

Meaning of the Degree	Suggestions and References
<p>This section is about the structure of the degree, its components and its expectations.</p>	<p>The Political Science Department offers a Bachelors of Arts degree in political science. Our mission is to convey substantive knowledge about politics, government and public life, and encourage our students to develop certain critical skills necessary for informed, active participation in political communities. The program facilitates and encourages experiential learning as a complement to the traditional pedagogies of the academy. The degree aligns with the university vision, values, and outcomes by providing our students with the substantive knowledge and the critical skills to engage as productive and intelligent citizens in their local, national, and global communities. By providing a range of class-based and co-curricular learning experiences, our students are prepared to be life-long learners.</p> <p>The Political Science program provides both breadth and depth in that it requires an introductory course in each of the subfields listed above. In these courses, students are exposed to the specialized knowledge of the discipline. By the end of their second year, students are able to identify and explain the central concepts in political science.</p> <p>It is in these introductory courses that faculty work with a diverse array of entering student abilities. Our entering students are interested in politics and law, but tend to have a vague sense of the career paths that follow a degree in Political Science. They have proven that they are hard-working and capable of basic writing and quantitative skills, but we do not expect these students to have any detailed knowledge of political institutions or of the study of politics. The introductory classes are designed to engage them in career exploration and provide a basic working knowledge for engagement in all six PLS subfields and the research methods course. These courses also emphasize writing assignments that work in conjunction with other writing intensive GE courses to prepare the students for more advanced critical writing in their later years.</p> <p>In their third year, students use the knowledge in the subfields to begin to analyze and apply the central arguments in the discipline. They also apply this knowledge in in the field through a variety of internships in the legal system, legislative offices, campaigns, and local governments and agencies. Students are exposed to more sophisticated research methods.</p>
<p>Describe the generic degree and what makes the PLS degree at CPP distinct.</p>	
<p>Describe how the degree aligns with the university vision, values, and outcomes.</p>	
<p>Describe your entering students' abilities and your graduates' culminating skills.</p>	

	<p>In their fourth year, students acquire more complex specialized knowledge of these fields and use it in combination with their research and data analysis skills to identify and study advanced political science questions. These are often questions that they encounter in their internships or in earlier political science classes. These research projects are required in the 400 level courses, and all students must complete either the senior thesis course, in which they write a 30-40 page research paper, or the senior internship course, in which they complete 200 hours in an internship and write a 25 page research and reflective paper related to the internship.</p> <p>Our graduates have gained proficiencies in the specialized knowledge of political science and research methods. They have the ability to identify and conduct scholarly research about complex political problems in the United States and elsewhere. They have developed very strong analytical and writing skills, as well as the ability to engage with others in respectful, professional, and productive ways to solve collective problems.</p> <p>http://www.cpp.edu/~class/political-science/</p>
Quality of the Degree	
<p>This section is about the alignment of the degree program with the expectations.</p>	
<p>Describe how your program helps students engage and master the key learning outcomes that represent what your graduates take away from their study.</p> <p>Provide a link to your website where those interested can find information about curricular requirements, learning outcomes, and other aspects of your program.</p>	<p>The Political Science program emphasizes research and writing throughout the program, which enables students to independently conduct reliable and meaningful research in political science and the social sciences in general. Information literacy is key in today's media saturated environments, and the Political Science program prepares students to navigate it with an objective and critical perspective, situating them to serve as citizens and professionals. Students gain the ability to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, which are increasingly important skills in our complex global environments and workplaces.</p> <p>We expect that students will obtain the ability to learn about politics and government from experience, as well as engage in problem solving in real-world settings. These skills are gained through a wide variety of internships and co-curricular activities and classes that the Political Science program supports, such as Mock Trial, the Judicial Internship, Model UN, and Model OAS. Students are encouraged through a variety of mechanisms, including advising, course credit, career exploration, to engage in these activities.</p>

	<p>These experiential courses, as well as the class-based courses, provide students with the ability to think critically from theoretical and practical perspectives about the institutions and processes of American government, international relations, and other governments and non-profit organizations.</p> <p>One of the most important high impact practices in the department is our senior capstone projects. Because all seniors present their work at a day-long conference, to which all majors are invited, our students are looking for appropriate research topics and internships long before their final year. The capstone project focuses and energizes their efforts. Students end their undergraduate experience with a significant research project under their belt, and for those who have done the Senior Internship course, work experience in a public organization. Both ensure that students have achieved the PLS learning objectives and prepare them for the next steps in their educational or career paths.</p> <p>http://www.cpp.edu/~class/political-science/about/index.shtml</p>
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Integrity of the Degree	
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<p>This section is about the assurance that the degree is meeting the expectations.</p> <p>Describe how your faculty members know that their program effectively delivers what its designers promise. Give examples of recent learning outcome assessments, what they demonstrate, and how the department uses its assessment procedures to help students learn.</p> <p>Provide a link to your website where those interested can learn more about your assessment procedures, findings, and how your faculty use assessment to help students learn.</p>	<p>The Political Science Department assessment is focused on the two capstone classes, Senior Thesis and Senior Internship. Both are two-quarter sequences, in which students use their research skills and knowledge of the field to develop and conduct in-depth research projects. In the Thesis course students research a current question or problem in political science and engage in high-level analysis. In the Internship course, students complete 200 hours in an internship related to the field, such as legislative staff work, non-profit management, or local government policy analysis. After the internship the students use scholarly research in political science and/or public administration to analyze their internship organization and experience.</p> <p>In both classes, students present their work to their peers and faculty. Their presentations are graded using a rubric. In both classes the papers are graded by two faculty members using an extensive rubric that focuses on most of the Department learning objectives, including research skills, persuasive and clear writing, and the ability to critically analyze politics and political institutions in the United States, internationally, and in other regions of the world.</p>
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A second element of our assessment is a senior exit survey and meeting. We have the graduating majors complete a survey about the program and the success of the program at achieving our learning objectives. We then meet with the students to discuss in greater detail their responses to the survey.

In the spring after the senior classes and the exit survey meeting, the data is collected from these direct and indirect assessment mechanisms and presented in an understandable for faculty to discuss. The faculty meet to review the improvements in the scores over the past few years, as well as where the students are weakest. We agree to focus on one or two identified potential improvements to the curriculum and discuss changes in our classes, advising, and even specific assignments in order to address the weaknesses identified in the assessments.

For example, in the past we recognized that students were having trouble identifying appropriate research questions, so we responded by incorporating more scholarly articles and research topics in lower and upper division courses, as well as including in our PLS 101 Intro to Political Science course and exercise highlighting the differences between Political Science subfields and the questions each subfield works with.

For semester conversion, we have added a new level of assessment at the end of each PLS 200 level introductory course. This will be an embedded exam or assignment that focus on the program learning objectives relevant to that particular subfield course. Faculty will agree on the assessment mechanism and goals for the introductory courses. The assessment outcomes will be included for discussion at the spring faculty meetings.

<http://www.cpp.edu/~class/political-science/about/learning-outcomes.shtml>