



GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

Department of Government and Justice Studies
Appalachian State University

Fall 2021

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Welcome to the Master of Arts Program in Political Science at Appalachian State!

The faculty and staff of the Department of Government and Justice Studies (GJS) join me in wishing you a successful academic career at Appalachian State University. This will be a unique academic year presenting our program, university, and state with multiple challenges. Together, however, with patience, compassion, and understanding, we can tread the uncertain waters before us. Here, at Appalachian, we are committed to doing everything in our power to make your experience in the program rewarding and intellectually challenging.

The Political Science MA program at Appalachian enrolls approximately 20-25 students, including regular and accelerated admission students. Each year 7-10 students graduate with a Master of Arts Degree in Political Science. Since the beginning of the program in the 1960's, hundreds of students have received their MA degree, and with hard work on your part, you may join the list of graduates. We are very proud of the number of our graduates who have gone on to obtain Ph.D. degrees and teach in colleges and universities across the country. Others have earned J.D. degrees and practice law. Still, others hold positions in federal, state, and local government, or work in the private sector.

Appalachian State University was founded in 1899 and during its first century established a reputation for quality educational programs to meet the needs of the region and the State of North Carolina. Today, Appalachian State is nationally recognized as one of the best universities in the country, with small faculty-to-student ratios and a beautiful location. Our program prides itself on personal attention and student mentoring. It offers a flexible curriculum designed to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue their professional and career goals.

Whenever you have questions about the MA program or Graduate School requirements, please email me. In addition, each GJS graduate faculty (listed on the next page) is available as a resource to you. We are here to provide guidance, mentorship, and support your intellectual journey and professional aspirations.

Best wishes for a successful academic year!

Tatyana Ruseva

MA Program Director

DEPARTMENT GRADUATE FACULTY

- **Phillip Ardoin**, Professor, Ph.D., Louisiana State University (MA program)
- **George Ehrhardt**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., Indiana University (MA program)
- **Cary Fraser**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., University of Geneva (MA program)
- **Jefferson Holcomb**, Professor, Ph.D., Florida State University (MPA program)
- **Marian Williams**, Professor, Ph.D. Florida State University (MPA program)
- **Yongbeom Hur**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., University of Kentucky (MPA program)
- **Ellen Key**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., Stony Brook University (MA program)
- **Andrew Koch**, Professor, Ph.D., University of California at Santa Barbara (MA program)
- **Nancy Love**, Professor, Ph.D., Cornell University (MA program)
- **Heather Ondercin**, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., (MA program)
- **Jeff Carter**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., (MA program)
- **Catherine Marcum**, Professor, Ph.D., Indiana University of PA (MPA program)
- **Patricia Mitchell**, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., University of Georgia (MPA program)
- **Adam Newmark**, Professor, Ph.D., UNC - Chapel Hill (MA program)
- **William Hicks**, Associate Professor, Ph.D. University of Montana (MA program)
- **Brian Bulla**, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., NC State University (MA & MPA programs)
- **Tatyana Ruseva**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., Indiana University (MA & MPA programs)
- **Curtis Ryan**, Professor, Ph.D., UNC at Chapel Hill (MA program)
- **Renee Scherlen**, Professor, Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin (MA program)
- **Kathryn Webb Farley**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., Virginia Tech (MPA program director)

ETHICS AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The MA in Political Science Program at Appalachian State University is designed to provide professional training for students who, upon leaving the program, enter into leadership positions in the public and private sector. Students are trained to use both quantitative and qualitative methods for analysis of political phenomena. In addition, students leave the program with a better understanding of the political processes that operate within the domestic and international realm. Although some courses may have specific sections on ethics, ethical behavior is implicit throughout the curriculum. We expect honesty from you in and outside the classroom. MA program faculty will not tolerate dishonesty. Activities that reflect negatively on your honesty and integrity will likely be a factor in the types of recommendations your prospective employers receive from the MA program faculty.

The following are some examples of unacceptable practices:

- submission of recycled term papers;
- submission of work done by others, either at ASU or in another university
- papers obtained over the Internet;
- collaboration with others on individual assignments;
- Plagiarism and/or failing to offer proper attribution to others for their work.

Please do not embarrass yourself by engaging in these or any other unethical or illegal activities. Such practices reflect negatively not only on the individual engaged in them, but our program and school, as well.

All students are expected to read and be familiar with the [Appalachian State University Academic Integrity Code](#).

Office of Title IX Compliance

The Office of Title IX Compliance supports the University's mission of scholarship through the promotion of equity, access, and civil rights throughout the campus community, fostering an environment free of discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, including Sex-Based Misconduct and relationship violence. To learn more, visit AppState's Office of Title IX Compliance: <https://titleix.appstate.edu/>

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Students in the Political Science MA Program choose one of three concentrations. Each concentration consists of required (core) courses, concentration courses, and electives.

- [*American Government*](#)
- [*International Relations and Comparative Politics*](#)
- [*Environmental Politics and Policy Analysis*](#)

Required Courses: PS 5001 Scope and Methods, PS 5002 Research Methods and Statistics, and PS 5900 Internship in Public Affairs are required for each concentration. A prerequisite for PS 5002 is an undergraduate statistics course. If your undergraduate transcript does not indicate that you have had such a course, you must take one prior to enrolling in PS 5002.

Concentration Courses: 6-12 semester hours of concentration courses are required for each concentration.

Elective Courses: The remainder of the required 33 semester hours consists of elective courses selected in consultation with the MA Director. These hours may be chosen from among those listed in the concentration courses, from other courses in the PS/PA/CJ Department, or from appropriate graduate courses in other departments.

Internship or Thesis: Students must choose from one of two options. They may write a thesis, or complete an internship in an appropriate public, non-profit, or private organization. Students who plan to write a thesis should discuss plans with the MA Director in their first semester in the program.

Comprehensive Exam: Successful passage of a comprehensive exam in the student's concentration area is a prerequisite to completion of the MA degree. The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate a student's mastery of the critical content of the discipline and readings in their concentration area. Comprehensive exams are completed in the last 1/3 of the program (typically the student's last semester). For more information, see section *Comprehensive Examination* further below.

Program of Study

Following successful completion of one semester of graduate study, students must complete a program of study form in consultation with the MA Director. The Director then submits the form to the Graduate School for approval. A program of study form outlines the courses the student expects to complete during his/her graduate career at ASU. A separate program of study form must be completed for Graduate Certificates.

Independent Study:

Pending approval by the program director, students can register for an independent study by completing a [Special Course Approval Form](#) found on the Graduate School's page. The Special Course Form is used to sign up for thesis, individual study, or independent study.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Requirements for the Master of Arts in Political Science

Semester Hours Required: minimum 33

**Designates number of graduate semester hours*

Required Courses PS 5001: Scope and Methods (3)*
PS 5002: Research Methods and Statistics (3)
PS 5900: Internship in Public Affairs (3-6)

Concentration **American Government Concentration (Code: 267C)**
(CHOOSE ONE) PS 5030: Seminar in American Government and Politics (3)
PS 5150: Seminar in Public Policy (3)

3 s.h. from the following in consultation with the MA Program Advisor:

PS 5010: Seminar in Political Philosophy (3)

PS 5020: Pro-Seminar in International Relations (3)

PS 5040: Pro-Seminar in Comparative Politics (3)

PS 5670: Advanced Environmental Politics (3)

12-15 s.h. of graduate electives selected in consultation with the MA Advisor

International Relations/Comparative Politics Concentration (Code: 267E)

PS 5020: Pro-Seminar in International Relations (3)

PS 5040: Pro-Seminar in Comparative Politics (3)

3 s.h. from the following in consultation with the MA Program Advisor:

PS 5010: Seminar in Political Philosophy (3)

PS 5030: Seminar in American Government & Politics (3)

PS 5150: Seminar in Public Policy (3)

PS 5670: Advanced Environmental Politics (3)

12-15 s.h. of graduate electives selected in consultation with the MA Advisor

Environmental Politics and Policy Analysis Concentration (Code: 267F)

PS 5670: Advanced Environmental Politics (3)

ECO 5621: Advanced Environmental Economics (3)

ECO 5660: Benefit Cost Analysis (3)

PA 5180: Public Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation (3)

9-12 s.h. chosen from the following in consultation with the MA Advisor. At least ONE must be from Section A.

Section A: Policy and Governance

PS 5010: Seminar in Political Philosophy (3)

PS 5020: Pro-Seminar in International Relations (3)

PS 5030: Seminar in American Government and Politics (3)

PS 5040: Pro-Seminar in Comparative Politics (3)

PS 5150: Seminar in Public Policy (3)

PS 5330: Problems in State & Local Government (3)

PS 5675: Readings and Research in Environmental Policy (3)

PA 5060: Seminar in Public Administration (3)

PLN 5460: Environmental Policy and Planning (3)

Section B: Professional Skills

- GHY 5810: Digital Image Processing (3)
- GHY 5812: Advanced GIS (3)
- PA 5271: Grants Strategies and Preparation (3)
- PA 5460: Budgeting and Fiscal Administration (3)
- PLN 5470: Community Development (3)
- PS 5675: Readings and Research in Environmental Policy (3)
- PS 5800: Directed Research (1-3)
- TEC 5129: Project Management (3)

Section C: Scientific Principles

- BIO 5222: Communities and Ecosystem Ecology (4)
 - BIO 5502: Freshwater Ecology (4)
 - BIO 5575: Ecotoxicology (4)
 - GHY 5820: Geographical Hydrology (3)
 - GS 5510: Environmental Problems (3)
 - PS 5675: Readings and Research in Environmental Policy (3)
 - TEC 5605: Sustainable Resource Management (3)
 - TEC 5606: Sustainable Water and Wastewater Technology (3)
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Sample List of Electives

Students are encouraged to consider elective courses that equip them with skills, knowledge, and experiences relevant for professional careers in policy analysis, campaigns and elections, and/or advocacy. Below is a sample list of courses in each focus area. These courses should be selected in consultation with the MA Director or other graduate faculty members.

Policy Analysis	Campaigns & Elections	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ PA 5180 Public Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation○ PS 5150 Public Policy○ ECO 5660 Benefit-Cost Analysis○ GHY 5812 Advanced GIS○ CIS 5630 Data Management○ CIS 5830 Security Privacy and Ethical Issues in Analytics○ MBA 5200 Problem Analysis and Quantitative Methods○ ECO 5740 Forecasting and Time Series Models○ CS 5710 Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery in Scientific Data○ PA 5460 Budgeting and Fiscal Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ PS 5110 Campaigns and Elections○ PS 5070 Seminar in Media and Politics○ PS 5155 Seminar in Political Behavior○ PS 5170 Advanced Political Psychology○ ANT 5410 Ethnographic Research Methods○ GHY 5812 Advanced GIS○ PS 5400 Washington at Work○ PA 5360 Public Personnel Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ PA 5270 Not-for-Profit Organizations○ PA 5271 Grants Strategies and Preparation○ PS 5070 Seminar in Media and Politics○ PS 5145 American Political Parties and Interest Groups○ PS 5400 Washington at Work○ COM 5150 Strategic Communication○ COM 5425 Task-Oriented Group Facilitation Methods○ MGT 5055 Leadership, Groups, and Teams○ PS 5670 Environmental Politics

INTERNSHIPS

All MA Political Science students must complete an internship (PS 5900) before being eligible to graduate. Students completing an internship must be registered for 3-6 credit hours. Students can replace an internship with a thesis, if approved by the MA director, and must register for PS 5998 and PS 5999 in two consecutive semesters. Students who replace an internship with the thesis courses must write and defend their thesis successfully in order to graduate (see THESIS Section).

Internships provide an organized and supervised professional experience with an approved agency for academic credit. Credit is earned by virtue of the integration of theory and practice, which is demonstrated by students through academic assignments. Through the submission of weekly reports, various evaluations, and a final paper and/or poster presentation, students are expected to make comparisons and analyses from their classroom education to their field experiences. Students will also demonstrate a proficiency in writing and verbal communication. The internship serves as a mechanism for expanding students' understanding of theory-versus-practice and education-versus-training.

Students planning on completing an internship must begin the process at least a semester ahead of time in order to successfully secure, register, and complete the internship by the deadlines provided on the GJS Internship page. MA students must contact potential agencies and secure their internship well before the semester of completion. Once the internship position is obtained, the student must complete the GJS internship application and attend a GJS internship information session. These sessions are held at the beginning of each fall and spring semester and will be announced by the internship coordinator, **Dr. Christina May**, through email and on AsUlearn. Summer internships are typically supervised by one of the PS Graduate Faculty. Once the application is submitted, the internship coordinator will provide an internship contract. Students must obtain the internship site supervisor's signature and sign the contract themselves, before returning it to the internship coordinator.

Once registered for an internship, you will be assigned to a faculty supervisor, who will administer your internship through an AsUlearn course page (either Dr. May or one of the PS Graduate Faculty). Each faculty supervisor will manage the course at their discretion. However, you can expect to submit weekly reports, a comprehensive final paper, and a poster presentation – as per the internship course syllabus for that semester. As the internship is the capstone course for our program, the student will be required to demonstrate proficiency in academic writing and research to successfully complete the course. You will be required to attend the poster presentation on campus, which is usually held on the last day of classes for that semester.

THESIS

A thesis is optional. The thesis entails 6 hours of graduate coursework (Thesis Prep PS 5998 and Thesis PS 5999). The thesis requires students to engage in independent research under the guidance of a committee consisting of three faculty members, one of whom will serve as the thesis director.

The thesis should represent the culmination of an independent research project conducted by the student and will show command of the literature and research methodology of the student project. Students will use the Style Manual for Political Science published by the American Political Science Association.

The candidate will choose a thesis advisor and two graduate faculty members who will constitute the thesis committee. Graduate faculty outside of the student's department may be appointed with the approval of the Graduate Dean. No more than one member of the thesis committee may be from another department or institution.

Students must register for Thesis Prep (PS 5998) the semester prior to writing and defending their thesis. The professor of record for Thesis Prep is the student's thesis director. The minimum requirement for a satisfactory completion of Thesis Prep includes a thesis prospectus approved by the student's thesis committee. The thesis prospectus may be approved through a formal prospectus defense or informally through consultation between the thesis director, student and the additional members of the committee. Once the prospectus has been approved by the full thesis committee, the student may proceed to register for PS 5999.

Students must successfully complete Thesis Prep (PS 5998) and receive full approval of their prospectus before being permitted to register for the thesis course (PS 5999). To register for PS 5999, students must complete a Special Course Request Form ([found here](#)) and submit that along with a 1-page thesis prospectus to Sharron Grimes at the Graduate School. Following approval, Ms. Grimes will process registration for PS 5999.

Students, who think they may wish to write a thesis, are encouraged to consult with the MA Director and graduate faculty who share their research interests as soon as possible after enrollment in the program. Given the nature of the research involved, this is not a project that can be satisfactorily completed in one semester. Students should also consult the **Graduate School's web page** for specific deadlines and requirements: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/enrolled-students/theses-and-dissertations>, as well as the **Graduate Thesis Manual** <https://graduate.appstate.edu/graduate-thesis-and-dissertation-manual>.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

During the final semester of coursework, students must pass a written comprehensive examination. The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate a student's mastery of the critical content of the discipline and readings in their concentration area. The examination committee, consisting of faculty members from the student's area of specialization (IR/Comparative, American Government, or Environmental Politics), prepares questions each semester covering the pertinent literature in the student's chosen field of concentration.

The comprehensive exam employs an essay format and students are typically allotted six hours for completing the exam. The exam is conducted on campus and students must type their responses. The exam will take place on a date near the end of the semester selected by the MA Director. Students are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the Grading Rubrics used by faculty readers. These are available on the MA Program AsUlearn Page. If you need access to the AsUlearn page, please contact the program director or Sarah Novak.

If a student gets a fail grade (0-12 pts as per the grading rubric), the student can retake the exam the following semester and this will be their second, and final attempt (two attempts total). If a student receives a qualified pass (13-14 pts) - they are offered an oral or written retake in the same semester. If they fail this attempt, then the student can come back the next semester for a retake. That will be their final opportunity to take/pass the exam (two attempts total). Successful passage of the comprehensive examination is a prerequisite to completion of the MA degree. For further information regarding the comprehensive exams and to view practice exam questions visit: <https://polisci.appstate.edu/comprehensive-exam>

PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT

Students must demonstrate a *proficiency in quantitative analysis* as a research tool. Students in the MA Program in Political Science meet the proficiency requirement by successfully completing the required quantitative literacy course set: PS5001 Scope and Methods, and PS 5002 Research Methods.

SUSPENSION AND PROBATION

Any student who fails to maintain a 3.00 GPA is automatically placed on probation by the Graduate School. Students placed on probation may not register for additional course work unless the MA Director makes a request in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School to allow the student to continue in the program. No student will be allowed to continue on probation for two semesters. Students are automatically placed on probation if they have:

- Cumulative GPA less than 3.0
- 4 or more grades at the C level, or
- Any failing grade (U or F). *Note:* There are no grades at the D level for graduate courses, so any such grade submitted in error by the faculty will be changed to F. C- is the minimum passing grade.

Students in the *accelerated admissions program* whose GPA falls under 3.4 will automatically be dropped from the program. Under these conditions, students will be unable to claim any graduate course hours completed under the accelerated admissions program. For more information on academic probation, see the Graduate School's page.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The department has a very limited number of **graduate assistantships** available each semester for both the MA and MPA programs. A student chosen to receive an assistantship is assigned to assist a professor with their teaching and/or research projects. Graduate research assistants may be assigned to work either 10 or 20 hours per week, although full-time (20 hours/week) assistantships are the norm. Salaries vary, but the minimum for a full-time assistantship during a semester is \$4,000.

Research assistantships are awarded on the basis of GPA and scores on the graduate record examination (GRE) admission test. Other factors, such as resource availability, faculty research projects, or student performance may also affect how awards are allocated. Students may not receive an assistantship for more than four Fall/Spring semesters.

Graduate teaching assistantships require considerable responsibility. A teaching assistant is usually assigned to teach a lab section of an undergraduate course or assist faculty with course content, delivery, and grading. Graduate teaching assistants must complete [a special training program conducted by the Graduate School](#) prior to beginning their teaching duties. If you are interested in obtaining a teaching assistantship, be sure to let the program director and/or department chairperson know.

Enrollment requirements for Graduate Assistants:

- *Summer assistantships* funded through the Graduate School require 2-6 s.h. of enrollment and good standing in the employment term; students who are probationary or provisional for that term cannot hold assistantships.
- *Fall/Spring assistantships* require 9-12 s.h. enrollment and good standing in the employment term; students who are probationary or provisional for that term cannot hold assistantships.

Mandatory Training for Graduate Assistants

All graduate students who have graduate assistantships must complete the [Legal Issues Training](#) once each academic year in order to continue payment beyond the first pay check. This training is not onerous, and it takes typically 30 to 60 minutes. The training is online, and there is a quiz at the end, verifying completion of the training. For details and how to complete the training, go to: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/mandatory-training-graduate-assistants>.

Each graduate assistant must sign a contract and keep regular hours with the Department or assigned faculty member. See the Department Secretary, Katy Marsh, for questions concerning your contract.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Financial Aid

Appalachian's graduate school costs are among the lowest in the southeastern US. Still, a graduate student can face financial challenges when budgeting for tuition and fees. The cost of attendance depends on three things: the location of study (on the main campus in Boone or at a remote site), your North Carolina residency status, and how many hours you will enroll in. You can find the tuition and fee schedule on the Student Accounts website. Regularly admitted, full-time, on-campus degree seeking students are eligible for assistantships, fellowships and scholarships. Because of the source of this funding, on-degree, certificate students, off-campus or part-time students are not eligible. If you were admitted provisionally, you are not eligible in your first semester of enrollment.

- *NC Tuition Scholarships for Out-of-State Students:* This competitive scholarship is open to international and out-of-state students and covers the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition (approximately \$6,000 a semester!). Contact your department to request consideration. Nominations are made by the program director or department chair.
- *Graduate Assistantships:* Each department has funds to hire graduate students as teaching, research, or general graduate assistants. You should be sure to let the program director know you are interested in a position. In addition, assistantships are available many other offices on campus. Student Development in particular hires many graduate students. See the Assistantship Page for more information.
- *Chancellor's and Provost's Fellowships:* New students should check "yes" on the admission application form to be added to the pool of applicants; returning students can fill out a scholarship application available from the Scholarship Page.
- *Diversity Fellowships:* This competitive scholarship is intended to provide greater access to graduate school for students from under-represented groups. Contact your department to request consideration. Nominations are made by the program director or department chair.

Housing

There is no on-campus housing for graduate students. There are numerous apartment companies and locals that rent out to students. Many of the larger companies are primarily occupied by undergraduates, so be mindful of the type of complex you'd like to live in. A good starting point is to go to Appalachian's off-campus housing overview. There are also listings on Boone's Craigslist and the GSAS Facebook page. Many students find potential roommates this way.

Trails for Success Workshops

Trails for Success regularly puts on workshops specifically catered to graduate students. These workshops prepare students who are about to enter the professional workforce. *Resume building, writing cover letters and other useful skills are conducted at these workshops.* Students can check the Professional Development Workshops page for an updated schedule on workshops:

<https://graduate.appstate.edu/enrolled-students/professional-development-workshops>

Graduate Student Association Senate

The Appalachian Graduate Student Association Senate (GSAS) is the main administrative organization for graduate students. This body advises the Graduate School on policy and practice and awards funds for both research and travel to graduate students from departments with active senators. GSAS sponsors a number of social and service activities each semester. Several departments also house graduate student groups specifically for their majors. Ask in your home department if there is such a group and how to get involved. Most clubs are open to all students, including graduate students. The Center for Student Involvement and Leadership maintains a listing of clubs and organizations.

University Writing Center: <https://writingcenter.appstate.edu/>

The University Writing Center is a free resource available to all Appalachian State University students and faculty as well as members of the Boone community. Our consultants are experienced writers and attentive readers who will work with you one-on-one to assist with any aspect of the writing process. To schedule an appointment for a writing consultation, go to [TutorTrac](#), or call 828-476-8644.

Resources

- Current Assistantship Opportunities: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/prospective-students/financial-support/graduate-assistantships/available-assistantship-positions>
- Graduate School Forms: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/about-us/forms#ProgramStudent>
- Program of Study Form: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/node/3376>
- Accelerated Admissions Completed Courses: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/node/3429>
- Assistantship Appointment Forms: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/about-us/forms#AssistantshipFaculty>
- Professional Development Workshops: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/enrolled-students/professional-development-workshops>
- Graduate Student Association Senate: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/enrolled-students/graduate-student-association-senate>

FREQUENTY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Should a question arise that is not directly answered in this handbook, please feel free to ask the MA Director for help. Each graduate faculty member is also here to help you get the education and guidance you need in order to succeed. Asking a question and avoiding a problem, is a lot easier than spending time trying to rectify a problem after the fact.