

Department of Political Science Graduate Handbook for Ph.D. Students

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Greetings from the Department Chair

Welcome to the Department of Political Science at the University of Alabama. This handbook is designed to provide you with information about our Ph.D. Program. While we are hopeful it will answer most of your questions and be highly informative, it is still important that you read the [University's Graduate Catalog](#), as well as all relevant information from the Graduate School website (<https://graduate.ua.edu/>).

We look forward to working with you to help you achieve your professional goals. Please feel free to stop by my office during office hours, make an appointment, or email me if you have any questions or simply wish to chat about anything regarding the graduate program. Your ideas and suggestions are always welcome, as we are constantly striving to improve our graduate program to maximize your success.

Sincerely,

Joseph Smith, PhD
Department Chair

The Ph.D. Program

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree program is designed to train students to become professional political scientists. Students completing this program will generally seek faculty positions at colleges and universities, but might also work as staff researchers for government, private industry, or non-profit organizations. The Ph.D. is primarily a research degree, and students in this program will be trained rigorously in the literature and methods necessary to conduct original research in the discipline. But students will also be given the opportunity to gain valuable experience in classroom teaching, thus improving their prospects on the academic job market and preparing them for life as a full-time faculty member.

All students in the Ph.D. program are subject to the rules and conditions specified in this handbook and in the University's Graduate Catalog.

Admission and Financial Aid

Applicants should visit The Graduate School website (<http://graduate.ua.edu>) for application materials and information about the application process. All admission materials are submitted to the Graduate School.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) are available through the Department on a competitive basis for Ph.D. students. All new applicants to the Ph.D. program will automatically be considered for funding. Most GTA positions are awarded beginning in the Fall term. To ensure full consideration for GTA positions applicants must submit all required application materials by February 15. Funding decisions will begin soon after that, and will continue until all positions are filled.

International students who are awarded GTA positions must enroll in the International Teaching Assistant Program (ITAP) and pass a proficiency exam before teaching their own courses. They must pass this exam by the end of the summer following their first year of funding. See <http://international.ua.edu/eli/itap/> for additional information.

In addition to GTA positions, the Graduate School and College offer fellowships and financial awards. All new applicants to the Ph.D. program are considered for these fellowships and awards. The decision process on these awards runs from December through early March. Applications received by December 1 will be eligible for consideration for all rounds of funding.

Transfer Credit

Ph.D. students may request to transfer a maximum of 25 credit hours from another institution, all subject to Departmental approval and the restrictions below.

Students must provide syllabi for all courses for which transfer credit is requested. Decisions on granting transfer credit will be made by the Graduate Director in consultation with the faculty member(s) teaching the most nearly equivalent UA course. In order to receive transfer credit, courses must be judged to have a workload and content comparable to departmental graduate courses.

Core seminars in each field (see the Graduate Catalog) must be taken in residence.

Major and Minor Fields

Students will be expected to attain a satisfactory degree of knowledge and competence in three of the following fields of Political Science: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Public Policy & Administration, and Political Theory.

Students will designate one field as the major field of study and the other two as minor fields. At least eighteen hours above the bachelor's degree (including transferred credit) must be in the major field, twelve hours in first minor field, and 9 hours in the second minor field. Students must take courses from at least two professors in each of their fields. Exceptions can be made only if courses from at least two professors have not been offered in a timely manner, and only with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. In exceptional cases, an approved outside field may be substituted for one minor field within political science. The choice of this field must be approved by the Graduate Studies Committee and the Department Chair.

Students pursuing the Ph.D. degree must complete nine semester hours of methodology courses: PSC 521 Research Design, PSC 522 Quantitative Methods I, and PSC 621 Quantitative Methods II. Ph.D. students whose major field is Political Theory or Comparative Politics, however, may petition the Graduate Studies Committee to substitute an alternative course for PSC 621. These courses must be completed within a student's first three semesters in the program, unless an exception is authorized by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Ph.D. students must complete at least 51 credit hours of graduate coursework.

Language Requirement

A foreign language is required of Ph.D. students if appropriate to the student's research interests, as determined by relevant faculty in the student's major field of study. This determination shall be made prior to the completion of 18 hours in residence in the Ph.D. program. Students may, with approval of the Graduate Studies Committee, substitute foreign language for the PSC 621 requirement.

Comprehensive Examinations

No student will be admitted to candidacy for the degree until the student has passed the comprehensive examinations. These examinations will be taken in two fields of Political Science: the student's major field of study and the first minor field. Students are eligible to take comprehensive exams no earlier than the semester in which they complete the required coursework for the field in which they are testing, and when they have completed no less than two full years of graduate study. Students with incompletes in a field may not take comprehensive examinations in that field. Students must take comprehensive examinations no later than one semester after completion of their course work.

Comprehensive examinations are administered during the Fall and Spring semesters only. PhD students may take comprehensive examinations in their major and minor fields in different semesters.

The Director of Graduate Studies determines the dates for comprehensive examinations and solicits exam coordinators for each field. The exam coordinators will develop the comprehensive examination in consultation with relevant colleagues in the field.

In August and January of each academic year, the Director of Graduate Studies will determine the dates for the coming semester's comprehensive examinations and send out a notice asking graduate students to indicate if they plan to take their exams during that semester. Graduate students must give such notice in writing, and these notices will indicate the field(s) in which the student plans to take his or her examinations and provide a listing of the courses the student has taken in each field as well as the professors who taught those courses.

Students are strongly urged to speak to each faculty member in the relevant fields to inquire about strategies for studying, reading lists, and old syllabi. This is even more strongly recommended for students who have transferred courses from other institutions and may not have interacted with some of the faculty members who might be submitting questions for the examination.

The exam is open book and open note. Students are permitted to consult notes and sources as they write their exam, but students may not submit pre-prepared text or copy and paste from prepared responses. Plagiarism software will be used. Students found to have violated academic policies on plagiarism, cheating, fabrication or misrepresentation (as described more fully in the [University of Alabama Faculty Handbook](#)) will be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion from the graduate program.

Students may not communicate with, solicit help from, or provide help to any other person during the exam. Students may not communicate in any way details of the exam to a person scheduled to take the exam at a later date or time.

Students must include parenthetical citations where appropriate.

Students will have 9 hours to complete the major field exam and 4 hours to complete the first minor field exam. Students will be given detailed instructions regarding electronic delivery and submission of the exam.

Upon submission of the exam, the Director of Graduate Studies will distribute the exam answers to the appropriate field coordinator, who will distribute the exam to relevant colleagues for grading. Faculty members will be asked to evaluate only those answers on which they have sufficient expertise to make informed decisions. Thus, the number of faculty members grading various answers on the same exam may differ. At least two faculty members will grade each

answer and at least three faculty members will participate in the grading of each exam. The field coordinator will convene a meeting of all faculty members who participated in grading the exam.

If a majority of these faculty members vote to pass the student, the student will pass; if a majority vote to fail, the student will fail. Tie votes will constitute a decision to fail, except in cases where there are only two graders. In cases in which only two faculty members voted, a third faculty member (to be chosen by the Director of Graduate Studies) will be asked to read the examination and break the tie. The final vote of the graders will be the sole factor determining whether or not the student has passed the comprehensive examination.

Once all fields have completed their meetings and submitted the results of comprehensive examinations, the Director of Graduate Studies will notify all students regarding the outcome.

If a student fails comprehensive examinations, there is one opportunity to re-take the exam(s). This will occur the next regular semester (i.e., Fall or Spring). All rules stated above will apply to the re-taking of the comprehensive examination(s).

If a student fails comprehensive examination(s) a second time, the student is dismissed from the graduate program at the conclusion of that semester.

Advancement to Candidacy

Students who have fulfilled the course requirements and passed the comprehensive examinations in their major field and first minor field become Ph.D. candidates.

Following admission to candidacy, students are expected to remain in continuous registration until completion of the dissertation. Students should register each semester for at least three hours of dissertation research (PSC 699).

No student may formally declare a dissertation topic until advancing to candidacy, but earlier preliminary inquiry and research on the dissertation topic is encouraged.

Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee consists of a minimum of five members. Faculty from the University of Alabama Department of Political Science must make up a majority of the committee, and the committee must include at least one member from outside the University of Alabama Department of Political Science. The Chair of the dissertation committee must be a full (i.e. tenured) member of the Graduate Faculty. The dissertation committee is formally established by the Department Chair. All members must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

The Prospectus

Ph.D. candidates should consult regularly with their Dissertation Committee Chair regarding their proposed dissertation topic, including whether the dissertation will follow the three

article-style format (http://services.graduate.ua.edu/etd/article_style.html) or the traditional dissertation format.

Students are expected to submit their completed dissertation prospectus to their Dissertation Committee Chair as soon as possible after they advance to candidacy. Typically, students will do so within one to two semesters after successful completion of the comprehensive examinations. The Dissertation Committee Chair will determine when the prospectus is ready for distribution to the Dissertation Committee. Upon approval by the Dissertation Committee Chair and consent of the Dissertation Committee, an oral defense of the prospectus will occur.

The Dissertation

A dissertation is required for the Ph.D. The dissertation must represent original research and constitute a contribution to knowledge in the discipline.

A minimum of twenty-four credit hours of PSC 699 is required for the Ph.D.

Ph.D. candidates should make a concentrated effort to complete the dissertation within one calendar year after the successful prospectus defense.

Students should review all Graduate School rules relating to the proper format for the dissertation and the deadlines for submission. The Graduate School rules are strictly enforced. All requirements for the doctoral program must be completed within the eight-year period (24 fall, spring, and summer semesters) following admission to the Doctoral program if the student enters the program without a Master's degree in political science. Students entering the program with a Master's degree must complete all requirements within seven years (21 fall, spring, and summer semesters).

Final Oral Examination (The “Dissertation Defense”)

Ph.D. candidates will be advised by their Dissertation Chair and Committee regarding readiness to defend the dissertation.

Final examinations for candidates for the Ph.D. degree will not be scheduled during summer school, except in unusual circumstances.

A formal application for graduation must be completed online on The Graduate School website. Students complete the intent to graduate form at the beginning of the semester they intend to defend their dissertation. Deadlines are posted on The Graduate School website (<https://graduate.ua.edu/current-students/student-deadlines/>).

Policies and Procedures

In this section of the Graduate Student Handbook, you will find policies and procedures that govern our work life. Some are University or College policies, while others originated in the Department of Political Science. If you have any questions about these policies, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies or the Department Chair.

Advising

All graduate students are required to meet with the Director of Graduate Studies prior to registering for classes each semester.

Conference Participation

Graduate students who wish to present solo-authored papers at a conference must submit a completed rough draft of the paper (*not* the proposal) to the Director of Graduate Studies at least two weeks before the call for proposals for the conference you wish to attend.

The Director of Graduate Studies will identify a faculty member to assess the quality of the paper draft and the likelihood that revisions could be made in time for conference presentation.

Students who are presenting a paper co-authored with a faculty member are exempt from this policy. Students who wish to petition the Graduate Studies Committee for an exemption to this policy may do so. Students who petition the Committee for an exemption should include an email from a faculty member who has agreed to mentor them through the writing process.

First Year Review

After the end of each Spring semester, all faculty who taught a first-year PhD student during the preceding year will be asked to submit a short letter stating the strengths and weaknesses of the student.

Prior to May 15, the Graduate Studies Committee will meet to discuss the first-year student reviews. All faculty are invited to attend and participate in this meeting. We anticipate the vast majority of these reviews will be positive. All students will receive written feedback regarding their first-year review.

If the first-year reviews by faculty indicate serious concern about ability to be successful in the PhD program, faculty in attendance at the first-year review meeting will vote regarding if the student should receive remediation, additional review, and potentially exit the program with an M.A. degree.

If a majority of the faculty in attendance votes 'serious concern', the Director of Graduate Studies will meet with the student to provide explicit feedback concerning the first year review. An additional review will occur at the end of the third semester to assess progress on the areas of concern.

At the end of the student's third semester, faculty teaching the student will be consulted. If sufficient progress was made, the student will continue in the Ph.D. program; if sufficient progress was not made, the student will be invited to take M.A. comprehensive exams in the Spring semester and exit the program with a Master's degree.

If a faculty member who was in attendance at the first-year review meeting believes an error

was made assessing a particular student in his/her subfield, that faculty member can declare responsibility for Chairing the student's dissertation and assuming mentoring responsibility for the student. Under this scenario, the student would continue in the Ph.D. program.

Graduate Student Committee Representation

Each year, graduate students may elect 1 non-voting representative to serve on the Graduate Studies Committee and on any faculty search committees that may exist during the year.

These representatives will participate in important discussions involving rules and procedures governing the graduate program, as well as the qualifications of applicants for new faculty positions. The representatives' major responsibility will be to seek and aggregate graduate student opinion, so that faculty can consider the views of graduate students in their deliberations.

In the case of the Graduate Studies Committee, the student representative will not be involved in confidential discussions dealing specifically with individual students or prospective students.

Professional Socialization Courses

Ph.D. students are required to register for PSC 500 in the Fall semester and PSC 501 in the Spring semester. These courses are professional socialization seminars that are offered on a pass/fail basis for .5 credit each.

These courses cover numerous topics such as effective teaching strategies; attending and participating in political science conferences; publishing your work in professional journals; the academic job market; and ethical issues facing instructors and researchers.

These courses will meet approximately once each month, with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or a faculty member coordinating the discussion. In addition to the class meetings, students will also attend research presentations and job talks as part of the professionalization process.

Mentoring

The goals of the mentoring program for our Ph.D. students are (1) improved readiness to teach their first class, (2) increased interactions between faculty and graduate students, (3) improved research and writing skills, (4) improved quality of conference papers, (5) increase in graduate student publications, and (6) increased readiness to write and defend a prospectus.

Mentoring: Year One

The focus of mentoring in the first year is on teaching. Faculty who are assigned a non-teaching GTA agree to mentor the student in teaching. The Graduate Studies Committee, with input

from graduate students, will create a list of topics (e.g., discussing syllabi, how to choose books, how to write a lecture, how to deal with problem students, etc.) the faculty will discuss with the graduate student during the first year. Non-teaching GTAs are typically assigned to two untenured faculty members. GTAs will not be paired with two first-year faculty members unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Students will be required to attend a certain number (TBD) of undergraduate classes taught by our faculty each semester to observe different teaching strategies. Attendance of a class in the student's major and/or minors is encouraged as long as there is not a conflict with the student's courses.

PSC 500/501 will continue to offer sessions every semester focused on teaching.

Mentoring: Year Two (Teaching)

GTAs typically teach their first course in the Fall semester of the second year. To support students teaching for the first time, additional teaching mentoring will occur.

Faculty will be assigned to a GTA and be responsible for consulting with the GTA prior to the beginning of classes on book selection and construction of the syllabus.

During the semester, the GTA should regularly consult with their faculty mentor regarding teaching questions or problems. The faculty mentor will attend at least one class in the first five weeks of the Fall and Spring semester to observe the GTA teach and provide written feedback to the student and the DGS.

GTAs teaching their own classes are required to utilize The Speaking Studio (<https://speakingstudio.ua.edu/>) at least the first two semesters they teach. Students may go to The Speaking Studio for assistance and/or The Speaking Studio will send a consultant to observe the student teaching in the classroom and provide feedback.

PSC 500/501 will continue to offer sessions every semester focused on teaching.

Mentoring: Year Two (Research)

There are two components to research mentoring in the second year:

(1) All PhD students will attend PSC 500/501 research mentoring sessions. At least one research mentoring session per semester will be a "behind the scenes" session on publishing. A faculty member will volunteer to make available all documents (e.g., conference paper, revised conference paper, submission to a journal, rejection/R&R, reviews, response to reviews, final publication) related to a recently published article or book. Students will be expected to read the documents prior to the session. At the session, the faculty member will not present the paper/book, but will instead discuss why the project was pursued, the stages of writing the paper/book, the process of responding to the reviews, etc. The majority of the session time should be reserved for student questions about the process.

(2) In the Fall semester, faculty who wish to mentor a graduate student in research will

complete a form describing tasks they need from a graduate student (e.g., data collection, literature review, development of a paper if in early stages, etc.). Faculty may identify a student they want to work with, or the Graduate Studies Committee will help connect faculty and graduate students based on shared interests. Faculty are not required to participate in the research mentoring program for second year students.

In Spring semester, graduate students who have been paired with a faculty member will enroll in PSC 598 (name of the course will be changed to “Directed Research”) with the faculty mentor. Research mentoring is faculty-driven; there is no mechanism for a student to “apply” to be a research mentee. Ideally, the result of the research mentoring will be a co-authored paper to present at a conference and submit for publication, but decisions about co-authoring with a graduate student is left to the discretion of the faculty mentor. PSC 598 credit will count as an elective course.

Mentoring: Year Three (Teaching)

Faculty will be assigned to a GTA and be responsible for consulting with the GTA prior to the beginning of classes on book selection and construction of the syllabus. During the semester, the GTA should regularly consult with their faculty mentor regarding teaching questions or problems. The faculty mentor will attend at least one class in the first five weeks of Fall semester to observe the GTA teach and provide written feedback to the student and the DGS. Attending a GTA class in the Spring semester is left to the discretion of the faculty teaching mentor.

PSC 500/501 offers sessions every semester focused on teaching.

Mentoring: Year Three (Research)

If a project is on-going from Year Two, it may continue in Year Three with enrollment in PSC 598 for an additional three credit hours. No more than six credit hours may be earned for the mentoring projects. PSC 598 credit will count as an elective course.

If the project from Year Two is complete, the student may begin work on a new project with the same faculty mentor or someone else, *depending on faculty wishes*. Ideally, work on a new project will be closely related to the expected dissertation topic, occur with the expected Dissertation Committee Chair, and will lead to a completed prospectus the semester following successful completion of comprehensive exams.

Faculty are encouraged to submit all types of research projects, including ones that would be appealing to students who anticipate pursuing a job at a teaching institution. For example, presenting a paper at the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference would benefit students, or co-authoring a paper for submission to journals such as *Journal of Political Science Education* or *PS: Political Science & Politics*.

Sexual Harassment Policy

The Department is committed to creating and maintaining a pleasant and safe working environment for all of its faculty, staff, and students. We do not tolerate sexual harassment of

any sort, and offenders will be reported to the proper University authorities. The following is from [The Graduate Assistant Guide](#) published by The Graduate School:

“The University is committed to maintaining a positive and productive environment in which the dignity and worth of all of its members are respected. Sexual harassment is damaging to this environment and will not be tolerated. Sexual harassment is defined for purposes of this policy as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment or education; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting that individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual’s academic or work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning or employment environment. Sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct within the University and shall subject the offender to possible disciplinary action up to and including suspension or dismissal. Student complaints may be filed with the Affirmative Action Coordinator for the college/school (or administrative division), the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, or the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs. Employee complaints should be directed to the Affirmative Action Coordinator for the college/school (or administrative division), the Director of Human Resources, or the University Compliance Officer. Institutional policy also prohibits amorous or sexual relationships between instructional personnel and students for whom they have professional responsibility, even though both parties might seemingly consent to the relationship. Such a relationship may lead to a charge of sexual harassment or make the objectivity of the instructor questionable and his or her evaluations suspect.”

General Information for Graduate Teaching Assistants

Graduate Teaching Assistants play an important role in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alabama. They contribute to the academic life of the Department, even as they enrich their own educational experiences. The Department of Political Science welcomes the participation of its Graduate Teaching Assistants and is committed to helping them fulfill their dual role as students and professionals.

This guide is provided for that purpose. It supplements [The Graduate Assistant Guide](#) , the [Graduate Catalog](#) , other University documents referenced therein, as well as materials distributed in both the University's and the Political Science Department's own teaching seminars and workshops.

New GTA Applicants

The Department awards teaching assistantships on the basis of academic excellence and potential for achievement as a college instructor. General factors that are taken into account in the review of applications include grades, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and relevant teaching experience.

All Ph.D. applicants who submit all required materials by February 15 are automatically

considered for a GTA position.

New GTAs will attend a two-day Workshop in August hosted by The Graduate School.

Duration and Renewal of GTA Appointment

Graduate Teaching Assistants are appointed for a term of either one semester or one academic year (although GTA's are subject to immediate termination if they repeatedly fail to meet their GTA responsibilities). Assistantships are available for a total of 10 semesters (or a total of 8 semesters if 12 or more hours of graduate coursework is transferred in). Application is required each academic year. Renewal is not automatic. Factors affecting renewal include maintenance of an exemplary academic record, progress toward the degree sought, and successful conduct of GTA duties.

To remain eligible for continuing appointment, the Graduate School requires that a student's overall grade point average must remain at or above 3.00 at all times. The computation of grade point averages includes treating incompletes as grades of "F" if they are not removed within 2 weeks of the semester following that in which the incomplete grade was given. If such a computation occurs, a GTA will have the assistantship removed by action of the Graduate Studies Committee, unless acceptable arrangements are made or the grade of incomplete is removed. The Department maintains an alternate list of eligible candidates for assistantships if vacancies occur during the academic year.

Each spring semester, the Director of Graduate Studies will send out an email announcing the deadline to apply for a GTA position for the following academic year. In a few cases, the Department will commit to providing an assistantship to a student for more than one year. In such cases, the student does not have to apply for re-appointment so long as that commitment is in force. All commitments of this type are contingent upon the student's remaining in good standing in the graduate program, and performing all GTA duties in keeping with the Department's specifications and standards. As with other GTAs, multi-year GTAs must meet all Department and Graduate School requirements, including those relating to minimum grade point averages.

Depending on budgetary and other considerations, opportunities for teaching in the summer terms may also exist. The Department Chair, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, will determine who will be chosen to teach such courses. Preference will be given to students on the basis of academic record, performance of GTA duties, and, particularly, a students' competence to teach the course(s) that are being offered.

Memorandum of Appointment and Teaching Assignments

GTA appointments are made in spring of the academic year preceding the date of the beginning of the appointment. At that time, the appointed GTA will be given a memorandum of appointment authorized by the Department Chair that will specify the type of assistantship, a brief description of its job requirements, the amount of its remuneration, its beginning and end dates, and other relevant information.

Course assignments for the Fall Semester are usually made at the time of the appointment or shortly thereafter. Assignments for the Spring Semester are usually made during the preceding fall. Some GTAs will be assigned to assist a Political Science faculty member with grading and/or other tasks determined by the faculty member. Most will eventually be assigned to teach their own courses. Currently, Political Science GTAs are responsible for teaching sections of

several lower division (100- and 200-level) courses.

GTAs who will teach their own courses must have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in Political Science courses prior to the beginning of their teaching appointments.

Remuneration

Currently, full-time Graduate Teaching Assistants are paid a stipend (salary) of approximately \$13,500 per academic year for .5 Full-Time Equivalency (FTE), which is 20 hours of work per week during the academic year. Full-time GTAs are not permitted to work elsewhere in any capacity at the University of Alabama. GTAs are paid in full for the months of September through April and receive partial paychecks for the months of August and May. Paychecks are drawn at the end of each month, August through May. Teaching Assistants who are assigned duties of .5 FTE receive a grant equal to their in- and out-of-state tuition charges (but limited to the full University charges for 9 graduate hours or the student's actual tuition costs). As specified in [The Graduate Assistant Guide](#), assistants who are assigned duties of less than .5 FTE receive proportionally reduced grants. *The Graduate Assistant Guide* also specifies the tuition grant implications of early termination of assistantship appointments.

GTAs who teach during the summer terms are paid an additional salary, but do not receive tuition grants. GTAs should be aware of the tax and financial aid (student loan) implications of their assistantship awards. Their GTA stipends (salaries) are taxable income. Their tuition grants are not taxable income. However, if GTAs apply for student loans, the amount of their tuition grant is used in the calculation of their loan eligibility.

For domestic GTAs, the University pays the single coverage premium for the University-sponsored student health insurance plan unless you have alternative health insurance and decline the University's plan. For international GTAs, proof of adequate student health insurance that is approved by the University before the start of classes each semester is required or the University automatically enrolls you in the student health insurance plan, bills your student account for the single health insurance premium each semester, and applies a grant to offset the cost of the single coverage premium.

Academic Enrollment

Graduate Teaching Assistants must be enrolled as full-time students in the Department of Political Science. [The Graduate Assistant Guide](#) specifies how assistantship assignments affect the determination of full-time status. GTAs who are assigned duties of .5 FTE (the typical assignment) must enroll for at least 6 hours of graduate credit (normally two graduate courses or equivalent dissertation credit hours); it is recommended that they enroll for no more than 9 credit hours (normally three graduate courses or equivalent dissertation credit hours).

Office Space and Mailboxes

Political Science GTAs are typically provided with office space on the third floor of ten Hour Hall. Offices are shared by two or more GTAs. GTAs are also provided with their own mailboxes in the Department's mailroom on the third floor of ten Hour.

Dress Code

GTAs represent the Department of Political Science when they are teaching undergraduates and attending Departmental presentations by job applicants and other visitors. As such, the expectation is that GTAs will dress in a professional manner, particularly when teaching and when outside visitors are in the Department. We recognize that most GTAs have a limited budget and simply ask that you wear clothing that reflects a work environment when you are working. Examples of clothing most would find inappropriate for teaching include gym shorts, flip flops, sweat pants, and t-shirts.

GTA Teaching Responsibilities

As mentioned in the mentoring section above, all GTAs will receive mentoring to promote improvement in teaching. This benefits the Department, the undergraduate students, and the GTAs when they go on the job market. In this section, information is provided about teaching responsibilities, expectation, and policies. Questions should be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies, the Department Chair, and/or the assigned mentor.

Class Meetings

You are expected to meet your class on all scheduled days of instruction, keep all your office hours, and conduct class for the duration of the scheduled class period. If you are unable to teach your class due to illness, call the Department of Political Science office staff and ask them to put a sign on your door announcing class will not be held in person due to illness and to check Blackboard for further information.

If you must cancel class to attend a conference, you must have the prior approval of the Department Chair and a plan for what students will do in lieu of the missed class. GTAs are encouraged to work with each other to cover classes in these situations by showing an appropriate documentary or providing guest lectures for each other.

Course Syllabus

GTAs who teach their own courses are responsible for constructing a draft syllabus and emailing it to their teaching mentor and/or the Director of Graduate Studies at least one week prior to the first class meeting.

All GTAs should consult this document to ensure your syllabi are in compliance with University policy on syllabus content:

<https://teachinghub.as.ua.edu/syllabus-requirements/>

Once approved by the teaching mentor or the Director of Graduate Studies, GTAs are responsible for uploading the syllabus in the folder “GTA Syllabi” on UA Box. This is a resource available to all GTAs to be able to see the required components of syllabi, the books used by other GTAs, the amount of reading typically assigned, and the types of assignments required. GTAs who are teaching for the first time or GTAs assigned to teach a new course are encouraged to take advantage of this resource.

In addition, GTAs must upload information into the Online Syllabus Management site here: <http://syllabi.ua.edu/front/#/>

Textbook Selection

GTAs are responsible for ordering textbook(s) for their courses each semester. You will receive an email from the Supe Store requesting your book order. If you are assigned to teach PSC 101 Introduction to American Politics, there is a common text the Department uses and you will not place a textbook order.

GTAs are currently assigned to teach 100- and 200-level introductory courses. As such, your textbook choice should be an introductory text. Consult with your faculty mentor, the Director of Graduate Studies, faculty who teach upper-level courses in the area you are teaching, and the course syllabi prior to making a textbook selection.

Class Rolls

You may access your class roll via myBama.

Blackboard

All instructors are required to upload the course syllabus in Blackboard. Blackboard has many attributes to enhance your teaching. GTAs are encouraged to attend a class about how to use Blackboard or use this site to familiarize yourself with the system: <https://frc.ua.edu/technologies/blackboard/>

Mid-Term and Final Grades

The University has a policy of providing “mid-term” grades for all 100 and 200 level classes. Since mid-term grades are assigned fairly early in the semester, they may be based on very little information, perhaps just a single exam. Do not worry about this: these grades are informational in nature, and do not go on the student’s permanent record. Simply assign each student a mid-term grade in myBama based on the best information you have at your disposal.

The deadline to submit midterm and final grades will be announced by the Department Chair and is also noted on-line in the academic calendar. These are firm deadlines.

Upon request by the Department Chair or Director of Graduate Studies, GTAs are required to provide access to student grades, which includes not only the final grades each student received, but also all of the criteria (exam and paper scores, attendance grades, penalties, etc.) that were used to calculate them.

Student Complaints

Students can bring a complaint or grievance about any aspect of an instructor's conduct at any time, and for any reason. GTAs should familiarize themselves with the "University-Wide Academic Grievance Procedures," referenced under the heading, "[Official Handling of Complaints](#)" in the *Graduate Assistant Guide*.

Instructor Evaluations

Toward the end of each semester, instructor evaluations are administered on-line. Because the evaluation is administered online, you should remind and encourage your students to participate. These evaluations can provide instructors with valuable information on the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching. At the end of each semester, the Department Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies reviews the GTA's teaching evaluations.

Consensual Romantic Relationships

GTAs should read policy regarding consensual romantic relationships, found here:

<https://hrestus.fa.ua.edu/HRFormsOnlinePub/HR%20Forms%20%20Online/Consensual%20Romantic%20Relationships.pdf>

