

SCHOOL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY GLOBAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA



DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK
Fall 2022 – Spring 2023



General Program Information

The doctoral curriculum is a four-year program which provides scholarly training in politics and international affairs, which is rooted in the political science discipline. The School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies (SIGS) houses degree programs in Political Science, International Studies, Africana Studies, and Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies. Our faculty is made up of political scientists, international affairs scholars, historians, and anthropologists. This dynamic setting fosters interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration.

All PhD program applicants are considered for graduate teaching assistantship awards, which include a tuition waiver (but do not cover fees), a 9-month academic year stipend paid out on a biweekly basis, and subsidized health insurance, in exchange for twenty hours of instructional work per week. Graduate assistantships offered at the time of admission are renewable for up to four years if the student makes satisfactory progress through the program. SIGS can sometimes employ graduate assistants over the summer for additional compensation, or beyond their fourth year, depending on our resource allocation.

We aim to only admit students that we can fund, and presently have resources to hire four new students each year as graduate teaching assistants. Consequently, admission into our doctoral program is competitive and each incoming cohort is small. Applications are also accepted from individuals who will bring institutional funds to cover their tuition and costs.

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook explains the requirements for earning a PhD in Politics and International Affairs at the University of South Florida. Its intended audience is doctoral students and potential doctoral students. In subsequent sections you will learn about the doctoral curriculum, non-coursework requirements, and SIGS governance and policies.

CONTENTS

PhD in Politics and International Affairs Curriculum.....	2
Non-Coursework Requirements and USF Policies.....	4
School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies Governance and Policies.....	8

I. The PhD in Politics and International Affairs Curriculum

The doctorate in Politics and International Affairs is a terminal degree in political science that prepares you to conduct social scientific research and teach at the collegiate level. Most students join the program planning to pursue academic careers, while others are mid-career professionals in the legal, intelligence, defense, diplomatic, or business fields.

At the doctoral level, our research and teaching strengths lie in the political science subfields of international relations and comparative politics. We offer the most seminars in these subfields and most of our students have research interests in these areas. Doctoral students choose major and minor fields of specialization from among international relations, comparative politics, and American politics. Political theory is offered as a minor field.

Doctoral students take disciplinary seminars and supporting coursework in each of their chosen fields. They also take several other required courses to learn about political science and its disciplinary boundaries; to develop the methodological and analytical skills needed to undertake doctoral research; to write a dissertation proposal; and to learn how to teach political science courses. Coursework makes up 45 credit hours of the 72-credit hour curriculum, with the remaining 27 credit hours are devoted to dissertation research.

Doctoral Degree Requirements

Earning a doctorate is unlike other academic endeavors. In addition to taking required courses and electives, you must satisfy several other requirements, perform independent research, and persuade a committee of faculty members that your research makes a scholarly contribution to the literature. For doctoral students with graduate assistantships, this research experience is accompanied by university teaching. Doctoral students with graduate assistantships should expect to devote well over 50 hours a week to their combined responsibilities as an employee (20 hours per week) and as a student (3, 3-hour seminars per week, with 6-8 hours of preparation for each). Given this demanding schedule, we advise graduate assistants against pursuing outside employment while completing the doctorate.

The coursework for the doctoral degree can be completed in two and a half years by taking a fulltime course load of three courses each fall and spring semester. This leaves a year and a half for funded graduate teaching assistants to conduct their doctoral research and write their dissertation. We encourage doctoral students to be entrepreneurial in seeking out internal and external grants and fellowships to support their research beyond the fourth year. USF requires PhD degree requirements to be completed within seven years of matriculation.

Doctoral Curriculum (72 credit hours post-bachelors)

Core Requirements (6 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• POS 6735 Foundations of Political Inquiry• IDS 6936 Interdisciplinary Professional Seminar
Disciplinary Requirements (9 credit hours) <p>Select three of the following, including major and minor fields</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• INR 6007 Seminar in International Relations• CPO 6091 Seminar in Comparative Politics• POS 6045 Seminar in American Government & Politics• POT 6007 Seminar in Political Theory
Methods Requirements (9 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• POS 6746 Quantitative Analysis I• POS 6707 Qualitative Analysis <p>Select one of the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• POS 6918 Seminar in Quantitative Methods• POS 6942 Field Work in Political Science• AFA 6355 African American Community Research: Ethnography
Major Field (6 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In addition to the core seminar, students take two classes in their major field
Minor Field (3 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In addition to the core seminar, students take one class in their minor field
Electives (6 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students take two elective courses. These can be taken outside of SIGS, with the approval of the graduate director.
Student Teacher Training Requirement (3 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• POS 6702 Teaching Political Science
Capstone Seminar Requirement (3 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• POS 6939 Capstone Seminar
Dissertation Research (27 credit hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the final year and a half in the program, students enroll in dissertation credit hours as they complete doctoral research and write their dissertation. Per USF policy, students in the dissertation writing stage (doctoral candidates) must enroll in at least two dissertation credit hours per semester until they graduate.

II. Non-Coursework Requirements and USF Policies

In addition to completing required coursework, all students must pass comprehensive examinations in major and minor fields, form a dissertation committee, write a dissertation proposal, and write and defend a dissertation. Based on the nature of their dissertation research area, certain students will need to demonstrate foreign language proficiency. This section explains non-coursework requirements and policies that govern degree completion.

Grade Policy and Academic Standing

To be considered a “student in good standing,” graduate students must

- Maintain an overall minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale) in all courses taken as a graduate student, and
- Maintain an overall minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale) in all courses taken in each of the student’s degree-seeking majors.

Only courses with grades of “C” (2.00) or better will be accepted toward a graduate degree; no grade of C- or below will be accepted. Students must meet the requirements to be in good standing to graduate. All “I” grades must be cleared to graduate. Students who fail to maintain good standing may be placed on probation or academically dismissed.

Comprehensive Examination Requirement

Doctoral students take qualifying exams in primary and secondary fields of specialization at the start of their third year in the program. They must be enrolled in a minimum of two credit hours in the term when they take the exams. Students can major in international relations, comparative politics, or American government. They can minor in these fields or in political theory. To prepare for the exams, students take disciplinary seminars and supporting classes in their chosen fields. They also review the [doctoral reading list](#). Past exam questions are available upon request from the academic program specialist.

Examinations are developed by committees of faculty with expertise in the designated fields. The exams are administered in-person, on two nonconsecutive days, and limited to eight hours per day. The major exam is taken one day and the minor exam on the other. Once submitted, exams are anonymized and returned to the field committees for evaluation. Major and minor exams are graded separately by the administering committees. After reviewing the exams independently, field committees meet to deliberate. Exams are assigned

a grade of pass, pass with distinction, or fail. At the field committee's discretion, test takers can be asked to appear for an oral defense of their exam, limited to one hour in duration.

Students who fail one or both of their comprehensive examinations will be eligible to retake the exam(s) one time in the next semester. If either exam receives a failing grade for a second time, the student will be dismissed from the program. Students who pass the exams become eligible to teach their own class as instructor of record in their fields of specialization.

Forming a Dissertation Committee

The doctoral committee will consist of at least four faculty members, three of whom must come from SIGS. The fourth member must come from outside the school, either a different department or another regionally accredited college or university. If the outside member is not from USF, the student must provide the graduate director a copy of the individual's curriculum vitae and links to their institutional websites, so they can be considered for affiliate graduate faculty status at USF. Once the committee has been assembled, the student should submit a [committee appointment form](#) to the graduate academic program specialist.

It is the student's responsibility to identify appropriate faculty members who they want to ask to serve on their dissertation committee. Faculty members must voluntarily agree to serve on dissertation committees. So, it is in the student's interest to make a positive impression on potential faculty mentors throughout their time in the program. The most important member of a dissertation committee is the major professor. This professor will play the leading role in supervising your research. During coursework, students should identify potential advisors and strive to cultivate positive relationships with them.

At the time of matriculation into the program, doctoral students are assigned a provisional major professor based on their research interests. This faculty member serves as an advisor for the student during their first years in the program; a source of advice on the curriculum, life as a graduate student, navigating Tampa Bay and USF, professionalization, and managing the demands of work as a teaching assistant. When a doctoral student forms a dissertation committee, their dissertation advisor is assigned as their major professor.

Dissertation Proposal Requirement

Students enroll in POS 6917 Capstone Seminar in the fall of their third year in the program to develop and write a dissertation proposal. This course is offered jointly with the Department of Sociology and is taken with a cohort of Sociology students who are also

preparing to begin their dissertation research. The product of this course is a dissertation proposal, which provides a road map for your proposed dissertation research. The Capstone Seminar is graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory. It is not repeatable.

Dissertation proposals must be approved by all members of the dissertation committee before the student can begin their research. When the proposal is ready for review, students should email it to their committee and circulate a [dissertation proposal approval form](#), which has a mechanism for soliciting feedback. When all committee members approve of the proposal, the student becomes eligible to advance to doctoral candidacy.

Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

Once a student's dissertation proposal has been approved by the committee, they can apply for admission to doctoral candidacy. To be eligible, students must have enrolled in at least two graduate credits the term that they took comprehensive exams, and also be enrolled in at least two graduate credits the term that they submit the [Admission to Doctoral Candidacy Form](#) to the academic program specialist. Students must have no "I" grades on their transcript and maintain a graduate GPA of at least 3.0 to advance to candidacy.

Once the form has been approved, students are officially advanced to candidacy and become eligible to enroll in dissertation credit hours (POS 7980) in subsequent semesters. The [USF Graduate Catalog](#) requires students admitted to candidacy to enroll in a minimum of two (2) hours of dissertation credits every semester (including summer) until they graduate.

Foreign Language Requirement

Students whose dissertation research will involve fieldwork or archival research in a non-English speaking country must be proficient in language(s) native to that region. For these students, competency in at least one foreign language must be demonstrated by passing the [competency exam](#) administered by the Department of World Languages.

IRB Requirement for Research on Human Subjects

If a student's dissertation research involves human subjects, such as interviews or fieldwork, they must complete USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved human subjects protection education prior to receiving IRB approval for new research. Students can satisfy this requirement by participating in one of USF IRB's bi-annual Student Researcher Workshops. The student's major professor also must complete the human subjects protection course. Learn more about satisfying the IRB educational requirement [here](#).

After completing the educational component, you must apply for and gain IRB approval before starting your research. Applications are submitted through [BullsIRB](#). Students should list their major professor as co-Principal Investigator (PI). An approved dissertation proposal must accompany the IRB application. Students should plan for the review process to take several weeks. Revisions are often requested before approval is granted. Researchers may not begin their research involving human subjects until the IRB application is approved.

Dissertation Oral Defense

A public oral defense of the dissertation is held when the major professor and doctoral committee agree that the written dissertation is ready for evaluation. The defense will be chaired by a faculty member from outside the school. The dissertation committee's external member can serve in this role.

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Requirements

To graduate, doctoral candidates must comply with the Office of Graduate Studies' Electronic Thesis & Dissertation requirements. Students must register for and complete the [ETD process](#) in the semester that they intend to defend their dissertation and graduate. This process entails editing your dissertation to conform with USF editorial standards.

Continuous Enrollment and Dissertation Credit Hour Policy

The [USF Graduate Catalog](#) requires all graduate degree-seeking students to be continuously enrolled. "Continuous enrollment is defined as completing, with grades assigned, a minimum of six (6) hours of graduate credit every three (3) continuous semesters. Courses that receive a "W" grade do not fulfill continuous enrollment requirements." After students advance to doctoral candidacy, they must enroll for a minimum of two (2) hours of dissertation every semester, including summer, up to and including the semester the dissertation is submitted to and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Leave of Absence Policy

Occasionally, students need to temporarily withdraw from the program with the intention of re-enrolling in one to two years. The catalog states "Leaves of absence may be granted to students under exceptional and unavoidable circumstances. Students requesting a LOA must specify the reasons for the leave, as well as the duration. Requested LOA may be approved for up to two years. Students requiring less than three (3) consecutive terms of absence do not need an approved LOA if they meet the continuous enrollment requirement."

Students wishing to apply for a leave of absence must submit a [graduate leave of absence request form](#) and a personal statement explaining the reasons for request to the academic program specialist no later than the semester prior to the start of the leave of absence. The request must be approved by the student's major professor, the graduate director, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

Time Limit for Degree Completion

USF requires doctoral degrees to be completed within seven (7) years of admission into a doctoral program. Students occasionally need additional time to complete their degrees, however. Students nearing the end of seven years who need additional time to finish can apply for a time limit extension of up to two years by submitting a [time limit extension request form](#) to the academic program specialist.

III. School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies Governance and Policy

The SIGS [faculty](#) shapes the doctoral curriculum and program-specific policies. The faculty delegates authority to administer the program, advise students, and enforce policies to the graduate director, who serves at the pleasure of the SIGS director. The graduate director works with other SIGS faculty members on the graduate committee, which makes doctoral admission decisions and advises the faculty on policy changes and curricular reforms. Policy and curricular changes are ratified by the SIGS faculty through a majority vote.

The SIGS [staff](#) plays a vital role in supporting the doctoral program. The graduate academic program specialist maintains tracking sheets for each student, circulates announcements about university deadlines, and processes forms for submission to the Office of Graduate Studies. The academic services administrator manages SIGS staff and property, processes new hire paperwork, and assists SIGS leadership with assigning graduate assistants to courses.

Inquiries about university policies or labor issues should be directed to the graduate director, who is the academic advisor for all SIGS graduate students and the immediate supervisor for SIGS graduate assistants. The academic program specialist provides advising support for doctoral students, but the graduate director's approval is required for most formal requests.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Rights and Responsibilities

SIGS strives to fund all admits into its doctoral program unless an individual brings other institutional support to fund their graduate education. We provide funding through a graduate teaching assistantship, which is a form of part-time employment. In exchange for

twenty hours of instructional work per week during the 9-month academic year, which stretches from early August to early May, students receive a biweekly stipend, a graduate tuition waiver (although students must pay certain fees), and access to subsidized health insurance. Assistantships offered at admission are typically renewable for up to four years so long as the student makes satisfactory academic progress and faithfully discharges their work responsibilities. Graduate teaching assistants are contractually required to be available to work on the USF Tampa campus during the nine-month academic year contract.

Labor relations are governed by the [collective bargaining agreement](#) (CBA) between USF and Graduate Assistants United (GAU), the graduate student union. The SIGS leadership is committed to enforcing the collective bargaining agreement to protect our graduate student workers and the faculty members they support. If a graduate assistant feels that their contractual rights are being violated, they should inform the graduate director, who will work with SIGS leadership to find an appropriate remedy. If this process does not yield an acceptable outcome, the student can file a grievance with the GAU (see CBA article 11).

SIGS graduate teaching assistants are assigned to provide instructional support to faculty members during their coursework phase of the program. These assigned tasks are limited to those that directly support undergraduate courses. SIGS administration or staff members will inform teaching assistants of their work assignments at least 10 days prior to the start of classes each semester. During the academic term, supervisory authority over the graduate teaching assistant work assignment is delegated to the professors to whom they are assigned. After graduate teaching assistants pass their comprehensive exams, they will have opportunities to teach their own course at USF as instructor of record.

Graduate Instructor of Record Teaching Modality Policy

SIGS doctoral students assigned to teach a class as instructor of record will usually deliver that course in the classroom. This reflects the school's commitment to developing doctoral students' pedagogical abilities, satisfying undergraduate demand for in person classes, and complying with university requirements that all online courses be developed with Innovative Education. In exceptional circumstances, doctoral students may be assigned to teach an online course that has passed Innovative Ed's quality review process.

The circumstances which qualify a SIGS doctoral student for an online teaching assignment are: 1) a long-term illness or disability that makes in person instruction infeasible, or 2) a need to complete dissertation research, such as fieldwork or archival research, in a location

outside commuting distance of USF. In most cases, the proposed research will occur outside the United States.

Doctoral students should submit research-related online teaching requests to the graduate director at the start of the term that they advance to doctoral candidacy. Requests should include: 1) a document detailing the proposed research, including why it must be undertaken at the proposed location, the expected duration, and proposed term, signed by both the student and their dissertation advisor; and 2) for students whose research will engage non-English speaking sources, evidence that the student has passed a language competency exam in a relevant language administered by the Department of World Languages. Applications for research-related assignments will be reviewed by the graduate committee and the SIGS director. Assignment decisions will be based on assessments of the student's academic record and proposed research, as well as SIGS programmatic needs.

Research Conference Participation and Travel Support

SIGS encourages advanced students to present their research at academic conferences. Presenting working papers or dissertation chapters at regional, national, or international conferences is an excellent way to gain critical feedback on your work, build your academic network, and hone your expertise. Students should work with their major professor to determine when and where to present research. Conferences affiliated with the [American Political Science Association](#) and [International Studies Association](#) are good venues.

SIGS strives to provide travel support for advanced students to present their research at conferences outside of the Tampa Bay region when resources are available. The school provides up to \$500 in travel support for students who present a paper at an academic conference through the Northcutt award, which is endowed through a generous gift from SIGS emeritus professor Susan Northcutt. To apply for a travel award, you should submit a [Conference Funding Request Form](#) to the academic program specialist at least one month before the conference travel; ideally when you are informed that your paper has been accepted onto the conference program.