

College of the Holy Cross
Department of Political Science

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) **Advanced Placement:** The political science department gives credit and placement for students who have received a 5 on an advanced placement exam in political science. For those who have a 5 on the American Politics advanced placement exam, you will place out of Introduction to American Politics and will need 9 additional courses in political science to complete the major. For those who have a 5 on the Comparative Politics advanced placement exam, you will place out of Introduction to Comparative Politics and only need 9 additional courses to complete the major. Those with 5 on both exams would only need 8 courses to complete the major. No credit toward the major requirements or placement is given for any score less than 5 on an advanced placement exam.
- 2) **Study Abroad:** Students can combine study abroad with majoring in political science, but the department encourages students to consult with a faculty advisor to assure proper curricular planning for those students. The political science department will grant up to 3 units of credit toward the major for political science courses taken abroad during the junior year. For those who go abroad for only one semester, the political science department will grant up to 2 units of credit toward the major. We do not allow students to satisfy their requirements for our four introductory courses through courses taken abroad, but we do allow course taken abroad to satisfy appropriate upper-division requirements. We particularly encourage students to take courses concerning the politics of the nation or region where they are residing, and we grant credit for the upper-division comparative politics/international relations requirement for such a course. Other courses will count as electives in fulfilling the major.
- 3) **Department Honors:** The political science department offers an honors program for those students who have done distinguished work in their political science classes. This program should be of particular interest to students who are considering graduate studies in political science or related fields. Those who are accepted into the political science honors program will take two thesis supervision courses in their senior year and write a substantial thesis under the guidance of one of our faculty. At the conclusion of their senior year, candidates for department honors present and defend their thesis in an open forum. Unlike the College Honors program, which requires students to take honors seminars outside of their major in addition to writing a thesis, the political science honors program is focused solely on writing a thesis.
- 4) **Pi Sigma Alpha:** Students who do distinguished work in classes but prefer not to write an honors thesis can win recognition for academic excellence through selection for our local chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honor society. Juniors who are in the top 1/3 of their class in their cumulative gpa, and who have achieved a department gpa of 3.3, are eligible. Seniors who are in the top 1/3 of their class in their cumulative gpa, and who have achieved a department gpa of 3.25 are eligible.