

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.

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 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 the application deadline. 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 or risk losing funding.

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.

Admissions decisions will be contingent on the ability to match a student with a potential advisor.

Transfer Credit

Ph.D. students may request to transfer a maximum of 19 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. 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 two 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 as the minor field. At least fifteen hours above the bachelor's degree (including transferred credit) must be in the major field, and nine hours in the 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 the 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. A student may petition the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the student's advisor, to substitute an alternative course for PSC 621 if deemed more relevant for pursuing their program of study. 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 39 credit hours of graduate coursework.

Language Requirement

Foreign language competence may be 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.

Comprehensive Examinations

No student will be admitted to candidacy for the degree until the student has passed comprehensive examinations. These examinations will be taken in the student's major field of study and the minor field. Unless granted explicit approval by the Director of Graduate Studies to do so earlier, students are eligible to take comprehensive exams no earlier than the semester after completing their required coursework and when they have completed not less than two full years of graduate study. Unless extraordinary extenuating circumstances prevent it, graduate students are expected to take comprehensive exams in both their major and minor fields the semester after completing required coursework. The Graduate Studies Committee must approve of any delay. Students with incompletes in any course may not take comprehensive examinations, and a delay in taking comprehensive examinations on account of incompletes will have deleterious impacts on whether a student is making "good progress" through the program.

Students indicate their intention to take the comprehensive examinations by completing the form located on the department website. An email will be sent each semester announcing the deadline to declare intention to take comprehensive exams.

Please note that the comprehensive examinations are not simply tests of the material students have taken in their coursework. Students should consult with their subfield coordinators as to the type of material they will be responsible for on the exam. Students are strongly urged to speak to each faculty member in the relevant fields to inquire about strategies for studying and reading lists. 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.

Comprehensive examinations are administered during the Fall and Spring semesters only.

Major field comprehensive examinations for the Fall semester will take place the third Tuesday of each September, and minor field comprehensive examinations will take place the fourth Tuesday of each September. Major field comprehensive examinations for the Spring semester will take place the second half of March, with the precise date to be determined by the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of the semester (a decision should be made prior to the beginning of the second week of classes). Minor field comprehensive examinations will take place one week after the major examinations. The Director of Graduate Studies will send out a notice at the beginning of the academic school year 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. No later than two weeks before the first examination, the Director of Graduate Studies will contact the exam coordinator for that field (this person will typically be the subfield coordinator, as further described below).

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. Participating faculty members grade comprehensive examinations on a pass/fail basis.

The final vote of the graders will be the sole factor determining whether the student passed the comprehensive examination. To pass, a majority of the faculty members grading the exam must agree that the student sufficiently demonstrated mastery and synthesis of the literature in their responses. If a majority of the faculty members do not agree that the student passed the exam, the student fails. This includes tie votes, which will constitute a decision to fail, except in cases where only two graders reviewed the exam. In cases where only two faculty members voted, a third faculty member (selected by the Director of Graduate Studies) will read the examination to break the tie.

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 must 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 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 one hour 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 strongly 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. Typically, the Chair of the dissertation committee will be both a full and tenured member of the Graduate Faculty and a tenured member of the Department of Political Science. The Department Chair formally establishes the dissertation committee. The Dean of the Graduate School must approve all members before the committee is formally constituted.

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 or the traditional dissertation format.

Students are expected to submit and defend their completed dissertation prospectus by the end of the semester following successful completion of comprehensive examinations. This will typically be by the end of the sixth semester. Upon submission of the prospectus, 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 prospectus is a working document describing and justifying the intended dissertation research question(s), methodology(ies) that will be employed, data that might be used, the resources needed to complete the project, the timeline of the project, and any additional factors the committee deems relevant. An approved prospectus launches the student into the doctoral thesis research and should be able to serve as the basis of grant applications. The prospectus provides the initial framework to guide the doctoral research. The exact format and length of the prospectus is a matter of discussion between the Dissertation Committee Chair and the student, but these will typically be no longer than thirty or so pages excluding the bibliography.

The Dissertation

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

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

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 nine-year period (27 fall, spring, and summer semesters) following admission to the Doctoral program.

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.

General PhD Roadmap:

Below is an example of how a doctoral student could fulfill all requirements within five years. Actual course offerings will vary. Students should work with the subfield coordinator to make course selections.

First semester

PSC 521 Research Design
Major/Minor Core Course (e.g., PSC 610)
PSC 522 Quant Methods PSC I
PSC 500 Departmental Seminar

Second semester

PSC 621 Quant Meth in PSC II
Minor/Major Core Course (e.g., PSC 631)
Major Elective
PSC 501 Departmental Seminar

Third semester

Major Elective
Minor Elective
Major Elective

Fourth semester

Major Elective
Minor Elective
Other Elective

Fifth semester

Comprehensive exams (September)
Write and possibly defend prospectus
Take any additional necessary courses
Write grant/fellowship proposals
Enroll in 9 credits of PSC 599/598/595

Sixth semester

Finish and defend prospectus
Submit articles/grant proposals
Teach own course
Enroll in 9 credits of PSC 599/598/595 or 699

Seventh semester

Focus on dissertation (PSC 699)
Prepare publications/conf. paper
Teach own course
Submit external fellowship applications

Eighth semester

Focus on dissertation (PSC 699)
Prepare publications/conf. papers
Teach own course
Prepare materials for job market

Ninth semester

Polish dissertation
Actively on job market
Teach own course
Prepare/submit publications
Enroll in PSC 699

Tenth semester

Apply for graduation
Actively on job market
Schedule and hold defense
Teach own course
Enroll in PSC 699
Submit publications

Students must complete at least 24 hours of dissertation (699) credit. Students may not enroll in PSC 699 until after they have passed their comprehensive exams.

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 their respective subfield coordinator (as elaborated below) prior to registering for classes each semester.

Conference Participation

Graduate students who are receiving any funding from the department for travel to a conference and who are presenting a paper for the first time must give their presentation to the department at least two weeks prior to the conference. They should notify the Director of Graduate Studies of their participation at least four weeks prior to the conference to schedule the practice presentation.

Good Progress

To be making “good progress”, students are generally expected to: 1) complete all coursework by the end of the fourth semester; 2) take comprehensive examinations during the fifth semester; 3) successfully defend the prospectus by the end of the sixth semester; and 4) demonstrate substantive progress on their dissertation each semester of taking 699, as determined by the dissertation advisor. Students who fail to maintain good progress in the program risk dismissal. Sometimes life events can complicate such a timeline, but students will typically be expected to adhere to this schedule. Substantial deviations must be discussed with and approved by both the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

After the end of each Spring semester (prior to May 15), there will be a faculty-wide review of all graduate students. We anticipate most of these reviews will be positive, and all students will receive brief written feedback from the Director of Graduate Studies regarding their review.

However, if students are deemed not to be making sufficiently “good progress” through the program, they will be notified in writing that they have until the end of the spring of the following school year to get back to making degree progress, and they will be given clear guidelines for remediation. Typically, this will mean getting back on time with the degree schedule elaborated above.

If the student fails to complete the remediation plan by the time of the next faculty-wide review in May, the student may be dismissed from the program with the opportunity to earn a Master’s degree.

If a student fails to take comprehensive examinations by the end of the fifth semester, that student will be notified in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies that they must take comprehensive exams by the end of the sixth semester. Failure to do so may result in

dismissal from the program. Similarly, if a student fails to defend a prospectus by the end of the sixth semester, that student will be notified in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies that they must defend the prospectus by the end of the seventh semester. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program with a Master's degree.

Students may petition the Director of Graduate Studies for a delay to taking comprehensive examinations and defending the prospectus under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., medical emergency).

Annual Review

After the end of each Spring semester (prior to May 15), there will be a faculty-wide review of all graduate students carrying a graduate teaching assistantship. We anticipate most of these reviews will be positive, and all students will receive brief written feedback from the Director of Graduate Studies regarding their review. However, if students are deemed not to be making sufficiently "good progress" through the program, continued GTA funding may be at risk, and post-comps students may be recommended to exit the program with a Master's degree. Pre-comps students will be invited to take M.A. comprehensive exams in the Spring semester of the second year and exit with a Master's degree.

Emphasis will be given to first-year students. If the first-year reviews by faculty indicate serious concern about a student's ability to be successful in the PhD program, faculty in attendance will vote regarding whether the student should be steered toward exit from the PhD program with an M.A. degree. This would include a second year of funding to finish the M.A.

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 attended 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

First-year 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 1.5 credits each.

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

These courses will meet approximately twice 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.

Advising and Subfield Coordinators

Each subfield will designate, in conjunction with the Director of Graduate Studies, a “sub-field coordinator.” The subfield coordinator is generally responsible for keeping track of the progress of students who are majoring within their respective subfield and for handling advising responsibilities for those students. Students will be assigned to their subfield coordinator upon admission to the program. With respect to coordinating comprehensive examinations, subfield coordinators will also be the point of contact for the DGS in each subfield.

Job Market/Placement Director

Students should seek career advice from their faculty advisors as well as from a faculty member who serves as placement director. The role of the placement director is to assist all PhD students entering the job market for academic (as well as non-academic) careers.

The placement director will help you understand the process and how to best strategize for the job market. They will also help you prepare your application materials and read multiple drafts of your cover letters and statements (but also ask your advisors and letter writers). They will also offer advice on other aspects of the job search, such as conducting interviews and the questions to ask during campus interviews.

The placement director will from time-to-time host relevant events, including practice job talks (where students receive critical feedback and advice from faculty and peers) and other talks or roundtables on topics related to the job market.

Students should plan on meeting one-on-one with the placement director the year before entering the job market (usually the year before finishing the dissertation) and feel free to use the placement director as a resource for advice and for reading application materials.

Students should keep in mind it is not the role of the placement director to locate relevant jobs or to write application materials for them. Instead, the placement director is a resource to help students navigate the process of preparing for the job market.

Student and Employee Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities

All graduate students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the University of Alabama's student Code of Conduct as well as rights and responsibilities detailed in the University of Alabama's Student Handbook. This includes, but is not limited to, adherence to the University of Alabama's stated policies on Title IX (sexual harassment and misconduct) as well as academic integrity. All employees of the University, including graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), are further required to be aware of their rights and responsibilities as detailed in the University of Alabama's Employee Handbook. This includes, but is not limited to, adherence to the University of Alabama's stated policies on Title IX (sexual harassment and misconduct), FERPA requirements, mandatory reporting responsibilities, and consensual romantic relationships.

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 based on academic excellence and potential for achievement as a college instructor. General factors that are considered 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 the Fall admissions deadline 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). In most cases, assistantships are available for a total of 10 semesters. 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 always remain at or above 3.00. 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.

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, typically in conjunction with a Graduate Council Fellowship or some other fellowship, the Department will commit to providing an assistantship to a student for more than one year. In such cases, the student should still apply for re-appointment to remind the graduate studies committee to hold a GTA slot for the student. 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 based on academic record, performance of GTA duties, and, particularly, a student's 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.

The department will generally delay assigning GTAs to teach their own courses until after they have passed comprehensive exams.

Remuneration

Full-time Graduate Teaching Assistants are paid a stipend (salary) 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 during the academic year. 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 typically 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 Hoor 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 Hoor.

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 many 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, sweatpants, and t-shirts.

GTA Teaching Responsibilities

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, contact 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. Similarly, if you plan to change the mode of instruction of a course, you must have the prior approval of the Department Chair.

Course Syllabus

GTAs who teach their own courses are responsible for constructing a draft syllabus and emailing it to the Instructor Review Committee for review.

Textbook Selection

GTAs are currently assigned to teach 100- and 200-level introductory courses. As such, your textbook choice should be an introductory text recommended by your subfield. Consult with your dissertation chair or the Director of Graduate Studies 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 Blackboard's tutorials to educate themselves on how to use the program.

Grading

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 in the *Graduate Assistant Guide*.

Instructor Assessment

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 Instructor Review Committee reviews the GTA’s teaching evaluation. The Instructor Review Committee will also arrange for one in-class teaching review of each GTA no less than once per academic school year.