Nebraska Wesleyan University

Political Science

Catalog

2025-2026

About the Program

Mission Statement
The Political Science program prepares students to be informed citizens and active participants in the political life of their local, national, and global communities. Through the integration of foundational theory and practical experience, students develop the ability to explain and evaluate political dynamics. The major equips graduates with the analytical tools and methodological training necessary for professional success, civic engagement, and lifelong learning.

Department Learning Outcomes
The Political Science department expects that graduates will:

1. Describe and apply key concepts used to study political institutions, processes, and actors in various settings.
2. Explain and evaluate fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories of politics.
3. Apply political science methodologies to analyze political phenomena and interpret patterns in political behavior and institutions.
4. Develop the capacity to engage constructively with differing viewpoints and contribute to collective efforts in public life.
5. Reflect on how the study of political science prepares students for civic life, professional opportunities, and continued learning.

Majors, Minors & Degrees

Majors

1. Political Science (B.A., B.S.)

Minors

1. International Policy
2. Political Science

Courses

POLSC 1010 United States Government and Politics

4 hours

This course introduces students to government and politics in the United States. Drawing upon historical documents, political science research, and contemporary examples, this course examines the context, processes, institutions, and outcomes of the U.S. political system. Through the development of social science and critical analysis skills, students will be introduced to concepts and theories central to studying political science and understanding the contemporary political environment.

POLSC 1010FYW United States Government and Politics

4 hours

This course introduces students to government and politics in the United States. Drawing upon historical documents, political science research, and contemporary examples, this course examines the context, processes, institutions, and outcomes of the U.S. political system. Through the development of social science, critical analysis, and effective writing skills, students will be introduced to concepts and theories central to studying political science and understanding the contemporary political environment and politics in the United States.

POLSC 1100 Introduction to International Politics

4 hours

This course provides an introduction to the concepts, theories and methods of international politics. It highlights the similarities and differences between political systems, as well the nature of relations between these political systems. By examining political violence, democratization, security, trade, and development, this class will equip students to analyze current problems and experiences.

POLSC 1900 Selected Topics

1-4 hours

A topical course designed to investigate relevant subject matter not included in any standard courses. The title and the content will be determined by current mutual interests of students and faculty. This course may be offered to meet a requirement for a major only by approval of the department chair.

POLSC 1950 Independent Study

1 hour

This is a research course. The student initially meets with the department chair to select a study topic and review research methods. At this time the student will be assigned a faculty resource person to guide his or her work and assist in an advisory capacity. A copy of the student's work is filed in the archives for the department. Independent Study may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

POLSC 1960 Special Projects

1-15 hours

Supervised individual projects for students on topics selected by the student in consultation with the instructor. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor.

POLSC 1970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate at a meaningful level in an internship with a public official, political figure, public agency, campaign or interest group and to use that experience as the basis for an academic paper.
Pass/Fail only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

POLSC 2000 Analyzing Politics and Policy

4 hours

This course introduces students to the core tools and techniques used to analyze political systems and public policy through a data-driven approach. Students will learn to apply research methods, policy analysis frameworks, and statistical tools to real-world political and policy challenges. With a strong emphasis on applied data analysis, the course equips students with the skills

to collect, clean, visualize, and interpret data using modern software and analytical techniques. Designed as a foundational course, it is ideal for students interested in political science, public policy, data analysis, or evidence-based decision-making.

POLSC 2030 Elections

4 hours

This course will be an examination of elections in the United States, particularly focusing on the elections of presidents, members of congress, political behavior, campaigns, and gender in elections. You will learn how behavior is influenced by campaigns, what leads people to vote the way that they do, the role the media plays in influencing elections, and what part gender plays in how elections are decided. Some attention will be given to campaign finance and law related to elections. Recent elections will receive a good deal of attention, along with key elections of the past where lessons may be learned from their outcomes.

Prerequisite(s): POLSC 1010/POLSC 1010FYW United States Government and Politics

POLSC 2100 Social Policy

4 hours

This course will analyze the regulations, laws, and rules that impact the lives of people in the community. Students will examine issues that are related to social and civic life including education, health care, crime, and employment. They will utilize local, state and national case studies for understanding and analysis.

Prerequisite: POLSC 1010 United States Government and Politics or POLSC 1010FYW United States Government and Politics.

POLSC 2110 Lobbying and Policy Advocacy

4 hours

How do people create meaningful change in government? This course connects theory with practice, providing a comprehensive examination of lobbying, coalition building, and effective advocacy strategies. Students will critically analyze scholarly research, examine real-world case studies, and gain hands-on experience in policy advocacy. Through practical experiences, they will develop the strategic and analytical skills essential for designing and implementing effective advocacy campaigns. Students will be equipped with the tools to influence policy and drive change.

POLSC 2200 Race and Politics

4 hours

This course introduces students to the intricate relationship between race, ethnicity, and American politics. Through the analysis of pivotal historical events, legislation, social movements, and policy debates, students will gain a deeper understanding of the key challenges and opportunities associated with race and politics in the United States. This course aims to equip students with the knowledge and tools to participate in meaningful discussions on racial equality, social justice, and the future of American democracy.

POLSC 2300 Introduction to Political Science

2 hours

This class provides students who are interested in the political science major or minor an in-depth examination of the major discussions, methods, and themes that form the core of political science education.

POLSC 2350 Judicial Politics

4 hours

In this course students will examine the organization, functioning, and impact of courts in the United States. Attention will be paid to the role of lawyers in the judicial system, trial and appellate court procedures, selection of judges, and the relationship of courts to other elements of the U.S. political system. Topics will include the nature of law, the role of juries, plea bargaining, alternative conflict resolution, court workload, and proposals for reform.

POLSC 2400 Congress

4 hours

Congress is established in the U.S. Constitution as the chief legislative body, responsible for making national laws and serving as a check on the executive and judicial branches. In this course, we examine the development of the Congress, the rules and procedures by which laws are made, and the policies it produces. We also explore how members of Congress are elected and factors influencing their behavior once in office.

POLSC 2450 State and Local Government

4 hours

State and local governments in the United States play an essential, yet often overlooked, role in the lives of their citizens. From setting educational standards and enforcing criminal laws to managing elections and determining zoning and land use, the decisions made at these levels of government shape the everyday experiences of residents.

This course examines the institutions, procedures, politicians, citizens, and public policies of both state and local governments across the U.S. We explore how variations among states and communities can inform our understanding of governance, policymaking, and democratic representation.

POLSC 2500 Constitutional Law

4 hours

This course explores the U.S. Constitution with a specific emphasis on civil rights and liberties, examining how landmark legal decisions have defined and redefined individual freedoms and equality under the law. Students will study the historical development and evolution of
constitutional protections, theories of constitutional interpretation, and key Supreme Court cases that have shaped civil rights and liberties in areas such as free speech, equal protection, and due process. The course
emphasizes the analysis of constitutional issues, the role of the judiciary in addressing societal controversies, and the impact of constitutional law on advancing or restricting civil rights. Students will develop skills in reading case law and critically evaluating the nature and limits of
constitutional decision-making in shaping a just society.

POLSC 2550 Political Parties and Interest Groups

3 hours

In the twenty-first century, the role of partisanship in the political process continues to be a salient topic for discussion among political elites, scholars, and constituents alike. This course aims to provide students with a detailed background in the formation of political groups and their function in government systems, as well as their role as a prevalent part of constituent identities. Through examination of relevant research and more contemporary examples, this class will also address and evaluate the topic of polarization and its effects on the behavior of elites and constituents in the modern era. Over the course of the semester, we will cover topics like the development of political parties, their effect on elections and in policy making, the rise of party as a salient identity for the public, and the theories behind polarization and realignment. Upon leaving this course, students should have a better understanding of political groups and the various facets of their operations.

POLSC 2630 Foreign Policy

4 hours

How do countries project power abroad and interact with other states within the international community? This course will explore how the United States and other countries think about foreign policy, what actors are involved, and the strategies used in the

international arena. Historical case studies will be used to highlight different aspects of foreign policy and stress the intricacies of the international arena. The course also seeks to connect the concepts and theories to current foreign policy issues facing the international community today.

POLSC 2640 Terrorism and Political Violence

4 hours

This course provides an introduction to the topics of terrorism and political violence. Understanding why political violence occurs, how it is used, the different forms it takes, what its effects are, and how it can be countered proves crucial to understanding the dilemmas faced by many states and non-state actors. We will cover topics such as terrorism, extremism, radicalization, and state and non-state violence. Through these topics, this course seeks to provide students with a better understanding of the uses and differing manifestations of terrorism and political violence.

POLSC 2660 Intelligence And National Security

4 hours

This course examines the people and processes of intelligence as a vital aspect of national and international security. We will determine how intelligence is gathered, analyzed, and communicated with special emphasis given to the relationship between the intelligence community and policy makers. This course equips students with the essential analytical techniques employed by intelligence professionals. Through immersive case studies and hands-on exercises, students will develop and refine their ability to analyze complex information and produce insightful assessments.

POLSC 2670 Global Revolution and Rebellion

4 hours

This class will explore the various ways that people protest again their governments. The first part of the class will examine the theory behind citizen-led uprisings: how do people decide to rebel? How do they mobilize? What is a collective action theory? What is the public sphere? We will end this section with a consideration of the revolutions of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe. The second part of the course will examine various types of revolutionary activity, both violent and non-violent. What are mechanisms of change? How does the strategy of change relate to the demands of the protestors? The final part of the class will study how revolutions end. When do the people get their way? What does a 'successful' revolution look like?

POLSC 2700 Women and Politics

4 hours

This course provides a comprehensive exploration of the role of women in the political process. It examines the historical and contemporary participation of women in political institutions, movements, and advocacy efforts. Students will analyze the barriers and opportunities women face in achieving political representation and leadership, as well as the impact of social, cultural, and institutional factors on their engagement. The course also delves into the ways in which women influence and are affected by policy decisions, particularly those related to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, workplace equity, education, healthcare, and family policy. This course invites students of all genders to engage in thoughtful discussions and develop insights into the broader implications of gender dynamics in shaping democratic governance.

POLSC 2720 Environmental Politics

4 hours

This seminar dives into the dynamic intersection of environmental and American politics, uncovering how U.S. policies shape global environmental outcomes. From tackling climate change and food insecurity to protecting biodiversity, we'll explore the urgent challenges that demand action both at home and abroad. With a focus on the power and influence of U.S. leadership, this course equips you with analytical tools to evaluate key issues and solutions. Together, we'll examine the roles of government agencies, businesses, NGOs, and international organizations in shaping the future of our planet.

POLSC 2730 The Politics Of Public Lands

4 hours

Public lands have long been at the heart of American political, environmental, and cultural debates. This course explores their historical development, contemporary challenges, and future directions. Students will examine how laws, governance structures, and competing interests influence the management of public lands. Topics include conservation, resource use, recreation, and cultural significance, with an emphasis on the relationships between federal, tribal, state, and local authorities. Through ongoing case studies, the course provides practical insights into the complex dynamics and political forces shaping public land use today.

POLSC 2900 Selected Topics

3 hours

A topical course designed to investigate relevant subject matter not included in any of the standard courses. The title, content, and credit will be determined by current mutual interests of students and faculty.

POLSC 2950 Independent Study

1-12 hours

This is a research course. The student initially meets with the department chair to select a study topic and review research methods. At this time the student will be assigned a faculty resource person to guide his or her work and assist in an advisory capacity. A copy of the student's work is filed in the archives for the department. Independent Study may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

POLSC 2960 Special Projects

1-15 hours

Supervised individual projects for students on topics selected by the student in consultation with the instructor. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor.

POLSC 2970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate at a meaningful level in an internship with a public official, political figure, public agency, campaign or interest group and to use that experience as the basis for an academic paper.
Pass/Fail only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

POLSC 3300 Public Opinion

4 hours

In democracies, the attitudes and beliefs of the public are expected to influence government policy and action. The formation and expression of public opinions, therefore, is central to understanding democratic governance. This course examines public opinion in contemporary America. We will discuss how attitudes can be conceptualized and measured, how they form, how Americans evaluate key public policies, and the influence these attitudes have on government operation.

Pre-requisite(s): POLSC 1010 United States Government and Politics or POLSC 1010FYW United States Government and Politics.

POLSC 3400 Congress and Presidency

4 hours

The intricate relationship between Congress and the Presidency lies at the heart of American governance, as defined by the Constitution. Together, these foundational institutions craft the nation's laws, shape policy, and balance each other's powers to sustain effective governance. This course offers a comprehensive examination of the evolution of Congress and the Presidency, the rules and procedures governing lawmaking, and the resulting policies. Additionally, we analyze the electoral processes for both offices, the factors influencing their decision-making in office, and the complex dynamics that shape their collaboration in steering the nation's course.

POLSC 3720 War And Peace

4 hours

Why do people use violence to pursue political goals? Additionally, once conflict has ended, what keeps actors from simply taking up arms again should they feel dissatisfied with the new status quo? This course will explore these broad questions by investigating the determinants and dynamics of conflict and post-conflict peace. The first part of the course will explore the theoretical explanations for why people and states resort to violence. This will be followed by an investigation into non-state actors and fighting within the state. The course will then end with a section on how violence ends and what influences post-conflict peace.

POLSC 3730 Authoritarian Regimes

4 hours

This course explores the evolving landscape of authoritarian regimes in contemporary politics. We will examine diverse forms of authoritarian rule, strategies for maintaining power, and factors contributing to resilience and decline. Using a comparative approach, we will analyze institutions, ideology, technology, and economic influences on authoritarian governance, as well as challenges from civil society and international actors.

POLSC 3900 Selected Topics

1-5 hours

A course designed to treat subject matter not covered in other departmental courses or to provide advanced study of subject matter introduced in other courses. The title, content, and credit hours will be determined by current mutual interests of faculty and students.

POLSC 3910 Directed Readings

1-6 hours

An opportunity for students, under the supervision of a faculty member, to pursue literature not covered in other coursework.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

POLSC 3930 Student Instructor Experience

1-4 hours

Students in this course will assist one of the department's faculty in teaching a course. The faculty member and the student will write a learning contract at the beginning of the term describing the responsibilities of the student (e.g., grading, taking attendance, tutoring, facilitating class activities) and establishing the criteria for evaluation of the student's performance. For each hour of academic credit, the student will be expected to devote 3-4 hours a week to assisting with the teaching. May be repeated for credit. P/F Only.
Prerequisite(s): Approval of the instructor.

POLSC 3950 Independent Study

1-12 hours

An opportunity for individual students to engage in advanced field or library research. A formal paper reviewing the research, suitable for placement in the college or departmental library, is required. Independent Study may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Approval of the department chair.

POLSC 3960 Special Projects

1-15 hours

This course is designed to allow students to pursue interests in political science or government beyond the extent possible in POLSC 3950 Independent Study. Open only to qualified students with approval. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Approval of the department chair.

POLSC 3970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate at a meaningful level in an internship with a public official, political figure, public agency, campaign or interest group and to use that experience as the basis for an academic paper.
Pass/Fail only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

POLSC 4900 Selected Topics

1-4 hours

A topical course designed to investigate relevant subject matter not included in any standard courses. The title and the content will be determined by current mutual interests of students and faculty. This course may be offered to meet a requirement for a major only by approval of the department chair.

POLSC 4910 Directed Readings

1-6 hours

An opportunity for students, under the supervision of a faculty member, to pursue literature not covered in other coursework.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the Department Chair.

POLSC 4950 Independent Study

1-4 hours

This is a research course. The student initially meets with the department chair to select a study topic and review research methods. At this time the student will be assigned a faculty resource person to guide his or her work and assist in an advisory capacity. A copy of the student's work is filed in the archives for the department. Independent Study may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Senior standing or permission of the department chair.

POLSC 4960 Special Projects

1-8 hours

Supervised individual projects for students on topics selected by the student in consultation with the instructor. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor.

POLSC 4970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate at a meaningful level in an internship with a public official, political figure, public agency, campaign or interest group and to use that experience as the basis for an academic paper.
Pass/Fail only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

POLSC 4990 Senior Seminar

4 hours

In this capstone course, political science majors will integrate what they have learned throughout the major to investigate meaningful political questions through research, writing, and presentations. Students will develop projects that demonstrate their ability to analyze complex issues, conduct appropriate research, construct clear arguments, and effectively communicate their findings. The course also includes structured reflection on students' academic experiences and guidance in identifying and preparing for goals beyond graduation. Prerequisite: Senior standing and permission of the department chair.