ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The political science major is designed to provide an understanding of the political forces, institutions, ideas, and problems of contemporary society. Our curriculum prepares students for graduate studies and professional careers in law, politics, teaching, journalism, government, and international civil service.

INTERNSHIPS

The Department administers a variety of internship programs. It encourages qualified majors to consider an internship experience as a means of clarifying their career goals, applying classroom learning to practical situations, and gaining valuable work experience in preparation for post-graduate employment.

Political Science students have completed internships at:
- Maryland General Assembly Internship Program
- The Washington Center Internship Program in Washington, D.C.
- The Hansard Programme in London, as well as many others

THESIS

Each senior at Washington College is required to complete a Senior Capstone Experience (SCE) on a specific topic selected by the student in the fall semester of the senior year in consultation with a member of the Political Science Department. Majors will write a thesis, which should be a minimum of 30 pages, and will present that research during our annual spring Senior Symposium in the form of a poster session. The SCE will be graded, with 85 percent of the grade derived from the written component of the thesis and 15 percent of the grade derived from the poster presentation.

In completing this project, students gain a sense of mastery of an important issue and a sense of confidence in their ability to manage the tasks they will face in further education and professional employment.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

1. Internships: Completion of a relevant internship related to political science and approved by the political science faculty (either credit or non-credit bearing).

2. Model Programs: Participation in a Model Diplomacy Program (POL 471) or a Model United Nations program (POL 473) together with the two-credit course component.

3. Volunteer Activity: Completion of a substantial volunteer or political advocacy activity outside of class requirements that has been approved by a member of the Political Science faculty.

4. Study Abroad: At least one semester or summer program of study abroad. The College currently participates in more than 30 study-abroad programs—including 15 programs in which courses are taught in English.

PI SIGMA ALPHA

In 1991, Washington College established a chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society. Since then, six faculty members and more than one hundred students have been inducted as members of our local chapter, Sigma Beta. Pi Sigma Alpha is the only national society that exists primarily to foster interest in political science among undergraduate and graduate students.

Students qualify for membership in Pi Sigma Alpha if they are ranked in the upper third of their class and they have an average of B or better in at least three upper-level courses in political science. Students who are not Political Science or International Studies majors may be elected to membership provided they meet these requirements and demonstrate an interest in political affairs.
Why Political Science at Washington College?

1. Our top faculty, our innovative teaching styles, and our emphasis on experiential learning set the study of political science at Washington College apart from other places.

Co-curricular programming through the Goldstein Program in Public Affairs and the Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture offers students myriad opportunities, including lectures by world-renowned experts, field trips, internships, and short-term study abroad.

2. Political Science students at Washington College also benefit from the College’s close proximity to our nation’s capital as well as Annapolis, the Maryland state capital.

Many of our students complete internships or volunteer to work for political parties, nongovernmental organizations or campaigns during election season.

3. The Political Science Department takes full advantage of the College’s proximity to our nation’s capital.

Learning opportunities include field trips to visit government institutions such as Congress and the Supreme Court, international agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, think tanks and advocacy groups, or to view special exhibits at one of the capital’s many museums.

4. Our students are enthusiastic participants in extracurricular activities relating to politics.

Organizations include the Student Government Association, Amnesty International, the International Relations Club, the International Studies Council, College Democrats, College Republicans, the Maryland Student Legislature, various Model UN programs, the student newspaper, and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance.

5. The Political Science Department presents opportunities for valuable out-of-classroom experiences through partnerships on and off campus.

The Department works closely with the Louis Goldstein Program in Public Affairs and the Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture, which offer a wide variety of co-curricular programming including symposia, field trips, academic enrichment, and even specialized off-campus study opportunities.

6. The Political Science Department is dedicated to fostering a strong sense of community for its majors.

In addition to personalized advising and mentorship through the Senior Capstone Experience, majors are invited to attend regular events to learn about career opportunities in related fields. Our majors also have opportunities to conduct research with members of the faculty, attend conferences with faculty, and attend faculty-student dinners.

Minty Abraham Wade ’04
Political Science major

A former refugee from Liberia, Minty Abraham Wade ’04 now works to protect refugee populations across the globe. Growing up in Liberia during a civil war, Wade understood from a young age the importance of protection for refugees in times of crisis. Now, as a senior analyst with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Wade implements strategies to protect civilians and appropriate much-needed resources for struggling refugee populations in the Middle East and Asia.

During her time with USAID’s Office of Strategic and Program Planning, Wade has revisited the nightmare she endured as a child through the intense violence of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a dangerous rebel sect that waged a campaign of terror.

“As a survivor of a brutal civil war who spent a significant portion of my life as a refugee, I know all too well the plight of women and children affected by the atrocities committed by the LRA,” Wade says. “As their strongest ally and advocate, I have successfully lobbied to have civilian protection considerations factored prominently into all military operations, which helped lessen reprisal attacks against civilians.” She says she now speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves.

“Because of instability in Africa and the Middle East, global leaders are now confronting the worst displacement crisis since World War II,” Wade says. “I would like to capitalize on my past experiences to inform and shape U.S. foreign policy related to conflict in Africa as well as the global migration crisis.”