

Political Science

What is Political Science?

Political science is the study of how political systems and public policy are created and evolve. It is concerned with many levels of political activity, from the campaigns of candidates for representation of a city precinct to the maneuvers of nations trying to resolve regional conflicts. You study the ways in which electoral, legislative, judicial, and administrative structures vary among countries; the reasons why governments change, fall, and engage in wars; and the behavior of public officials and other citizens who take part in politics. Most political scientists work as researchers and teachers in universities, which means they generally have graduate degrees. Many graduates of political science programs use the bachelor's degree as an entry route to law school or public administration.

Occupational opportunities

A liberal arts major provides a suitable background for many different kinds of entry-level positions, often not directly related to the actual major. A high proportion of political science majors become employed as managers and administrators. The selected list that follows offers a glimpse of the wide-ranging career paths for which a political science degree provides preparation. For some occupations listed below, such as industry lobbyist, related training may be desirable.

Politics/Government

- Legislative aide
- Staff assistant
- Corrections officer
- Public opinion analyst

Communication

- Teacher, secondary level
- News analyst
- Press agent
- Editorial assistant
- Public affairs reporter
- Web designer

Public Interest/Social Change

- Canvass director
- Strategist
- Publications director
- Issues director
- Direct mail specialist
- Development director
- Lobbyist
- Event coordinator
- Activity planner
- Peace corps volunteer

Business/Industry

- Advertising account manager
- Regulatory analyst
- Sales manager
- Public affairs officer
- Customer service representative
- Industry lobbyist

Graduate Study Required

- International lawyer
- Legal investigator
- City manager
- Urban policy planner
- Public health administrator

Graduate Study Required

- College/University professor

Graduate Study Required

- Environmental lawyer

Graduate Study Required

- Systems analyst
- Multinational marketing analyst

Career Snapshot: Paralegal

While lawyers assume ultimate responsibility for legal work, they often delegate many of their tasks to paralegals. In fact, paralegals—also called legal assistants—continue to assume a growing range of tasks in the Nation's legal offices and perform many of the same tasks as lawyers. Nevertheless, they are still prohibited from carrying out duties which are considered to be the practice of law, such as setting legal fees, giving legal advice, and presenting cases in court. One of a paralegal's most important tasks is helping lawyers prepare closings, hearings, trials, and corporate meetings. Paralegals are found in all types of organizations, but most are employed by law firms, corporate legal departments, and various government offices. In these organizations, they can work in many different areas of the law, including litigation, personal injury, corporate law, criminal law, employee benefits, intellectual property, labor law, bankruptcy, immigration, family law, and real estate. Paralegals in small and medium-sized firms usually perform a variety of duties that require a general knowledge of the law. Computer use

The Political Science Department is located on the fifth floor of the Newman Vertical Campus in room 5-280. You can contact them at (646) 312-4410.

and technical knowledge has become essential to paralegal work. Paralegals employed by corporations and government usually work a standard 40-hour week. Although most paralegals work year round, some are temporarily employed during busy times of the year then released when the workload diminishes. Paralegals who work for law firms sometimes work very long hours when they are under pressure to meet deadlines. Some law firms reward such loyalty with bonuses and additional time off. Paralegals handle routine assignments, particularly when they are inexperienced. As they gain experience, paralegals usually assume more varied tasks with additional responsibility. Paralegals do most of their work at desks in offices and law libraries. Occasionally, they travel to gather information and perform other duties.

Skills and Abilities

One of the critical abilities required in this field is being able to critically and creatively analyze and evaluate diverse issues, situations, or problems. Systematic thinking, adaptability, excellent communication skills and the ability to speak authoritatively are also valued. The skills developed in writing essays and research reports, evaluating the arguments of others and representing one's point of view in classroom discussion lead to careers requiring clear thinking, well documented analysis, and forceful expression. These abilities may be applied to job responsibilities in a variety of sectors and occupational groups. For example, while an urban policy planner, an international lawyer, and a Foreign Service officer might have very different responsibilities, each might use the skills of interpreting issues and data and communicating these ideas persuasively on a daily basis. Those who work in this field tend to be people oriented with a focus on leading and influencing. A sampling of representative skills and abilities follows:

<u>Research Methods</u>	<u>Analysis</u>	<u>Planning and Development</u>	<u>Communication</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting data • Developing research designs and models • Programming and systems analysis • Utilizing survey research methods • Comparing/contrasting ideas and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting issues/data • Understanding complex problems • Offering differing perspectives • Synthesizing themes from complex issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making projections • Organizing people/ideas • Logistical thinking • Conceptualizing /implementing projects • Decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting ideas and data clearly • Influencing/persuading people and groups • Mediating/negotiating conflicts • Public speaking • Listening critically

Additional Resources

U.S. Government's Occupational Outlook Handbook
<http://stats.bls.gov/oco>

American Political Science Association (APSA)
 1527 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20036
 (202) 483-2512
www.apsanet.org
 American Academy of Political and Social Science
 3814 Walnut Street
 Philadelphia, PA 19104-6197
www.aapss.org

Pre-Law Student Services
www.ilrg.com/pre-law.html

Careers in Government: a clearinghouse of information, resources and jobs available in public sector organizations in America and abroad
www.careersingovernment.com