

Distinction in Political Science

The department's distinction program offers a valuable opportunity for highly qualified PSC majors to work on a senior research project under the guidance of a faculty advisor.

Students participate in a seminar during fall and spring semesters to ensure the successful completion of their projects. Professor Emily Thorson teaches the seminar and guides students through the program. For more information, please contact [Professor Thorson](#) or read about the program on our [information sheet](#).

In the spring, students present their findings during a poster session at the [Maxwell School Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship](#) and may submit their paper for the Outstanding Student Research paper award.

In 2019-2020, Political Science distinction students completed the following projects:

- *The Effects of Protest Image in News Tweets About Abortion*
- *Responsibility Framings: Environmental Behavior and Belief*
- *Is Sunlight Really the Best Disinfectant? The Effect of Media Pressure on Voluntary Political Contribution Disclosure*
- *Framing Opposition to Renewable Energy in U.S. States*
- *Crisis Conscience: How Climate Change's Impact On Cities Affected Mobilization For The 2019 Climate Strikes*
- *The Price of Decentralization and Ethnic Conflict*

In 2016-2017, Political Science distinction students completed the following projects: In 2018-2019, Political Science distinction students completed the following projects:

- [*What's to Blame and Whose Voices are Heard: How The New York Times Covers School Shootings*](#)
- [*Research On Youth Government Organizations*](#)
- [*The Effects of Gender and Apology on Evaluations of Political Misconduct*](#)
- [*Neoliberalism: A Populist Crisis of Conscience*](#)

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Department of Political Science Maxwell School of Citizenship
Distinction in Political Science

The Department of Political Science offers undergraduate majors the opportunity to graduate with Distinction in Political Science.

Eligibility

The student must have at least a 3.5 cumulative GPA both overall and within Political Science to enroll in the program, and s/he must maintain both the department and university cumulative GPA at 3.5 or higher through graduation.

Thesis

The program requires the student to produce a senior thesis that reflects an understanding of the contemporary literature relevant to the thesis topic, advances an original argument, and presents evidence appropriate to the underlying inquiry. The thesis should generally be modeled after a typical academic journal article in the field of Political Science. The thesis will be read and evaluated by a committee of three, consisting of the main advisor and two additional readers.

Two of the readers must be members of the Political Science department. One of the readers may be a graduate student in Political Science. An oral defense will determine if the thesis meets the departmental requirements for Distinction.

Time Line

Third week of April (junior year): The student is responsible for locating a faculty advisor who will approve the topic and supervise the thesis process; departmental application form for the distinction thesis program, with advisor's signature, must be submitted to the Department by the third week of April of the junior year.

First week of fall semester (senior year): An outline of the thesis with an annotated bibliography should be submitted during the first week of senior year.

November 1 (senior year): A thesis proposal (5-10 pages) is due by November 1 (or the closest business day in November). The proposal must be approved by at least two faculty members who will also be part of the oral defense committee. A copy of the proposal, with faculty signatures, should be submitted to the Department. After the first semester, the student or advisor have the right to terminate the thesis process.

End of spring break (senior year): A full draft of the thesis is due by the first business day following spring break.

Third week in April (senior year): The thesis must be completed, defended, and approved no later than the third week in April. The committee will determine at the completion of the defense if the thesis is "satisfactory" or "not satisfactory" in meeting the Department's standards for Distinction.

Coursework/thesis credits

Distinction students may earn six credits (3 for each semester) for the thesis work towards their Political Science major. Students register for the courses PSC 495 for fall and PSC 496 for spring (three credits each semester). These courses will involve regular meetings with a faculty member and the other participants in the Distinction program. For each of these semesters, the seminar leader and the student's advisor will agree on a grade that accounts for both their work on their research project and their contribution to the Distinction seminar. If the thesis is not completed on time or the committee determines that it does not meet the requirements for Distinction, the advisor and seminar leader will determine the appropriate grade for the spring semester's coursework but Distinction will not be awarded.

Connection to Renee Crown University Honors Program

Students in the Honors Program may arrange to have their Political Science thesis count as their Capstone Project. The Honors Program "will typically accept that work as also suitable for submission toward completion of the depth requirement." Consult both the Honors Program and the Political Science Department if you are following this path.

The Honors Program requires the submission of a proposal in the fall semester of junior year, but following the PSC schedule (application submitted in April of junior year) is acceptable with notification of the Honors Program. Honors may also require, at that point, a somewhat more elaborate proposal (2-3) pages than what is required by PSC. Note that the Political Science department requires an oral defense of the student's thesis, and the Honors Program requires a presentation of the project on Presentation Day in early May, as well as a "written description of the Capstone Project that explains the work to a general, education audience outside the field, as part of their project.

For additional information on Distinction and Thesis requirements, please contact Professor Dimitar Gueorguiev in Political Science at ddqueorg@maxwell.syr.edu.