

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES  
5151 State University Drive • Los Angeles, CA • 90032-8226**  
*(Revised, 11/2017, TED)*

**GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK, MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM**

**Welcome** to the Master of Arts degree program in the Department of Political Science at California State University, Los Angeles. This guide is intended to answer many of the questions you may have about the MA program. It covers basic requirements, procedures, expectations, and student responsibilities, and will help you to complete the program in timely fashion. The program has been designed to provide students with a thorough exposure to advanced graduate study in our discipline, including a rigorous means of evaluation in the form of a comprehensive exam or thesis. The goal of this structure is to prepare students for a variety of opportunities, including future academic work (Ph.D. training, law school, and other professional schools), employment as community college professors, work in the public sector in local, state, national, and international institutions, and politics-related jobs in non-profit organizations, campaign organizations, research institutions, journalism, etc.



## **GETTING STARTED**

Once you are admitted into the MA program, be sure to regularly check your personal email account and, once you have been assigned one, your new CSULA email account. The MA Graduate Advisor (a member of the graduate faculty) will communicate with you regularly about department requirements and any orientation programs that may be held. ***The advisor will also work with you to complete a Program Form (see Appendix A), which is a mandatory document that will be kept in your departmental file.*** The advisor will also help develop a Road Map plan for completion of your courses (see Appendix B). The name and contact information for the current advisor can always be found on the department website. The advisor can meet with students during designated office hours or by appointment, as well as communicate by phone or email.

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **Conditional Admission**

Some students in the MA program are admitted on a *conditional* basis, which may require the completion of additional prerequisite coursework in the department before full admission to the program. Students admitted on a conditional basis will receive a checklist with their original letter of acceptance specifying the nature of the conditions which must be met. For some students, this may include the completion (with a grade of “B” or better) of some or all of the program’s undergraduate “foundations” courses: POLS 3710 - Foundations of American Politics; POLS 3720 - Foundations of Political Theory; POLS 3730 - Foundations of Comparative Politics; POLS 3740 - Foundations of Global Politics.

### **Course Requirements for the MA Degree**

The department has designed a program of seven core seminars, mandated for all MA students, which introduce students to advanced study in the main fields of the discipline. In addition, students are required to take three electives in one of three “concentration” areas: American Politics, Political Theory, and Global Studies. The total number of units necessary for completion of the program is 30 (based on 10 courses, each worth 3 units). In their last semester in the program, students will take either a comprehensive exam (focused on their concentration field and a second field of their choice) or complete a master’s thesis (based on working closely with a faculty advisor and committee). All of these requirements are presented in a worksheet format in the Program Form in Appendix A.

The seven graduate seminars (21 units) are as follows:

- POLS 5040: American Political Behavior (3 units)
- POLS 5050: American Political Studies (3 units)
- POLS 5090: Foundations of Empirical Political Theory (3 units)
- POLS 5100: Political Theory (3 units)
- POLS 5260: International Political Economy (3 units) *or* POLS 5270 Seminar: Advanced Studies in International Relations (3 units)
- POLS 5440: Jurisprudence in a Globalized World (3 units)
- POLS 5500: Comparative Politics (3 units)

*Requirements for Concentrations (9 units)*

Each concentration requires the completion of three elective courses drawn primarily from the undergraduate curriculum (4000-level courses only) in Political Science. In addition to the 4000-level undergraduate courses listed for each concentration, students also have the option of completing POLS 5980: Graduate Directed Study, which will count as one elective course. POLS 5980 requires students to complete an independent research paper or comparable project under the supervision of a single faculty member. Students must receive approval from both the supervising faculty member and the MA Advisor prior to enrolling in POLS 598.

The electives for each concentration are as follows:

*American Politics (Three Electives)*

- Choose three courses from the following: POLS 4000, 4030, 4040, 4060, 4080, 4090, 4140, 4180, 4250, 4410, 4810, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in American Politics).

*Political Theory (Three Electives)*

- Choose *two or three courses* from the following: POLS 4310, 4330, 4350, 4370, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in Political Theory).
- Students may also take *one* of the following courses in the Department of Philosophy: PHIL 4100 or PHIL 4130 or PHIL 5440.

*Global Politics (Three Electives)*

- *International Relations.* Choose *one or two courses* from the following: POLS 4250, 4260, 4270, 4290, 4460, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in Comparative Politics).
- *Comparative Relations.* Choose *one or two courses* from the following: POLS 4460, 4500, 4510, 4520, 4530, 4540, 4580, 4590, 5310, 5980 (POLS 5980 must be supervised by a faculty member in Comparative Politics).

**Culminating Experience: Exam or Thesis**

Students have a choice of taking either a comprehensive exam or completing a thesis at the end of the program. The vast majority of students choose to take the comprehensive exam, which for most is a more bounded and manageable endeavor, based largely (but not exclusively) on coursework already completed.

### *Comprehensive Exam*

To take the comprehensive exam, students must register for a designated course, POLS 5960, during the semester they intend to take the exam. Failure to register means you will not be allowed to sit for the exam. Conversely, if you register but later decide to postpone taking the exam, you must remember to officially drop the course, otherwise it will count as an “attempt.” The exam is offered in both fall and spring semesters, and is typically held in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. Students who fail the exam are entitled to take it one more time, and under certain circumstances can petition for a third attempt (see the MA Advisor for further information).

The format of the comprehensive exam consists of multiple essay questions, written by hand in Blue Books in a designated classroom for a timed period. During the exam week, one day is designated for each of the three concentrations: Political Theory, American Politics, and Global Politics (International Relations/Comparative Politics). You must test in your major area/concentration, and then choose *one* of the remaining two areas. You will be required to answer three questions in your major area/concentration, and two questions in your elective area. If you are testing in your major area, you will have 6.5 hours to complete your exam; if you are testing in an elective area, you will have 4 hours.

**To prepare for the exam, students should review closely *A Student’s Guide to the Comprehensive Exam*, which is available on the department website or by request from the MA Advisor.** The guide contains examples of past questions that you will find useful to review. Copies of previous exams are also available for review in a binder kept in the department main office (the binder can be viewed, but must not be removed from the office). Many students may also find it desirable to schedule an appointment with the faculty members in your concentration and secondary field to discuss the requirements for which you will be held responsible. In general, the exam is a challenge for most MA students; serious and intensive preparation is recommended.

### *Thesis*

A thesis may be authorized for exceptional students who present a proposal the department deems worthy of study. If you are interested in writing a thesis, please consult with the MA advisor and/or relevant member(s) of the MA faculty before you begin writing a proposal. To be approved to write a thesis, you must prepare a **proposal that is at least ten pages in length (double-spaced)**, with a **bibliography** that notes relevant books and articles. You must also secure the support of an MA program faculty member who is willing to serve as chair of the thesis committee. Completing a thesis of acceptable quality is a formidable challenge, and should be pursued only by students who are committed to serious research and writing at a high academic level. In general, most students prefer to take the comprehensive exams, and if they are interested in writing a longer research paper do so by taking POLS 5980: Graduate Directed Study with a professor of their choice.

Students approved to write a thesis will be asked to enroll in POLS 5990 for 3 units of credit (if necessary, the course can be taken again for an additional 3 units).

Note that students who have made one attempt to pass the comprehensive examinations may not change to the thesis option, and students who have taken POLS 5990 units may not change to the comprehensive examination option.

## **PROCEDURES AND MISCELLANEOUS POINTS**

### ***MA Program Form***

As noted above, you are required to complete an MA program form before you can be formally classified as a graduate student in the Department of Political Science. To complete the MA program form, you must meet with the MA advisor, either individually or as part of an orientation.

### ***Registering for Graduate Seminars***

MA students are encouraged to register for seminars as early as possible so that the department can have an accurate understanding of whether sufficient students will enroll to avoid a course cancellation. If graduate courses are cancelled (a rare occurrence) due to insufficient enrollment, the MA Advisor will work with students to assure that they can still complete the program according to schedule.

### ***Adding and Dropping Classes***

Students should be aware that there are university deadlines for both adding and dropping courses. The last day of the semester on which a student may, with the approval of the instructor, *add* classes is the same day of the third week as the day of the week on which classes began. Students may *withdraw* without restriction or grading penalty up to and including the sixth day of instruction. In such cases, no record of individual course withdrawal appears on the permanent academic record.

Drops between the seventh day of instruction and the end of the eleventh week of the semester are permitted only for serious and compelling reasons. The student must obtain the signatures of the course instructor and the department/division chair or school director on a drop request form, which shall state the reasons for the withdrawal.

If you have further questions about adding and dropping classes, please consult with the MA Advisor or staff in the department office.

### ***Maintaining Student Status***

A graduate degree student is required to maintain continuous enrollment in every fall and spring semester from the beginning of the program of study until the awarding of the degree. Enrollment during Winter or Summer Session is required only if the student plans to graduate during that particular term. All students must be enrolled during the term in which they graduate. **Unless granted an approved leave of absence, a graduate student who fails to register each semester has discontinued enrollment in the graduate degree program.**

**Every semester, graduate students must be registered in a course, or in University (UNIV) 9000, or must have an approved leave of absence.** Registration in UNIV 9000 is restricted to graduate students who have been advanced to candidacy and have completed all coursework (including all allowable research units) but need additional time to complete their thesis, project or dissertation. If a student wishes to take a semester off before resuming coursework, she or he must take a Leave of Absence, not UNIV 9000.

Although UNIV 9000 is a zero unit course, the fee is based on one unit of credit for payment purposes; no unit credit is added to the student's program or transcript. This course is not eligible for financial aid. The deadline to enroll is the University Add Deadline. Information on how to enroll:

<http://www.calstatela.edu/page/university-9000-univ-9000>.

### ***“Normal” Course Load***

Two graduate seminars and an additional concentration elective is considered a normal or full course load for full-time students (see the Road Map in Appendix B). During the last semester, as students prepare for the MA exam, it is advisable to just take a single course (in addition to enrollment in POLS 5960).

### ***Substitutions***

Substitutions for any of the seven required graduate seminars are strongly discouraged. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis, and only with a compelling reason and a comparable replacement course. Be advised, too, that certain sections or questions in the comprehensive exam will be difficult to pass if you do not take the corresponding graduate seminar.

### ***Grading Standards***

The department faculty members adhere to high, but fair, standards of evaluation. In all classes, you are expected to demonstrate mastery of course material and an ability to communicate effectively and professionally, both orally and in writing. Inadequate mastery of the course material and/or poor communication skills—especially written skills—can easily result in a grade of *B*, *C*, or lower. Understand, too, that you are as responsible for the quality and depth of your education as is the faculty. While faculty members are sympathetic to students with competing responsibilities and outside commitments, it is still your responsibility to meet the standards set by the department.

Students are required to maintain a 3.0 (*B*) grade point average for all classes on their MA program. Students who fail to maintain an average of 3.0 or above will be placed on academic probation. Students who fail to earn a GPA of 3.0 or above in all of their required classes will *not* receive a degree. A grade of *C* is allowed on the program; however, any grade *below C*, including *C-*, requires that the course be repeated with both grades computed in the grade point average.

### ***Graduation (Degree Check)***

To receive your degree, you must file for graduation. Application for graduation (a degree check or “grad check”) is made on a form that is available on the Graduation Office website at <http://www.calstatela.edu/graduation>, in the Political Science Department, or in Administration 146. Candidates must be granted permission to apply for graduation by the department before they can submit the completed application and required fee to the Cashiers’ Office for fee payment. Students are required to file an application by the deadline announced in the Schedule of Classes.

### ***Postbaccalaureate Writing Proficiency Requirement***

All postbaccalaureate students at Cal State L.A. who are pursuing a graduate degree are required to satisfy the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). Beginning in Fall 2017, graduate students will be **exempt** from UNIV 4000 or 4010 if they hold an earned bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited college or university where English is the primary medium of instruction. Graduate students are also exempt from UNIV 4000 or 4010 if they have score of 41 or better on the writing portion of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) or a score of 4 on the analytic writing portion of the GRE or GMAT. Graduate students who do **not** fall into these categories will have to do one of the following:

- Take and pass the Writing Proficiency Examination (WPE), a timed supervised writing assessment; or
- Take and pass the special upper division university writing course (UNIV 4010); or
- Provide evidence of passing a writing proficiency examination or a graduation writing assessment examination in English at any accredited college or university where the primary language of instruction is English; or
- Provide evidence of achieving a score of 41 or better on the writing portion of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) or a score of 4 on the analytic writing portion of the GRE or GMAT.

Postbaccalaureate students must satisfy this requirement within the first two semesters of their graduate program or prior to the completion of 12 semester units, whichever comes later.

### ***Graduate Assistant Positions***

The department regularly offers positions to graduate students to work as Graduate Assistants (GA) in undergraduate courses (typically, POLS 1000: American Government and Society). This duty mainly involves helping the instructor in the grading of large numbers of papers, exams, etc., and in related

tasks. In general, students should have completed POLS 5050 with a B+ or better grade prior to working as a Graduate Assistant for POLS 1000.

To apply for a GA position, fill out the Graduate Assistant Application Form (on the POLS Department web page), and turn it in to Isabel Garza in the main office. Students who are approved by the MA Graduate Advisor will be placed on a list, and faculty will be free to either choose their own GA from this list or have a GA assigned to them by the Graduate Advisor. Grad students selected as GAs will be notified by the Graduate Advisor, then students must provide two letters of recommendation, a resume, and complete various forms (available from the department office) before they can be appointed officially as GAs.

### **Core MA Faculty**

*Core MA faculty members regularly teach graduate seminars and related undergraduate courses in the MA program, supervise independent studies and theses for MA students, and participate in the preparation and evaluation of the MA comprehensive examinations.*

- Emily Acevedo, Associate Professor • (323) 343-2243 • E-mail: eaceved3@calstatela.edu  
Ph.D. -- Claremont Graduate University, 2008  
Latin American Politics  
Comparative and World Politics  
Terrorism and U.S. Counterterrorism  
Social Movements and Revolutionary Movements
- Martin Adamian, Associate Professor • (323) 343-2236 • E-mail: madamia2@calstatela.edu  
Ph.D. -- Colorado State University, 2006  
J.D. -- Wayne State University Law School, 1996  
Public law  
Global environmental politics  
Civil rights and civil liberties  
International law and jurisprudence
- Scott Bowman, Professor • E-mail: sbowman@calstatela.edu  
Ph.D. -- University of California, Los Angeles, 1989  
Public Law  
Legal Theory  
American Political Thought  
Political Study of Business Enterprise
- Gar Culbert, Associate Professor • (323) 343-2241 • E-mail: gculbert@calstatela.edu  
Ph.D. -- University of Virginia, 2010  
M.A. -- Brandeis University, 2001  
Political Behavior  
Presidential Nominations and Elections  
American Political Institutions and Development  
Research Methods  
Political Theory

- Taylor Dark III, Associate Professor • (323) 343-2247 • E-mail: tdark@calstatela.edu  
 Ph.D. -- University of California, Berkeley, 1993  
 M.Sc. -- London School of Economics, 1984  
     Political Parties and Interest Groups  
     Congress and the Presidency  
     Labor Policy  
     European Politics
  
- Timothy C. Lim, Professor • (323) 343-2243 • E-mail: tclim@calstatela.edu  
 Ph.D. -- University of Hawaii, Manoa, 1996  
 M.A. -- Columbia University, 1987  
     Transnational Migration  
     Human Trafficking and Smuggling  
     Comparative Politics and Development  
     Comparative and International Political Economy  
     International Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy  
     East Asian Politics/Korean Politics
  
- Michael McLendon, Professor • (323) 343-2284 • E-mail: mmclend2@calstatela.edu  
 Ph.D. -- University of Texas, Austin, 2001  
 M.A. -- Columbia University, 1993  
     Ancient Political Thought  
     Modern Political Thought  
     American Political Thought  
     Critical Theory  
     Postmodernism

### **Office Staff**

Graduate Coordinator: Jacqueline Escamilla  
 Phone: (323) 343-2230  
 E-mail: jescam11@calstatela.edu

**APPENDIX A**

**PROGRAM FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

CIN#			
Name			
Address	City, State, Zip, Country (if not U.S.)		
Contact Phone	Email Address		

**A. PREREQUISITE/CONDITIONAL COURSEWORK\* if any** (indicate course #, semester completed, and grade)

Course 1: POLS 3710		Course 2: POLS 3720		Course 3: POLS 3730		Course 4: POLS 3740	
semester	/grade	semester	/grade	semester	/grade	semester	/grade
/grade							

\*Prerequisite courses **do not** count toward units in the MA program. *Classes noted as a prerequisite, however, must be satisfied with a grade of "B" or better.*

**B. OFFICIAL MA COURSEWORK** (must maintain cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher; no credit for grade of C- or below).

<b>I. Required Core (21 units)</b>	UNIT S	G R D	SEMESTER	↓ Course Substitutions or Transfer Coursework ↓
<b>American Politics</b>				
POLS 5040 Seminar: American Political Behavior	3			
POLS 5050 Seminar: American Political Studies	3			
<b>Political Theory</b>				
POLS 5090 Seminar: Foundations of Empirical Political Theory	3			
POLS 5100 Seminar: Political Theory	3			
<b>Global Politics (Intl Relations/Comparative Politics)</b>				
POLS 5260 Seminar: International Political Economy or POLS 5270 Seminar: Advanced Studies in IR	3			
POLS 5440 Seminar: Jurisprudence in a Globalized World	3			
POLS 5500 Seminar: Comparative Politics	3			
<b>II. Concentration (9 units) Choose one concentration →</b> <input type="radio"/> Political Theory <input type="radio"/> American Politics <input type="radio"/> Global Politics				
1.	3			<b>Concentration Electives</b> <b>Political Theory:</b> POLS 4310, 4330, 4350, 4370, 5980. Optional to take one course in Philosophy: PHIL 4100 or PHIL 4130 or PHIL 5440. <b>American:</b> POLS 4000, 4030, 4040, 4060, 4080, 4090, 4140, 4180, 4250, 4410, 4810, 5980. <b>Global:</b> IR, <i>Choose 1 or 2:</i> POLS 4250, 4260, 4270, 4290, 4460, 5980. <i>Comparative, Choose 1 or 2:</i> POLS 4460, 4500, 4510, 4520, 4530, 4540, 4580, 4590, 5310, 5980.
2.	3			
3.	3			
<b>IV. Comprehensive Exam or Thesis (3-6 units)</b>				
<b>OPTION A</b>				
POLS 5960: Comprehensive Examination	0.0			*maximum of two attempts*
<b>OPTION B (requires M.A. advisor approval)</b>				
POLS 5990: Thesis. Students who write an MA thesis may, with the approval of the M.A. advisor, substitute 3.0 thesis units for one required seminar of their choosing. Students may also take an additional 3.0 units if they are unable to successfully complete their thesis within one semester.	3.0 -			*no equivalent transfer credit allowed*

Total minimum units =====|30 – 36|

**C. UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS WPE/GWAR:**

CSU exempt \_\_\_ Required \_\_\_ Semester & Year satisfied \_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Semester Classified (G2)	_____
Semester Candidacy (G3)	_____

**APPENDIX B****CSULA POLS MA PROGRAM  
TWO-YEAR ROAD MAP FORM**

**Notes:** (1) Students can take courses in any order they wish, and can also choose to take two or more electives in one semester in lieu of graduate-level courses. However, the model schedule distributes the course load with the intent to avoid more than two graduate seminars in one semester

(2) It may also be possible to take concentration electives during the summer or winter intersession.

(3) If you are unable to complete the program within a two-year period due to a lack of course offerings, contact the MA Advisor for assistance (it is possible that a course substitution may allow you to finish on time).

**YEAR ONE**

<b>FALL SEMESTER</b>	<b>SPRING SEMESTER</b>
POLS 5_ _ _ (3):	POLS 5_ _ _ (3):
POLS 5_ _ _ (3):	POLS 5_ _ _ (3):
Concentration Elective (3):	Concentration Elective (3):

**YEAR TWO**

<b>FALL SEMESTER</b>	<b>SPRING SEMESTER</b>
POLS 5_ _ _ (3):	POLS 5_ _ _ (3):
POLS 5_ _ _ (3):	POLS 5990: Thesis (3) <b>OR:</b>
Concentration Elective (3):	POLS 5960: Comprehensive Exam (0)