

POLITICAL THEORY FIELD CURRICULUM

The Political Theory field explores fundamental questions of political thought. The program is strongly committed to intellectual and theoretical diversity and aims to bridge divisions between various paradigms and traditions of political theory, between the history of political thought and contemporary political theory, and between theoretical and empirical forms of inquiry.

The program is designed to equip students with sophisticated skills of interpretation and argumentation, a refined understanding of the rich literatures of social and political theory, and a firm grasp of issues of great interest and currency in the field. These include central questions and controversies in the history of political thought, as well as a wide array of developments in 20th century and contemporary political theory. The former encompass debates about key thinkers and developments in the history of political theory and questions regarding the nature of interpretation and historical explanation. Among the latter are new developments in contemporary European and American political theory; recent disputes in democratic theory, critical theory, and poststructuralism; ongoing controversies regarding multiculturalism, diversity, and identity politics; pressing issues of political ethics, including the ethics of war and peace; critical analysis of key concepts and phenomena, such as colonialism and imperialism, power and freedom, equality and inequality; vigorous discussions of the interplay between language and politics; and lively arguments about the philosophical and methodological foundations of political inquiry.

1. All Political Theory students must complete four graduate seminars in political theory. These must include the Political Theory Field Seminar and three additional graduate seminars in Political Theory, Pol Sci 239 or equivalent. The courses chosen to fulfill this requirement must be offered by at least two different faculty members. Independent Study (Pol Sci 299) does not count toward the basic four-course requirement. The Political Theory Field Coordinator will resolve any questions about whether a particular graduate seminar satisfies part of the requirement.
2. All Political Theory students are expected to participate regularly in activities organized by the Political Theory Group.
3. Students pursuing Political Theory as their primary research specialization are expected to acquire broad and deep knowledge of the literature in the field. This will involve additional coursework beyond the four-course minimum, with students devising a program of study that is appropriate to their intended research emphasis in close consultation with their academic advisor. It will also require self-directed reading, and may include study in cognate fields and programs outside the department.
4. Students pursuing Political Theory as their primary research specialization are also expected to develop fluency as soon as possible in at least one foreign language to a level sufficient to engage in research in that language.