

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Appalachian State University

Master of Arts in Political Science Program

Department of Government and Justice Studies

January 2009

WELCOME

Welcome to the Master of Arts in Political Science program at Appalachian State University.

The faculty and staff of the Department of Government and Justice Studies join me in wishing you a successful academic career at Appalachian State University. We will be pleased to do everything in our power to make your stay in Boone both pleasant and intellectually challenging.

You will be enrolled in a program with approximately **20** other students. Each year approximately seven to ten students graduate with a Master of Arts Degree in political science from the university. Since the beginning of the program in the 1960's, hundreds of students have received the 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 throughout the country. Many other graduates of our program have gone on to earn J.D. degrees and practice law. Still other recipients of the MA degree hold critical jobs with federal, state, and local government agencies. Finally, countless numbers of MA graduates have been successful 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 by several major publications as one of the best universities in the country. Although the total student body now numbers more than 14,000, Appalachian State has not grown so large that you will become a number. Our program prides itself on personal attention and mentoring of students.

Whenever you have questions about the MA program or Graduate School requirements and procedures, **please feel free to talk to me**. Each faculty member in the program is also available as a resource to you.

Best wishes for a great academic year.

Phillip J. Ardoin
Assistant Professor and MA Director

DEPARTMENT GRADUATE FACULTY

- Phillip Ardoin, Assistant Professor Ph.D., Louisiana State University
- James F. Barnes, Professor Ph.D., Ohio State University
- Mark Bradberry, Assistant Professor Ph.D., University of Georgia
- William Cassie, Associate Professor Ph.D., University of Kentucky
- Brad Chilton, Professor Ph.D., University of Georgia
- George Ehrhardt, Assistant Professor Ph.D., Ohio State University
- Brian Ellison, Professor Ph.D., Colorado State University
- Marvin Hoffman, Professor Ph.D., University of Georgia
- Todd Hartman, Assistant Professor Ph.D., SUNY Stony Brook
- Andrew Koch, Associate Professor Ph.D., University of California at Santa Barbara
- Kenneth L. Mullen, Associate Professor Ph.D., State University of New York at Albany
- Daniel Murphy, Assistant Professor Ph.D., Iowa State University
- Adam Newmark, Assistant Professor Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Elicka Peterson, Assistant Professor Ph.D., University of Missouri at Saint Louis
- Matthew Robinson, Professor Ph.D., Florida State University
- Sung Roh, Assistant Professor Ph.D., Sam Houston State University
- Curtis Ryan, Associate Professor Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Renee Scherlen, Associate Professor Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin
- Dragan Stefanovic, Associate Professor Ph.D., University of Tennessee at Knoxville
- Ronald Stidham, Professor Ph.D., University of Houston
- Ruth Ann Strickland, Professor Ph.D., University of South Carolina
- Joel Thompson, Professor Ph.D., University of Kentucky
- Emmanuel Udogu, Professor Ph.D., Southern Illinois University
- Barbara Zaitzow, Associate Professor Ph.D., Virginia Polytechnic Institute

ETHICS

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 key leadership positions in the public and private sector. Students are trained to use both quantitative and qualitative methods of research 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 governmental system and how they are dependent upon each other. Although some courses may have specific sections on ethics, ethical behavior is implicit throughout the curriculum. We expect honesty from you and will not tolerate dishonesty. In acquiring enough education to be admitted to graduate school, you should have gained enough common sense to know that any activity that reflects on your honesty and integrity will likely be a factor in the types of recommendations and evaluations your prospective employers receive from us concerning your time in the MA program.

Among the unacceptable things that have been attempted in the past are:

- 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 exams;
- plagiarism in term papers 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.

MA CURRICULUM

Students in the Political Science MA Program may choose from one of two concentrations: American Government or International Relations/Comparative Politics. Copies of the checksheet for each concentration may be found in the attachments section of this handbook. Each concentration consists of four parts: required courses, concentration courses, options, and electives.

Required Courses: PS 5001 and PS 5002 – Scope and Methods and Research Methods is required in 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. Each concentration also requires one or two other courses appropriate to that particular concentration.

Concentration Courses: **Six to nine** semester hours of concentration courses are **required** for each concentration, however, a student may take more than the minimum. Courses in this category are selected in consultation with the MA Director.

Options: Students must choose from one of three options. They may write a **thesis**, complete an **internship** in an appropriate agency, or complete the **directed research** course. Students who plan to pursue further graduate work at the Ph.D. level are strongly encouraged to write a thesis.

Electives: The remainder of the student's required 33 or 36 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/CJ Department, or from appropriate graduate courses in other departments.

THESIS

Although a thesis is optional, it is strongly recommended that students who plan to pursue the Ph.D. write a thesis. The thesis entails 6 hours of graduate course work (Thesis Prep -PS 5998 and Thesis PS 5999). The thesis requires students to engage in individual research under the guidance of a thesis 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 his/her specialty. The thesis is expected to conform to accepted standards used in research writing. 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 of the department 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 advisor. The minimum requirement for a satisfactory completion of Thesis Prep includes a thesis prospectus approved by the student's full 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 thesis committee. Once the prospectus has been approved by the full thesis committee, the student must submit the Thesis Committee Membership Form with all of the required signatures (forms may be acquired from the Graduate School website or from the MA Director).

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). Satisfactory completion of the thesis requires students to submit to the entire thesis committee a final draft of their thesis at least 1 week prior to the Department's Formal Thesis Defense date. If a student is unable to meet this deadline, they will not be allowed to defend their thesis and will be required to delay their defense and graduation at least one semester.

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 after enrollment as possible. 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 further information regarding university requirements and important deadlines.

OTHER INFORMATION FOR MA STUDENTS

Language Proficiency

Students must demonstrate a proficiency in reading a foreign language or quantitative analysis as a research tool. Almost without exception, quantitative analysis as a research tool is the preferred choice. Students meet the requirement by successfully completing an undergraduate statistics course and the required PS 5002 Research Methods course.

Comprehensive Examination

During the final semester of course work, students must pass a written comprehensive examination. The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to test student's mastery of the critical issues and readings of their field within political science. The examination committee, consisting of faculty members from the student's area of concentration (IR/Comparative or American Government) and selected by the faculty within each program, 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 allotted eight hours for completing the exam. The exam is conducted in the department's computer lab 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. If a student does not pass their comprehensive, the exam committee may request that the student take an oral exam or second written exam prior to the end of the semester or require the student to postpone re-taking the comprehensive exam until the following semester. Successful passage of the comprehensive examination is a prerequisite to completion of the MA degree.

For further information regarding the comprehensive exams and/ or questions please contact the MA Director.

Admission to Candidacy

Following successful completion of one semester of graduate study (nine or more semester hours with a minimum 3.0 GPA) a student is eligible for admission to candidacy. The admission to candidacy form must be submitted to the MA Director who will then acquire the required number of signatures from other graduate faculty members. The form must be signed by the MA Director, the department chairperson, and three graduate faculty members. The admission to candidacy form may be obtained from the graduate school web page. A sample form may be found in the attachments section of this handbook.

Program of Study

Following successful completion of one semester of graduate study a student should also submit to the MA Director a program of study. This form outlines the courses the student expects to complete during his/her graduate career at ASU. Like the admission to candidacy form, this form must be signed by the MA Director, the department chairperson, and three graduate faculty members. This form may be obtained from the graduate school web page. A sample form is also found in the attachments section of this handbook.

Graduate Research Assistantships

The Department of Political Science/Criminal Justice has a very limited number of graduate research assistantships available each semester for the MA, MS, and MPA programs. A student chosen to receive an assistantship is assigned to assist a professor in his or her teaching and research projects. Graduate research assistants may be assigned to work either 10 or 20 hours per week and are compensated at the rate of \$1750 or \$3500 per semester, depending on the number of hours assigned each week.

Research assistantships are awarded on the basis of scores on the admission formula used by the department as well as recommendations from the faculty. However, other factors may also affect how awards are made. It has historically been the practice of the department to maintain student assistantships if their academic and assistantship performance is satisfactory. Students may not receive an assistantship for more than four Fall/Spring semesters. In allocating assistantships, the department must consider how many assistantships are available, and whether current assistantship holders will be in school next semester. We also try to make some assistantships available to deserving new students. At any given time, there will likely be 10-12 individuals who receive graduate research assistantships.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Graduate teaching assistantships are less numerous and even more difficult to obtain. Considerable responsibility is involved because a teaching assistant is usually assigned to teach an undergraduate course in the department. University of North Carolina system rules require that graduate teaching assistants must have completed 18 semester hours of graduate course work. In addition, they must complete a special training program conducted by the College of Graduate Studies prior to beginning their teaching duties. If you are interested in obtaining a teaching assistantship, be sure to let the MA Director and/or department chairperson know. Teaching assistants receive \$3500 per semester, and teach one course, typically Introduction to American National Government.

Each assistant, regardless of the type of assistantship, must sign a contract. See the Department Secretary, Ms Julie Hutchens, for instructions concerning your contract.

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.

QUESTIONS

Should a question arise that is not directly answered in this handbook, please feel free to ask the MA Director (Phillip J. Ardoin) and/or the department chairperson (Dr. James Barnes) 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 straighten out a problem after the fact.