 350 Politics and Film (3)

In Politics and Film, students will learn how to identify, understand, analyze, and communicate political ideas as portrayed and presented in films. While most of the films, readings, and class discussions focus on American politics, some content will pertain to the political science fields of political theory, international relations, and comparative politics.

V. Other Courses**POSC 280 Model UN (1)**

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the structure, activities and procedures of the United Nations, as well some of the central features and challenges of international law and diplomacy. Student will represent a UN member at the American Model UN Conference in Chicago. May be repeated for credit.

POSC 390 Special Topics in Political Science (3)

The presentation of selected subjects of special relevance not included in regular departmental offerings. Prerequisite determined by instructor. May be repeated with a different topic.

POSC 495 Senior Thesis I (1)

Tutorial provided on the writing of the senior thesis. Graded S/U.

POSC 496 Senior Thesis II (1)

Tutorial provided on the writing of the senior thesis. Graded S/U.

POSC 497 Independent Study (1-3)

Specialized research supervised in a tutorial setting. No more than six hours of independent study in any one department may be used to meet graduation requirements. Independent study does not fulfill elective requirements for majors or minors. May be repeated.

POSC 499 Internship in Politics (1-3)

Supervised field work in an organization involving the student in work related to the discipline of Political Science. Open only to junior or senior majors. It does not fulfill elective requirements for majors or minors. Graded S/U. May be repeated.

Four-Year Plan for B.A. in Political Science

Students should realize that the sample 4-year plan for a political science (POSC) major is only one example. Intended and declared POSC majors should contact one of the POSC faculty for individual advising and then develop her 4-year plan according to her unique needs and goals. Once the student has declared POSC as their major, a POSC faculty adviser

will use the department printed Sophia/POSC rubric and form on major requirements and the Bulletin to help plan their future courses.

In advising students for their 4 year plans, faculty advisers will also help students to determine when POSC majors will be able to study abroad and/or in Washington, DC and when they can participate in internships for 1 to 3 credits as “free elective” credits. The best time for a student to go to DC for the Washington Semester Program (WSP) (p. 4) at American University is the spring of their junior year. The best times to study abroad are the spring semesters of their sophomore or junior year and fall of their junior year.

Students are informed by the major form and their faculty advisers when the four required courses are offered. POSC 201 is usually offered every semester. Incoming students with a score of 4 or 5 on the AP SAT exam in American government are not required to take POSC 201. Transfer students who have earned at least a C (2.0) in a 200-level American politics course at another college (but not online) may use it to satisfy POSC 201, depending on the POSC chair's evaluation of that course's syllabus.

Courses taken at other institutions by transfer students must be evaluated by the department chair if the courses are to fulfill major requirements. Of the five electives required for the POSC major, students must take at least three electives within this department.

POSC courses at the 100 level may not be credited toward the major.

POSC 204, 206, and 207 must be taken in residence at Saint Mary's College. Exceptions will be made for transfer students and qualifying international programs with the approval of the chair.

POSC 207 is offered every fall. POSC 204 and 206 are offered every spring.

POSC electives at the 300 and 400 levels are listed in the most recent Bulletin and on the POSC web site. They are usually offered every two years in the same semester. For example, POSC 416 was taught in the spring of 2020 and again in the spring of 2022. Currently, the POSC faculty do not offer any summer courses.

Credits from independent study and internships may not be applied toward major requirements. Internships and independent studies may be taken only by juniors and seniors.

If a POSC major spends one or two semesters in Rome, then pre-approved political science courses may be taken to satisfy two elective requirements for the POSC major. If a student participates in the WSP in DC, then 8 credits will be earned for two seminar courses and both courses will apply to the major as two of the five required electives. If a student takes any POSC electives in Rome, Spain, DC, Notre Dame, or other instructions, then at least three POSC electives must be completed on campus.

The best times for POSC majors to study abroad are the spring semesters of sophomore or junior years. The best time for students to be in DC for the WSP is the spring semester of junior year.

If a POSC major studies off-campus in the spring semesters of sophomore or junior years, then POSC 204 and POSC 206 must be taken in other spring semesters in order to graduate on time.

The four-year plan below illustrates how many POSC courses satisfy Sophia requirements. POSC courses satisfy LO1 and LO3 requirements, Women's Voices, the W, Global Learning A and Global Learning B. There

are no POSC courses that satisfy any LO2 requirements. For example, if a student enrolled in POSC 301 in the fall of her junior or senior year, it would count as an elective for the POSC major and satisfy a Women's Voices requirement.

With a requirement of 28 credits for students who write their senior theses in the POSC major, the POSC major requires fewer credits than other majors. Most POSC majors add second majors that require more than 30 credits. Thus, the sample plan assumes that this student is a double major. This plan also assumes that several POSC courses will satisfy both the major and Sophia requirements. If a student majors in POSC only, it is possible to spend two semesters off-campus, one abroad and one at the WSP at American University in DC.

Sample four-year plan for political science

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
First Semester		
Gen Ed Language I (3 cr)		
Gen Ed Writing Proficiency (4 cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
AVE 101	College in Practice	1
POSC 201	American Politics	3
2nd Major (3 cr)		
Credits		4
Second Semester		
Gen Ed Language II (3 cr)		
POSC 204	Political Thought	3
Gen Ed MATH (3 cr)		
2nd Major (3 cr)		
POSC 206	International Politics	3
Credits		6
Second Year		
First Semester		
General Education Course (3cr)		
Gen Ed RLST 1 (3 cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
POSC 207	Comparative Politics	3
2nd Major (3 cr)		
Credits		3
Second Semester		
Gen Ed RLST 2 (3 cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
2nd Major (3 cr)		
POSC elective		3
Credits		3
Third Year		
First Semester		
POSC elective		3
General Education Course (3cr)		
2nd Major (3 cr)		
Credits		3
Second Semester		
General Education Course (3cr)		

POSC elective		3
2nd Major (3 cr)		
General Education course (3cr)		
2nd Major (3 cr)		
Credits		3
Fourth Year		
First Semester		
POSC elective		3
POSC 495	Senior Thesis I	1
2nd Major (3 cr)		
2nd Major (3 cr)		
Credits		4
Second Semester		
POSC elective		3
2nd Major (3 cr)		
Credits		3
Total Credits		29

Sample plan for POSC Major study in Washington, DC

This plan assumes that there are 30 credits in the student's second major and that some POSC courses satisfy Sophia requirements.

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
First Semester		
Gen Ed Language I (3 cr)		
Gen Ed W (4cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
POSC 201	American Politics	3
2nd Major (3cr)		
Credits		3
Second Semester		
Gen Ed Language II (3cr)		
POSC 204	Political Thought (CTS)	3
General Education Course (3cr)		
2nd Major (3cr)		
POSC 206	International Politics	3
Credits		6
Second Year		
First Semester		
General Education Course (3cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
POSC 207	Comparative Politics	3
Credits		3
Second Semester		
General Education Course (3cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
POSC 207	Comparative Politics	3
Credits		3
Third Year		
First Semester		
General Education Course (3cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
General Education Course (3cr)		
Two in 2nd Major (6 cr)		
Credits		0

Third Year**First Semester**

POSC elective (3 cr) 3

General Education course (3cr)

Two in 2nd major (6 cr)

General Education Course (3cr)

Credits 3**Second Semester**

Seminar I at American University (4 cr) 4

Seminar II at American University (4 cr) 4

POSC 497 Independent Study 3

Internship at American University (4 cr) 4

Credits 15**Fourth Year****First Semester**

POSC 495 Senior Thesis I 1

POSC elective (3 cr) 3

Two in 2nd major (6 cr)

Credits 4**Second Semester**

POSC elective (3 cr) 3

Two in 2nd major (6 cr)

Credits 3**Total Credits 37**

Note: Including POSC 495 for the senior thesis credit, the POSC major requires 28 credits. POSC majors who are double majors and fulfill their senior comprehensive requirements in other majors are required to complete 27 instead of 28 credits since they do not register for POSC 495. Double majors who complete the Washington Semester Program (WSP) must fulfill their senior comprehensive requirements in the POSC major.