

# What can I do with a degree in... **POLITICAL SCIENCE?**

## What is **POLITICAL SCIENCE?**

Have you ever wondered why countries go to war? Why people vote the way they do? Why do some defendants get harsher sentences than others? Who really has the “power” in the world? If so, the study of political science and public affairs may be for you.

When you enroll in our undergraduate and graduate academic programs—the NASPAA accredited MPA Program among them—you won’t find yourself regurgitating lecture information, you’ll be researching and applying your knowledge to real-world social and political problems on a local, national, and global scale.

## What are the **DEGREE OPTIONS?**

**Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Political Science**

**Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Political Science**

The B.A. requires courses in a foreign language while the B.S. requires a second research methods class.

There is also a minor in Political Science.

## What about **LAW SCHOOL?**

Although there is no “one path” to law school, a degree in Political Science has long been the most popular path. At Western, you’ll be learning from professors who have been there. The Political Science department is fortunate to have two faculty members who have J.D. degrees in addition to their PhDs. When they tell you how to get into law school, how to pass the bar, and what it’s like to practice law, they know what they’re



talking about! Perhaps because of this superior advising, our students have been successful in gaining admission to law schools including Harvard, Cornell, Penn State, and the Universities of Chicago, Florida, and North Carolina, among others.

## What is the **ADMISSION PROCESS?**

Students declare a major in Political Science with the Advising Center, located in Kilian Annex. Please make an appointment with your academic advisor to declare a major. Students may also stop by the Political Science and Public Affairs Department in Stillwell 358.

## What **JOB** ARE **AVAILABLE?**

The skills learned from a political science major help prepare our graduates for a variety of careers, including government leaders, political activists, political commentators, archivists, attorneys,

consultants, federal government analysts, polling/ surveying analysts, foreign service officers, research analysts, political reporters and journalists, intelligence officers, educators, city planners, urban policy planners, international agency officers, university administrators, corporate analysts, data scientists, non-profit program managers, and more. **NOTE:** Advanced degrees may be required for some of the listed professions. Please see a career counselor or an advisor for more information.

## Who employs **POLITICAL SCIENCE** graduates?

Our graduates gain employment with a variety of employers including local governments, like cities and counties, state agencies, and federal government offices. Other students go on to work for non-profit organizations, businesses and industries, consulting firms, law enforcement, hospitals and health organizations, school systems, and universities and colleges.

# MAJOR MAP

**How to use this map:** Review the four categories and suggestions of activities and when you should consider engaging in them. Remember, these are just suggestions! There is a fillable space for you to add in any other ideas you have to set yourself up for success in life after college.

## 1st YEAR

## 2nd YEAR

### EXCEL IN ACADEMICS

Many first-year students in the Political Science major will focus on the liberal studies requirements as well as introductory Political Science courses, such as PSC 101 (American Government) and PSC 169 (Exploring Global Politics).

[Check out the eight semester plan for your degree](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

Students in their second year will likely continue with liberal studies electives, continued topics related to Political Science, as well as introductory courses with their minor. Students should plan to take PSC 230 (Political Analysis I) and PSC 240 (Political Theory), both required for all majors.

[Check out the eight semester plan for your degree](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

### GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Check out [WCU's DegreePlus program](#) and choose which events in any of the four categories you want to attend. Categories include: Professionalism, Teamwork, Leadership, or Cultural Responsiveness.

See what on-campus employment opportunities are available by logging in to JobCat via your MyWCU.

Consider getting involved with the [Public Policy Institute](#), [Local Government Training Program](#), the Model United Nations, College Democrats, College Republicans, or the Political Science Club. If you are thinking about attending a graduate school, start engaging in hands-on experiences required in graduate school admissions.

### BE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Connect with the [Center for Service Learning](#) and ask about the [Spark Award](#), a program aimed to encourage students to be connected with their community.

Follow the Political Science Department on [Instagram](#).

Job shadow with professionals in the career area you wish to pursue.

Volunteer with area non-profits or organizations which interest you.

Consider the [study abroad programs related to Political Science](#). Talk with a study abroad advisor about targeted experience for your areas of interest.

### PREPARE FOR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

Further explore your career options or career interests using the [Center for Career and Professional Development's \(CCPD\)](#) online resources, [Focus 2](#), and [O\\*NET Online](#).

Connect with a career counselor early on to explore opportunities and experiences you can do while in college to further develop your professional resume.

Check out [CCPD's list of career-building activities](#) and participate in an activity this year, such as attending Career Fair Plus.

Start a spreadsheet of graduate schools you wish to apply to in a few years with their admission requirements so that you are aware of the expectations.

## Looking for a minor? Consider these options:

Business Administration & Law

Communications

Criminal Justice

Economics

Emergency & Disaster Management

English

History

International Studies

Philosophy

Professional Writing

Psychology

Sociology

Social Work

### 3rd YEAR

Third level courses focus on upper-level Political Science courses and special topics relating to your chosen minor. You should consider fulfilling the “engaged experience” for the major. [Check out the eight semester plan for your degree](#) and make an appointment with your department advisor.

Consider internship experiences that will give you practical and hands-on experience to put on a resume. Consider networking with professionals in your field at national or regional professional conferences such as the [North Carolina Political Science Association annual conference](#).

Develop deeper relationships with the organizations for which you volunteer. Ask for special projects or responsibilities that you can highlight on a resume.

Connect with alumni in your field through [LinkedIn](#)

Follow the Political Science Department on [Instagram](#).

Visit the CCPD to hone your professional resume and cover letter. Apply for internships. Utilize the [Writing and Learning Commons](#) for MCAT, GRE, LSAT, and other professional exam preparation sessions. Use [Big Interview](#) to learn more about professional interviews.

Schedule a visit to tour graduate schools of your choice, if applicable.

### 4th YEAR

Courses in your final year will complete the major coursework requirements, as well as your chosen minor electives. Take PSC 499 (Capstone) which includes some career preparation activities. Be sure to [check out the eight semester plan for your degree](#), make an appointment with your department advisor, complete your degree audit, and [apply for graduation!](#)

Investigate requirements for full-time jobs. Assess what skills or experiences you’re lacking and invest time in seeking additional opportunities such as certification programs, classes, or professional development workshops during your last year to fill that gap. Connect with your faculty advisor or career counselor.

Talk to your department advisor about alumni contacts related to your job interests.

Network with employers and non-profits at the annual Career Fair Plus event, held each October and February.

Apply to graduate schools, if applicable.

Look for and apply for jobs between 4 and 6 months before graduation.

Polish your resume, cover letter, and interview skills by visiting the [CCPD](#).

Internships are still the number-one educational experience employers look for in a recent college graduate resume. (Chronicle of Higher Education's study on 59,000 employers)

**DID YOU KNOW?**

# MORE INFORMATION

## INTERNSHIP Information

At Western Carolina University there are numerous internship opportunities for students. In some cases internships are established through a faculty member in the student's major. Oftentimes students find part-time jobs in an area related to their field of study. When this happens, students should discuss with their academic advisor the possibility of receiving college credit. Generally, three hours of general elective credit can be earned for a minimum of 200 hours of experience.

The Political Science program has been successful in placing students into rewarding internships in the government, nonprofit, and sometimes private sectors. In our program's history, students have been placed in federal, state, and local opportunities. Our faculty, program alumni, and career center are pleased to work with students to find an opportunity that will advance their career goals. Some internship programs of particular interest may include the SECU Internship Program or the Capitol Hill Internship Program, both facilitated through the CCPD.

## SKILLS LEARNED in the classroom

The core competencies will center on developing skills, knowledge, and attitudes such as:

- information handling and organization
- curiosity and creativity
- critical thinking and evaluation
- problem solving
- written and oral communication
- professional teamwork

- leadership abilities
- research and analytical thinking

## KNOWLEDGE Base

This program will prepare students to:

- speak and write effectively
- use and apply knowledge of ethical principles
- identify needed actions or presented problems, find and use appropriate information to address the action or problem, identify alternative solutions, and make decisions
- navigate difficult situations or challenges using diverse perspectives
- interact with diverse populations.

## Professional RESOURCES

- American Political Science Association: [www.apsanet.org](http://www.apsanet.org)
- International Political Science Association: [www.ipsa.org](http://www.ipsa.org)
- Southern Political Science Association: [spsa.net](http://spsa.net)
- International Association for Political Science Students: [iapss.org](http://iapss.org)

## QUESTIONS?

For questions, please call the Political Science program at 828-227-3898 or visit [politicalscience.wcu.edu](http://politicalscience.wcu.edu)

To schedule an appointment with a career counselor, contact the Center for Career and Professional Development, 828-227-7133 or [careerservices@wcu.edu](mailto:careerservices@wcu.edu).