

YALE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

NEW GRADUATE PROGRAM FOR 2006

Adopted March 2006

OVERVIEW

On March 23, the faculty adopted a major reform of our graduate program. Below is an overview of the changes made. These reforms were undertaken with the following objectives in view:

1. to enhance and regularize faculty/student mentoring;
2. to provide all incoming students with a clearer road map to the study of politics both in the larger discipline and at Yale;
3. to help advanced students prepare for the job market;
4. to recognize new subfields in the study of politics and encourage subfield specialization, while maintaining a modicum of breadth and insuring familiarity with the larger discipline.

Except where modified, displaced, or augmented by these proposals, all current rules, practices and requirements remain in place.

I. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND COURSE OFFERINGS

Proposal #1: The minimum requirement for advancement to candidacy will be increased from 14 courses to 16 courses.

Rationale: The current minimum course requirement has yet to catch up with the new demands on graduate education in political science. Expectations for quick integration into the program, methodological training, and professional skill development (e.g. the Research and Writing seminar and the workshops) have come to compete with enduring expectations for building substantive breadth and depth in knowledge. This proposal is a partial response to this crowding effect and should be read in conjunction others, such as the proposed reform of the exam format. It will mean that students will normally be carrying a full, four-course load in each of their first four semesters.

Note, however, that with the year-long Research and Writing sequence counting as two courses and with the proposed "Introduction to the Study of Politics" to be required of all incoming students on a Credit/No Credit basis (see below), the

additional burden is less than might at first appear. Note also that the current option of counting two courses outside political science (or more at the DGS's discretion) remains open; so too does the exclusion in normal circumstances of basic language training classes from the total course requirement.

Proposal #2: Establish a new course called "Introduction to the Study of Politics." This course will be *required* of all first year students. It will be offered each fall, and scheduled so as to minimize conflict with other political science courses. Although the exact content of this course will vary with the instructors, we expect that they will want to consider some core concepts, to alert students to some basic research design issues, to contextualize the state of the discipline, and to introduce students to the themes of our Department's "New Initiative" and its relationship to the exam fields. We expect as well that the course will feature visits from faculty, individually or in groups, who will discuss the state of the discipline as they see it. The course will be offered on a Credit/No Credit basis. This course will run concurrently with the stats intro, and is in addition to current stats requirement.

Rationale: Students come to us with increasingly varied backgrounds and have asked for an overview or a better sense of the lay of the land coming in. This course is meant to be a low key but content-rich introductory experience. The emphasis is on professional enlightenment and cohort building. The new 16 course requirement suggests four courses per semester for two years, though in fact, a course or two can spill over to the third year. As incoming students often try to ease the transition to graduate school with a three course load in their first semester, offering this course on a credit/no credit basis should help ease the additional burden and anxiety. The course will showcase the intellectual range and diversity of the discipline and the problems it addresses. It should be an occasion to inform students of the range of choices and styles of research, not to indoctrinate them for or against any particular style or choice.

Proposal #3: All graduate seminars will offer students a short paper and/or exam option.

Rationale: We do not want first year students to get bogged down in several research papers (and the accompanying "incompletes") and to therefore skimp on broad reading and skill development. We still expect that students will choose to write one or more long research papers each semester, but under this proposal students can choose to spread their writing obligations out over the course of each term.

Proposal #4: Every field which regularly offers comprehensive examinations will also regularly offer at least one introductory course. At minimum, there will be an introductory course offered in each exam every other year. Fields where a common introduction might suffice, like Contemporary Theory and Political Philosophy, may rely on a single course for this purpose, though that course will count only once in determining field certification by coursework (see below Part II, Proposal #1).

Proposal #5: An Introductory Game theory course without course prerequisite will become a regular offering, and be staffed every other year at a minimum. (Students will still be expected to have mastery of the material covered in the summer math camp prior to the beginning of the semester.)

Rationale: Many students want some exposure to game theory but are unprepared for the Formal Modeling seminar. Offering an introductory game theory course without prerequisite will not only expose more students to the method but may increase enrollments in more advanced classes, whether in modeling or advanced game theory. Moreover, since formal theory is now to be regularly offered as an exam field (see below), it should conform to the expectation of offering an introductory course accessible to all.

Proposal #6: A Qualitative methods course will become a regular offering, and be staffed every other year at a minimum.

Rational: There is great student demand for this training. Many of our students find that their dissertation requires field work and/or archival research, but at present there is nor formal training in which they can find out how to go about it or what to expect. Moreover, the course should host a general discussion of the many issues surrounding the distinctions between qualitative and quantitative, and between inductive and deductive research.

Proposal #7: To the extent possible, the DGS and the chair will insure that an introductory course is offered in each field every other year at a minimum, that there are courses offered in each field in both the Fall and the Spring semesters, that courses in the field are offered on different days or different times of the day, and that the courses to be offered cover substantially different material. For this last purpose, the DGS and chair may solicit help from a field coordinator.

II. FIELDS AND FIELD CERTIFICATION:

Proposal #1: *Certification of field competence:*

- a. *All students must be certified in **four** fields, and all students must have at least three fields certified before the beginning of the third year of graduate study. The fourth field must be completed **before the beginning of the sixth semester.***
- b. Certification of field competence will be granted *either* by passing a written field exam *or* by coursework, but students must take *at least two written field exams* before advancing to candidacy.
- c. To qualify for field certification through coursework will require completion of three courses in the field, where courses “in the field” are determined by the faculty

and the DGS. If competence in two fields is to be certified by coursework, each must be represented by three separate and distinct courses. In addition, in each field certified by coursework a research paper or other independent project must be completed and submitted to review by two faculty members in the field, only one of whom may be the instructor of the course for which the paper was written. Research and Writing papers may qualify for certification in an appropriate field with the consent of faculty in the field.

d. Oral exams cannot be substituted for written exams.

Rationale: All our proposals regarding field certification and exams are designed to promote more specialized training without sacrificing disciplinary breadth. They do this by increasing the number of fields to which students are exposed while reducing the number of written field exams a student must take.

Currently, most students finish their course and exam work before they have conceptualized a dissertation topic. Some find that they need to retool once the dissertation is in full view. If they do retool, they then have no way of displaying their new competence to prospective employers. This proposal addresses that issue by extending certification for the fourth field into the third year. At the same time, this program must confirm to the university requirement that PhD students advance to candidacy within six semesters. Students must complete the fourth field after 5 semesters, so as to avoid running up against this deadline.

Our expectation is that consideration of the mix of fields will be made in close consultation with the student's advisor (see Mentoring, Proposal #1) and with an eye to the dissertation.

Proposal #2: Exam format

a. Each field exam will be 8 hours long. Exam conveners can designate either closed book or open book exams. Closed book exams will be monitored in a special room set aside for this purpose.

b. In addition to demonstrating a basic knowledge of the field, its literature and controversies, students will be expected to demonstrate an ability to respond to issues and problems as they posed by the exam questions. As a general rule, answers that use the question merely to review the relevant literature without independent application to the question asked will be deemed unsatisfactory.

Our premise is that comprehensive exams serve an important purpose in graduate education, that they are essential in maintaining the sense of a common discipline and in certifying breadth and depth of knowledge. We also believe that the format must have some intellectual integrity if it is to be taken seriously by anyone. Our proposal to move from a 5 hour to an 8 hour format is meant to give students the time they

need to think and express their ideas clearly. Moreover, it provides a clearer standard for exam writers and exam evaluators alike.

Proposal # 3: *Field distribution: Letter Fields and Number Fields:*

The new field certification system will work in conjunction with a field distribution requirement. For these purposes the fields will be divided as follows:

Letter Fields

- A. *Political Philosophy*
- B. *Contemporary Theory*
- C. *Comparative Politics*
- D. *Political Economy*
- E. *International Relations*
- F. *American Politics*

Number Fields

- 1, *Empirical Methods*
- 2. *Formal Theory*
- 3. *any individual or special field*

With the exception of special fields, all fields will offer exams twice a year and all fields will be open to certification by coursework. Students can choose exam or coursework certification in any combination of four fields within the following constraints:

- a. Students must be certified (by exam or coursework) in at least two letter fields.
- b. Students must sit for two written examinations.

Rationale: This breadth requirement allows students a wide range of options in crafting their intellectual and scholarly personas. Three fields will be easy to group around a single set of interests; this proposal merely encourages exposure to something outside their area of concentration. The basic constraint is on how special fields are combined with others.

Independent reading courses will, of course, count toward certification in the field designated by the supervisor and the DGS. Moreover, we recognize that some courses may be relevant to work in more than one field and may be so counted. The constraint is that students seeking field certification by coursework will not be able to count any one course in more than one field.

There is no minimum number of field courses for students seeking field certification by exam; nor is there a research paper requirement of them. The three course/one paper rule may however be advisable.

Proposal #4: *Formal theory.* As indicated in our list, formal theory will now be offered regularly as a “number field.” It will regularly offer an introductory course for which there is no prerequisite training. It will provide for certification by coursework, and schedule exams twice a year for students who wish exam certification.

Proposal #5. “*Empirical Methods.*” The “Methods” field will now be called “Empirical Methods.” Although the optional formal theory part of this exam can be dropped in light of the new formal theory field, the empirical methods exam will add a “qualitative methods” component as an optional part of the exam.

Proposal #6. “*Special fields.*” As at present, students may develop their own field for certification. A special field will count as a numbered field. Special fields can not be certified by coursework alone, but by examination only. The exam will be based, as at present, on a reading list approved and compiled in conjunction with a special faculty committee put together by the student. The faculty committee will compose and evaluate the exam.

III. Advising, Mentoring, Professional Development

Proposal #1. All students will choose or be assigned an advisor at the start of their first semester. Students can change their advisor at any time simply by having the new advisor notify the DGS. The graduate registrar will send a notice to each faculty member each year indicating who their advisees are and keep them apprised changes made during the year.

By the end of the first year, each student will submit to the DGS a preliminary plan signed by the advisor indicating the number, type, sequence, and timing of field certifications. This plan can be modified at any time with the consent of the advisor and the DGS.

Proposal #2: All students are expected to participate regularly in one of the ongoing field workshops each year, and **all students will be required to present a research paper at a field workshop before the end of their fourth year.** “Job talks” will have their own forum (see below) and will no longer be an integral part of the field workshops.

Proposal #3: All workshops will provide each regularly attending graduate student opportunity to participate in some formal capacity of each year. Students may for example, serve as formal paper discussants; they may be asked periodically to offer the presenter a short written critique or response to his/her presentation; they may be designated the “opening questioner” for a particular session, etc. Forms of student participation may be varied according their year in the program with greater involvement pacing advancement through the program.

Proposal #4: Early in the fall semester each year the DGS, or some other faculty member, will hold a special session for third year students called “What is a Prospectus and How Do I Write One?”

Proposal #5: Each third year student will choose a dissertation committee before the end of September. The dissertation committee and the student will convene at least once *as a group* during *the fall semester* of the third year to discuss the student’s plan

of attack on the prospectus. For faculty who are away, some other way of conferring during the fall as a group should be arranged. If the dissertation prospectus is not approved by the end of the fall semester, the committee will convene as a group again *before spring break* of the third year to review a penultimate draft of the prospectus and to draw up a plan for completion of the prospectus upon which all can agree. These group meetings are in addition to those the student will hold with individual committee members regularly throughout the prospective drafting process.

Proposal #6. The “Placement Officer” will henceforth be known as the “Professional Development Officer.” (PDO) The PDO will provide the following services in exchange for one course teaching credit per year. The DGS may, at the chair’s discretion, assume this job for an additional course teaching credit.

a. The PDO will host a “job talk” seminar over the course of the Fall semester beginning in Week 2 with a session on “how to give a job talk” and continuing with practice job talks by all students on the market. These sessions may be scheduled irregularly as student job visits demand. They will be open to all faculty and all graduate students, with the expectation that all students in residence will attend several each year.

b. During the Spring semester, the PDO will host a “professional development” seminar for all grad students including various programs and visitors. Sessions might include visits by faculty in the mode of the old “what’s worth doing and why” or visits by publishers and journal editors who can speak to the demands of publication.

c. The PDO will meet with all first and second year students to discuss their summer plans, alerting them to opportunities to advance their training and move more efficiently through the program and encouraging them to use this time productively.

d. The PDO will conduct meetings with students on the job market each year, including but not limited to: 1) a spring orientation for those to go on the market the next year which indicates what needs to be put in order over the summer; 2) a fall meeting which reviews each student’s application packet before it is send out; 3) a spring debriefing of students who went on the market in the current year. The debriefing will be open to all students in the program so that they can learn more about what it is like “out there.”

e. All students should notify the PDO of their plans to go on the job market in the prior spring. The PDO will collect notices of job openings on an ongoing basis and make sure that the relevant students are notified. All faculty are encouraged to transmit inquiries and notices of openings that they receive to the PDO.

f. The PDO will be responsible for insuring that *all graduate students beyond the second year* create and maintain web sites effective for promoting their credentials and their research, and will make a special review each year of the sites of students on the market. The PDO will create an “Overview of Students on the Market” for our

Department web site with links to the individual candidate's materials. The PDO will also create and maintain a website indicating the placement record of the Department in recent years.