

**A Guide to Normal Progress in the Master's Program in
Political Science at the University of Houston
2008-2009**

The following pages describe normal progress for full time master's degree students. Full time students (3 courses per semester) should plan on completing their studies within two years of their initial enrollment. Those taking the master's program on a part time basis should plan on completing at least three courses per year (fall, spring, and summer terms). A part-time master's degree should be completed in 4 years or less.

As an M.A. student in political science at the University of Houston, you have a great deal of flexibility to create a degree plan that suits your interests. There are two options for completing the degree:

1. M.A. Plan 1: 30 hours of coursework and 6 hours of Master's thesis hours
2. M.A. Plan 2: 33 hours of coursework and 3 hours of Bibliographic Essay hours

You do not have to decide which option you will take until later in your career.

Important Rules and Deadlines

1. The university requires all students to maintain continuous enrollment during the "long" semesters until the degree is completed; summer enrollment is optional. Some exceptions to this policy can be obtained by petition, primarily for medical reasons or other true emergencies. If this is necessary, arrange this in advance or as early in the semester as possible; whether and how much tuition can be refunded depends on the circumstances, including how early the petition was filed..
2. Under university rules, ALL students must complete their master's degrees within 5 years of originally enrolling for the degree.

Year One

To get the most out of your studies, we recommend that you consider doing at least some of the following:

1. Take our methods sequence of courses (6480 & 6481), and take it early in your career. To survive these courses you don't have to be a mathematical genius or to have prior statistics courses. The skills, lingo, and ways of thinking about data will help you in all your political science courses, and give you skills that you will carry beyond your studies.

2. Concentrate your courses in 1-2 subfields (policy, comparative, American, etc). Knowledge cumulates, and courses will get easier as you learn more about the subfield.

3. If there is a Gateway course in one of your subfields, start your studies there. Gateway courses are designed to introduce students to great texts, and great questions, in the field. The subfield Gateway courses are:

Fall:

- 6309 Survey of American Political Behavior
- 6343 Seminar in Democratic Political Thought

Spring:

- 6311 Seminar in Comparative Political Analysis
- 6312 Survey of American Institutions and Policy

Important Rules & Deadlines:

1. Students must maintain a 3.0 average to stay in the program in the first year and afterwards.
2. Incompletes turn into an "F" after a year, and such grades can adversely affect grade point averages of otherwise good students.
3. Students may take only two independent study courses (including summer courses). Choose your courses accordingly.

Desirable Activity:

1. Meet with your assigned advisor at least once a semester. You may change advisors if there is someone you would rather work with. Be sure to let both professors know, as well as the graduate advising assistant.
2. Identify several professors with whom you might want to study and introduce yourself to them and let them know your interests.
3. Get to know your fellow students by attending some "extra" events, be they student or faculty presentations, happy hours, or whatever. It's always good to be around the department a little more than the minimum. Students teaching students is one of the most important components of a stimulating intellectual environment, and that works best when everyone strives to contribute to it.

Year Two (and beyond)

If you are a full time student, you will complete your coursework in year two. If you are planning on writing a Master's thesis (original research), you probably need to start this in the Fall semester: it is a 6 hour project, and is likely to require more than one semester to complete. The three hour bibliographic essay can be completed in one semester. Either way, you will need to find a professor who is willing to work with you on this individual project. Ideally, the project is in an area of mutual interest to you and to that professor, possibly something that grows out of coursework.

Important Rules & Deadlines:

1. You will need to arrange with the Graduate Advisor to sign up for bibliographic essay or thesis hours (you cannot sign up for these yourself).
2. If you are taking the thesis option, you will need to put together a thesis committee and there will be a formal thesis defense.
3. The deadline for filing for graduation occurs early in each semester, generally in the first 3-4 weeks.