Political scientists study the exercise of power and influence; sources and resolution of conflicts; the relation of politics to the economy, culture, and other aspects of society; the adoption and implementation of public policies; and the development of political systems. These topics are studied at all levels, from local communities to the global community.

The scope of the discipline is reflected in the main areas of specialization that make up the undergraduate curriculum: political theory, comparative government and politics, international relations, and American governmental systems and processes. In addition, undergraduates may choose from several optional concentrations: business and politics, campaigns and elections, citizenship and civic action, global politics, law and politics, democratization and development, political psychology, beliefs, and behavior, and public affairs.

The College of Liberal Arts Advantage: More Than a Major
When you study Political Science at the University of Minnesota, you gain the added advantage of a College of Liberal Arts education. At CLA, the liberal arts mean you get more than just a degree in one major or another; it means you will be exposed to different areas of study, to different ways of thinking and learning. In fact, the liberal arts teach you how to learn—how to ask the right questions, how to problem solve, and how to innovate. The liberal arts prepare students for the complexities of our world, because here at CLA you will study not just, say, politics or art but also where politics and art intersect, where science and ethics intersect, where economics and the environment intersect.

Meet Our Students

Senior Ryan Atkinson is taking full advantage of the Fraser Fellowship, which gave him an opportunity to explore human rights advocacy work.

Read more about Ryan's story, and learn more about our undergraduate program.

Student Experiences

Learning Abroad in Political Science: Prepare to Lead in a Global Economy

"Living and studying abroad, immersing yourself in another culture, helps you to understand things about yourself and your own country and culture that you might have never thought about. If politics is the art of the possible, then study abroad helps you get a clearer sense of what 'the possible' can mean. According to 16th-Century French essayist, Michel de Montaigne: 'Traveling through the world
produces a marvelous clarity in human judgment."

—Lisa Hilbink, Director of Undergraduate Studies

Learn more about study abroad for Political Science majors.

Undergraduate Research: Turn Curiosity into New Knowledge

Our faculty is passionate about a wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of politics. They are interdisciplinary and multifaceted in their approaches to political science, with expertise ranging from ancient and medieval theory to American institutions to international and comparative politics. Our faculty are scholar-teachers and have won many teaching awards—a testament to their dedication to students. See a list of faculty members by research specialty.

Student Organizations: Find Friends and Grow as a Leader

• Undergraduate Political Science Association (UPSA)
• Minnesota Political Theory Colloquium
• University of Minnesota Undergraduate Mock Trial Association

Meet Our Faculty

Assistant Professor Jane Sumner wanted to find a better way to figure out the gender and race balance in bibliographies and syllabi. “I decided just to solve my own problem,” Sumner says and took to technology.

Read more about Professor Sumner's work.
Meet Our Alumni

According to political science alumnus Nigel Purvis (BA ’87), “Solving the climate crisis by switching from coal to renewable power, replacing cars that run on oil with electric vehicles, and stopping global deforestation is one of the major challenges of our time and requires reinventing the global economy.” Through Climate Advisers, a certified B Corporation he founded, Purvis is working to do just that.

Read more about Nigel’s story.

CLA Graduates: Successful Careers and Purposeful Lives

CLA graduates succeed in many different careers — law, health care, medicine, business, government, teaching, advertising, arts and entertainment, international relations, and more — precisely because they understand how to navigate a complex and interconnected world. As our alumni explain below, “Being a good employee means being curious, and continuing to evolve, and learn, and educate yourself, and I can think of no stronger foundation for doing that than a liberal arts education.

“An education in the liberal arts is a springboard to lifelong career success”
-- Dean John Coleman
You might also explore

African American and African Studies
American Indian Studies
American Studies
Chicano-Latino Studies
Global Studies
Sociology of Law, Criminology, and Deviance

Associated Careers

Government Executives and Legislators; Government Lawyers; Judges; News Analysts, Reporters, and Correspondents; Political Scientists; Public Interest Advocates; Public Interest Lawyers

Admission Information

FRESHMAN: Admission information

TRANSFER STUDENTS: Requirements for the College of Liberal Arts

Beyond admission, if you have questions about transferring, the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has transfer advisors to help. Please feel free to contact them about any
of the topics below:

- Course plans before transferring
- Estimated time to graduation
- Career preparation in CLA
- Getting ready for orientation, if admitted
- Connecting with major/minor departments