

Dartmouth College
Department of Government
Plan of Study Form for Majors
(class of 2008 and later)

Instructions

Political science is a highly diverse field united around a core interest. Political scientists study power, and especially power used for public purposes: how it is created, organized, distributed, justified, used, resisted, and sometimes destroyed. They study power both normatively and empirically. They study it in different settings: within states, among states, and in spaces that states do not (or no longer) control. They consider past as well as contemporary patterns. They use a wide array of approaches and methods to gain leverage on the even wider array of questions they pose.

Why do *you* want to study politics? What particular topic or puzzle drew you to the Department? Perhaps you are interested in when and how disempowered groups press their claims; perhaps you are interested in the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy (or the reverse); maybe you want to understand the relationship between political institutions and economic development. Maybe you just want to know everything there is to know about politics in the United States (or China or Chile or Germany or Nigeria or Egypt).

To make the most of your Government major, you need to choose your courses according to some intellectual plan. This is the place where we ask you to articulate your interests and come up with an appropriate academic plan. In all likelihood, you will find that your interests span the traditional subfields of American political science: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory. If, for example, you are interested in democratization (a topic located primarily in comparative politics), you would be well advised to take courses in all four subfields. Political theorists make, interpret, and assess normative arguments about power and justice, and therefore about the different ways that democracy can be defined, defended, and criticized. The United States is not a typical democratic state, but it has a long, complex, and correspondingly instructive experience as a democracy; Americanists study the patterns of American democracy—its institutions, actors, processes, and policies, in the present and over time. War and trade—the stuff of international relations—affect the domestic politics of all countries, and so create opportunities and obstacles for democratic politics (think about the impact of colonization on political development—or about the impact of American power on American democracy). Finally, democratization happens (or does not happen) in specific ways and in specific places; students of comparative politics analyze and compare the institutions, actors, processes, and policies of different political systems (China, Chile, Germany, Nigeria, Egypt—and, if relevant, the United States). To understand how the subfields complement each other, substitute humanitarian intervention (a topic located primarily in international relations) for democratization as your hypothetical focus and run through the argument.

In planning a government major, students may select either a series of individual courses of interest to them, building a program of courses focused on a particular problem or issue. Alternatively, they may concentrate on a subfield. Major cards must be approved by a faculty advisor. Students should pick an advisor with whom they share academic interests and consult regularly with that advisor throughout their time at Dartmouth. Before meeting with their advisor, students should complete the Plan of Study Form and bring it with you to the meeting with your advisor. Information on our faculty including advising fields, office hours, curriculum vitae, recent publication and research interests can be found on our webpage at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~govt/faculty/>.

For further guidance in answering the questions posed on the form, please go to the Department's website and click on the appropriate link.

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Name: _____ Class: _____ Type of Major: ___ Single ___ Double with: _____

1. Please state a broad substantive topic *and* a related puzzle that you hope better to understand by majoring in Government. Examples of possible topics include (but are not limited to) democratization, representation, ethnic conflict, institutions and political behavior, war and diplomacy, human rights, political economy, political development, and religion and politics. Examples of possible puzzles include: what is the relationship between economic growth and democracy? what are the causes of war? what is justice? what impact has federalism had on the development of the American welfare state?

2. Government 10 or its equivalent is a prerequisite for the major. It is a “tools” course, and the earlier you take it, the more opportunity you will have to use it. When did you take/when do you plan to take Government 10 or its equivalent?

3. What other tools, skills (e.g. a language), or areas of inquiry (e.g. biology, classics, economics, sociology) might enable you to gain better purchase on your chosen topic or puzzle? What courses outside the Department do you plan to take to complement the program you are designing as your Major?

4. You are required to take two introductory courses for the Major. Which introductory courses are most likely to help you lay a foundation for your program and why? When did you take/when do you plan to take each course?

5. You are required to take at least six further courses in the Department. These courses are the core of your program. They should be selected and sequenced in a way that makes intellectual sense. In practice, you may not be able to take the most suitable courses in the most sensible order (courses close, D Plans change...) — but you should start with a coherent plan. Please list below the six courses you would like to take, in the order you would like to take them.

6. In addition to the courses listed above, you are required to take at least one advanced seminar. What seminar is consistent with your intellectual goals and when do you plan to take it?

7. To fulfill the Culminating Experience requirement in Government, you must either take another advanced seminar in your senior year or write an honors thesis. You may now anticipate one option and later choose the other, so you should keep your options open. What additional seminar would appropriately cap the program you have constructed for yourself? On what topic can you imagine yourself writing a thesis?

Student’s signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor’s signature: _____ Date: _____