Brandeis University - Department of Politics

Learning Goals for the Major

The Politics major explores how societies manage conflict and cooperation, organize the competition of differing ideologies and philosophies, and create and implement public policy.

Our goal is to deepen understanding of democracy and democratic systems, and the international and global contexts in which they operate. Politics courses enable students to broaden their perspective by familiarizing them with the ways others have engaged important political issues, from the classical philosophers whose works shape the Western tradition, to the modern theorists and practitioners who shape the discourse, policies, and practices of contemporary national and international political life.

Politics courses address the implications of difference, and particularly inequality, for democracy; the politics of ethnicity, race, religion and gender in the United States and abroad; the meaning and consequences of nationalism as a political force; the role of Islamic organizations and social movements in democratic political systems; the challenge of policing a diverse society; the global political economy of trade, money, investment and cultural exchange; and the strategic and economic dimensions of U.S. foreign policy and international relations. Courses in the department address the cultures and politics of Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

The curriculum is divided into the four major subfields of political science: American politics, comparative politics, international relations and political theory. Introductory courses in each of the subfields provide foundational work in concepts and analytical approaches. The curriculum introduces students to the basic concepts and methods of political science, and emphasizes certain core skills, knowledge of critical institutions and processes, and the ability to engage issues of social justice.

Completing the Politics major enables students to develop the following Core Skills:

- thinking critically about arguments, based on the evaluation of evidence
- articulating reasoned arguments clearly, both orally and in written form
- familiarity with a variety of research methods for understanding politics, including comparative case study, area studies, textual interpretation and statistical analysis
- ability to use the concepts and methods of political science to conduct research and analysis

Courses in the Politics curriculum impart Knowledge about:

- the functioning and distinctive features of the American political system
• the diversity of other political systems and the significance of these differences
• how states, societies and transnational actors cause and resolve conflict
• foundational political ideas and thinkers
• the origins and nature of democracy and democratic systems

The curriculum addresses the multiple understandings of individual and social justice, and how these understandings motivate conflict and cooperation around patterns of difference, particularly inequalities in wealth, status, and power.

The Politics curriculum prepares students for participation as engaged, active citizens. **Upon graduating**, Politics majors pursue careers in governmental and nongovernmental public service, policy analysis and advocacy, public relations, political campaign management, teaching, journalism and business, as well as post-graduate work in law, business, political science and other social sciences.