POLITICAL SCIENCE
GRADUATE PROGRAM

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Our Graduate Program

Our graduate program provides an environment in which students work collaboratively with faculty to prepare for successful careers as scholars and teachers of political science. In order to foster this collaborative approach, enrollment in the program is highly competitive, which allows close working relationships with faculty. We offer multi-year financial packages to all admitted students through a combination of fellowships, research assistantships, and teaching assistantships so that students of our program can concentrate fully on their studies. The success of our program in preparing students for academic careers is evident in our excellent placement record of graduates in research universities and liberal arts colleges.

While we offer emphasis in all of the traditional subfields in political science, American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Theory, and Methodology, our department encourages training and research that cuts across the traditional fields. Our graduate program is structured to introduce students to a range of approaches in political science research and the methodological tools needed to engage in cutting-edge scholarship. Our program also offers numerous opportunities for students to pursue independent and collaborative research, as well as the funding to do so. We are dedicated to insuring that your studies are your first priority.

Our Placement Record

Graduate school is a career choice. At the UC Davis Graduate Program in Political Science we dedicate significant time and resources to support your future as a working professional in your field. Our program will equip you with the knowledge necessary to be a leader in political science research, with the practical experience to effectively impart your knowledge to the next generation of political science students. We will also assist you with preparing your application materials for the faculty recruitment season. With the proper training and preparation we help you achieve your career goals, while also giving you the tools you need to excel in your future position.

Our program has been very successful in placing our graduates. Since 2000, almost all of our graduates from the PhD program have received tenure-track appointments in a variety of academic institutions. Recent placements include tenure track jobs at University of North Carolina, University of Wisconsin, Texas A&M University, Vanderbilt University, Florida State University, University of South Carolina, University of Kansas, US Naval Academy, University of California Irvine, Tulane University, Santa Clara University, Gettysburg College, Strathclyde University, Koç University, and University of New Mexico. Other students have also secured positions in state government, political consulting, and legislative advocacy groups.
The study of American politics at Davis engages a broad range of questions central to understanding democratic processes and institutions in the US. Faculty research and teaching covers the major institutions of American national government, including the Congress, courts, presidency, and the political parties. The faculty in American politics includes recognized experts on the electoral process, with interests in the study of political behavior, citizen participation and engagement, and political representation.

Many of the core questions in political science can be addressed within the broad approach known as comparative politics. As the quality and quantity of data on other countries increased, however, scholars in comparative politics have been able to provide some of the most compelling answers to the core questions in the discipline. At Davis, our view is that such an approach offers substantial advantages over a more “area-studies” focus; comparative politics program around an explicitly comparative orientation.

When do states go to war? What affects trade and immigration patterns? Which counter-terrorism strategies work? Is the enemy of my enemy truly my friend? How does war affect leaders, public opinion, and elections? These are just some of the critical international politics questions studied at Davis. Our goal is to ask questions that have relevance for the global future and answers from the international relations past, and to examine them creatively and rigorously.

In the political theory subfield at Davis we take a broadly textual approach to the history of political thought, focusing on major political philosophers from the ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary eras. We provide our students with training in textual analysis that is also sensitive to the broader philosophic issues and historical contexts necessary for understanding these texts. While we offer courses across the entire range of the history of political thought, including seminars focusing on a single thinker or text, our program is particularly strong in the early modern era.

At UC Davis, we have a strong commitment to training students to learn a variety of statistical methods and formal theory while at the same time teaching students to think carefully about the nature of the data and the assumptions of the models given the data. We offer a variety of courses on a wide range of topics, including linear modeling, duration modeling, Bayesian statistics, time-series, hierarchical modeling, discrete-choice modeling, game theory, social choice theory, formal and spatial modeling, and the empirical testing of formal models.
Admissions Procedures

The Department of Political Science accepts PhD applications and MA/JD joint program applications. Please note that we do not offer a stand-alone Master of Arts program. Applicants for the MA/JD program must also apply directly to the UC Davis Law School if not already a law student in order to be eligible.

For full consideration and review your application must be completed by December 15th and any transcripts must be post-marked by December 15th. The following information is required and must be submitted online as part of your admission application:

1. Submit an online application. There is an application fee of $105 for a domestic application and $125 for an international application. The fee may be paid by credit card or e-check. The fee must be paid before the application can be reviewed by our committee, and the fee must be paid for each application submitted.

2. Submit three Letters of Recommendation that must be uploaded by your letter writers through the online application system (letters must be submitted online, no paper letters will be accepted).

3. Submit GRE (Graduate Record Examination) scores. These scores must be current (taken within the last 5 years) and should be sent electronically directly from ETS to UC Davis. The ETS code for UC Davis is 4834, the code for Political Science is 1902.

4. Submit TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System) scores if you have not studied at an institution and received a degree where the language of instruction is English. These scores must be current (taken with the last 2 years). TOEFL should be sent electronically and directly from ETS to UC Davis. IELTS scores should be mailed directly to UC Davis.

5. Submit a writing sample as part of the online application. This sample should demonstrate your ability to engage, research, and analyze topics in political science.

6. The UC Davis graduate programs are no longer accepting paper transcripts as a part of the application process. Instead, all applicants must upload PDF versions of their transcripts or academic records directly to our online system.

Financial Support

Our department believes it is in everyone’s best interest for students to focus on their studies and research. In order to achieve this, we do our best to provide full funding to all of our students through a combination of fellowships and employment. Being employed as a Teaching Assistant (TA) or Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) at UC Davis provides tuition remissions in addition to full health insurance coverage, a salary, and the practical experience of teaching at a university level. Funding lasts for the duration of a student’s expected time to degree, which is usually 5-6 years. The university also offers scholarships designed to help support incoming students in their first years of Graduate School. This funding is normally merit based and awarded to students who submit scholarship applications in tandem with their application for admission into the program.
UC Davis is 15 miles west of Sacramento and 72 miles northeast of San Francisco. Within a 60-mile radius are Berkeley and the Napa Valley. Within a two-hour drive are Lake Tahoe to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The campus is among the most popular in the UC system because of its outstanding academic reputation and college town atmosphere that thrives off the student population. Davis is highly environmentally friendly. You’ll find that Davis is a very flat area which makes it easy to bike to campus from just about anywhere in town. We also have a student-oriented bus system, Uni-trans, with all lines running to campus. All of our buses run off biodiesel fuels in lieu of traditional petro-diesel, or newer and more sustainable fuel sources that promote a healthy environment for our community.

If you recently moved to Davis, it is important to remember that weather is relative: everybody has different comfort levels. Davis has what is called a Mediterranean climate, which exists in few places other than near the Mediterranean Sea. Be sure to plan your wardrobe accordingly for cool, wet winters, hot, dry summers and mild weather during the Spring and Fall.

The city of Davis is most easily split into 4 quadrants (North, South, East and West):
North Davis is located near the 113 freeway and West Covell Blvd. It’s conveniently situated between two popular grocery stores, restaurants, and bus lines. North Davis hosts several housing communities that cater to UC Davis Undergraduate students.
South Davis is located just south of the I-80 freeway. This area is characterized by rather new apartments and single family homes. It’s much quieter, but a bit further from campus with less frequent bus routes.
East Davis is situated north of I-80 and east of J Street. Most students live in apartment complexes, although the area also boasts many single-unit homes. However this area is further away from popular grocery stores, and has less reliable access to frequent bus lines.
West Davis encompasses the area west of Highway 113, and is primarily residential. The area does have a distinctly rural feel with extensive farmland and the landmark “Avenue of Trees”, a historic section of Russell Blvd. lined with 100 year old Black Walnut Trees.
Downtown housing options (such as small flats and bungalows) are also available, but limited due to high demand.
Department of Political Science #1060

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