Honors Opportunities in Political Science

In addition to its regular, enlightening classroom experience, the School of Politics and Global Studies (SPGS) has numerous opportunities to explore for Barrett Honors College students majoring in political science. Although many of these opportunities are available to all political science majors, they may be especially appealing to our honors students. These activities include internships in Arizona and Washington, D.C.; working on research and teaching with faculty members in SPGS; taking graduate seminars in our 4+1 accelerated master’s degree program; scholarships; clubs; and classes taken for Honors credit.

Classes Available for Honors Credit in Political Science

Many political science classes are available for Honors credit. While SPGS occasionally offers classes that are limited to honors students only, the more common path to honors credit is for students enrolled in a “regular” class taught by a full-time faculty member (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, or full-time Lecturer) to simply ask their professor whether they can take the class for honors credit. For a list of our faculty, sorted by their area of research and teaching specialization, please see here. Students should ask their professors about the honors credit during the first week of class, and meet with the instructor soon after to jointly agree upon a plan for the special project or enhanced work the student will undertake to fulfill the contract. Many of our faculty offer honors credit options for their courses every semester. For more information on Barrett’s enrichment contracts, including a discussion of the procedures required to get a contract approved, please see here.

Internship Programs

Honors students might also be interested in pursuing internships either locally or in Washington, D.C. SPGS offers numerous opportunities for excellent students to engage in paid and unpaid internships in policy, government, law, media, and other related fields. Internships are a valuable opportunity for students to learn about the political process first hand and to explore potential career opportunities. Students seeking course credit for their own individually-arranged internship usually register for POS 484; more information regarding that option is available here.

There are currently two other, more structured internship opportunities with a coursework component supervised by ASU faculty and administered by SPGS. The Capital Scholars Program enables qualifying students to have a summer internship in Washington, DC, with a government or policy focus, while earning 6 upper-division credits. In past years, Capital Scholars have interned in government offices, nonprofit and advocacy organizations, lobbying firms, media outlets, and beyond. Housing is included in the program; students live with other Sun Devils while experiencing the nation’s capital. Details are here.

The McCain Institute program involves spending a full semester in Washington, earning 12 credits while interning at a governmental or nongovernmental organization. The focus of the program is on foreign policy, and students meet for a weekly seminar at the McCain Institute for International Leadership. Details are here. Both the Capital Scholars and McCain Institute programs include organized visits to government agencies and historic sites in Washington, as well as networking opportunities. Each program has a competitive application process.
Turning the focus to the Grand Canyon State, the Arizona Legislative and Government Internship Program is a competitive, university-wide program that provides an opportunity to intern full-time at a state agency, or with the state legislature, Governor’s office, or state Supreme Court, while receiving a tuition and fee waiver and a monetary stipend. This program operates each spring semester and carries 12 credit hours; the competitive application process occurs during the fall semester. Details and application forms are here.

**Diplomat in Residence**

SPGS is privileged to serve as the host of a career diplomat, an employee of the U.S. State Department, who is assigned to our campus to help students prepare for possible foreign-service careers. Students interested in government service in diplomacy and international affairs are encouraged to make an appointment with the current Diplomat in Residence, who has an office on the 6th floor of Coor Hall.

**Junior Fellows Program**

Have you ever wondered what your professors do when they are not in class or diligently grading your papers and exams? While students have some idea that professors engage in research, they rarely get to see that research take place, let alone participate in it. Because of all the talent among our undergraduate students, SPGS devised a program to offer them an opportunity to participate in research (or teaching) and to expose students to the possibility of pursuing an academic career. In this program, students pair up with a faculty member in the School to work on research projects and meet every other week with the other Junior Fellows in a seminar taught by a senior faculty member. During the seminar, professors from the School as well as a variety of other distinguished visitors, alumni, and speakers discuss the research process as well as graduate and professional opportunities relevant to excellent students. Students must meet the selection criteria (majors or minors of junior or senior standing, with at least a 3.3 overall GPA and/or 3.5 in political science classes), and must be nominated into the program by faculty members. If you are interested in participating, let your professors know. To find out more, please see here.

**The 4+1 Accelerated M.A. Program**

The joint 4+1 Accelerated M.A. Program in Politics and Global Studies is an accelerated degree program designed to enable highly qualified undergraduate majors in Political Science or Global Studies to earn both a Bachelor of Arts/Science degree and a Master of Arts in Political Science degree in five years. Students accepted into the 4+1 program apply 3 credits of 400-level coursework and 6 credits of 500-level coursework as “shared” courses, allowing the student to complete both degrees more quickly. These degrees are designed to meet the needs of students pursuing careers in a variety of areas. Students completing the 4+1 program are well-positioned for application into a PhD or law program or enter the work force in a variety of fields. Admission to the program is highly competitive. More information is here.

**Pi Sigma Alpha**

Pi Sigma Alpha is a national honor society that recognizes scholarship and excellence for students in political science. It prepares students for intellectual and professional leadership in the political arena through individual and collaborative exchanges with peers, faculty, and the community. This student
organizations bring together students and SPGS faculty for both formal and informal occasions: lectures, career workshops, and social get-togethers. More information is here.

**The Senior Honors Thesis**

The honors thesis is the culmination of an honors student’s undergraduate education in political science. Completing the thesis successfully and on-time is a tremendously rewarding experience, but also requires careful planning and preparation. Barrett Honors College now requires all students to complete a thesis-preparation workshop. [This link from Barrett](#) provides more information on the thesis requirement, procedures, and deadlines; click on “Getting Started” for information about thesis-prep workshops.

Political science majors who write their thesis in SPGS ordinarily sign up for 3 credits of POS 492 as a first-semester senior, and POS 493 as a second-semester senior. Although Barrett allows students to undertake their thesis in departments and programs that are not their “home” major, students who desire POS credit for the thesis must have a thesis director who is a full-time SPGS faculty member. The second reader of the thesis may be another SPGS faculty member, but might also be an individual from another ASU department or School who has expertise in the subject matter of the thesis, or potentially an expert from outside the university.

**Writing Your Thesis – a Timeline**

**Junior Year – First Semester:** This is a good time to think about what classes you have enjoyed and which faculty members you might like to work with on your thesis. You should be thinking about general topics in political science that you would like to learn more about, or intellectual problems that have intrigued you in your courses. At this point, you do not need to know your specific research question, but you should work toward a general topic (e.g., legislative elections in Arizona, Latin American politics, immigration policy, democratic deliberation, military coups, etc.) and identifying faculty who work in these areas. Some students want to write about a personal interest of theirs. Although we encourage you to pursue a topic you are passionate about, we suggest avoiding topics about which you have had no relevant coursework or training, or topics where our faculty lacks expertise.

**Junior Year – Second Semester:** During this semester, you should plan to meet with faculty members who are potential thesis directors. (You may sometimes hear this person referred to as a “thesis advisor” – same thing.) You should also meet with the one of the Honors Faculty Advisors in Political Science (currently Professors Paul Lewis and Avital Simhony) to talk about developing your potential research topic and finding an appropriate thesis director to match with your interests. You can also email professors directly to set up a meeting. In this way, you could even start working on some of the preliminary research for your project over the summer between your Junior and Senior year – for example, collecting data, doing interviews, visiting archives, or reading primary texts. Getting things started as a junior also helps ensure that you can work with your first-choice professor. By the Fall semester, some professors may have already agreed to work on a number of theses and may not have the time to work on the project with you. We strongly recommend getting a thesis director by the end of your junior year.
This is also a good time to look over theses from prior years. Barrett Honors College has a repository of completed theses from recent years. This will give you some idea about what a thesis looks like and how other students in political science have approached this project.

**Senior Year – First Semester:** During the first semester of your senior year, you will register for POS 492. To register for this, you will need to obtain the permission of one of the Political Science Honors Faculty Advisors (currently Professors Paul Lewis and Avital Simhony). He or she will want to know which thesis director you are working with before you will be allowed to enroll in the course. By mid-September, Barrett Honors College requires that you submit your thesis prospectus. That document requires the signatures of the first reader (your thesis director) and the second reader. Your research topic, by this point, should be narrowed down to a much more specific research question, one that can be investigated and answered within the next six months. In other words, rather than saying “My research topic is X,” you should be able to say “The question that my thesis will answer is X.” You should be meeting with your thesis director on a regular basis and updating your second reader with your progress.

**Senior Year – Second Semester:** In general, your writing of the thesis should be underway near the beginning of this semester, given that Barrett calls for the thesis oral defense to be held approximately mid-way through this semester (e.g., in mid-March for those graduating in May). Although this scheduling may seem early, it allows for the revisions, edits, and additions to the text that thesis committees often require before the thesis received final approval. The need to begin writing by the beginning of this semester means that the bulk of your actual research (data collection, interviewing, or what have you) should have taken place during the prior semester.

**Scholarships**

Each year SPGS awards several scholarships. Eligibility for most of these is limited to political science or global studies majors. These scholarships are awarded for the following academic year, so you should apply for these scholarships during your sophomore or junior years to defray tuition costs for the subsequent academic year. Below is a brief list of the current scholarships, which range in amount from approximately $500 to $2,800. Each of the scholarships has a somewhat distinct focus, and some have special eligibility requirements or application procedures. We encourage you to read the full descriptions and learn about the application process [here](#).

- Calvin M. Holman Political Science Scholarship
- Craig and Barbara Barrett Political Science Scholarship
- Getsinger Family Capital Scholars Scholarship
- Kenneth C. Behringer Undergraduate Research Scholarship
- Dean’s Circle Scholarship
- Herman R. Frazier Political Science Scholarship
- Ross R. Rice Award
- Sarah Anne McNeil Memorial Scholarship
- Zachary J. Marco Capital Scholars Scholarship
- Norma F. Schuessler Scholarship
- SPGS Director’s Scholarship
• **William D. Kavan Scholarship**
• **Undergraduate Travel Support** (to defray costs for majors presenting the results of their research at national or regional professional conferences or participating in a workshop out of state)