

“The block plan lets the professors fit the class schedule to the needs of the class, rather than fit the needs of the class to the schedule.”

David Yamanishi, Associate Professor of Politics

Cornell College understands the term “politics” to embrace everything people do that is related to making and enforcing group decisions.

Politics includes government in the narrow sense that most people use the term, but it is not limited to that. Politics addresses practical questions: “Who has power?” “How are governments organized?” “How are decisions made?” Politics also considers the ideas and values—like liberty, equality, justice, democracy, and law—that influence how people think about governance.

This is a department of political science, but it is also a department of political philosophy and a department of government. The department feels a kinship with biology, psychology, sociology, and economics, and also with philosophy, history, and literature. It embraces the broader term politics over narrower terms like government and political science because it better reflects the breadth of our mission and interests.

The department also embraces the college’s commitment to creating an environment that is conducive to liberal learning and an appreciation of diversity. Each member of the department offers a different intellectual background, method of inquiry, scope of interest, and conception of what is important in politics.

BENEFITS OF ONE COURSE AT A TIME

One Course At A Time allows the department to routinely blend political theory with real-world practice. With several hours of uninterrupted time each day, students in these courses are able to explore topics in depth and make use of a wide range of learning activities. For example:

- Role-playing simulations that extend for multiple days. Campaigns and Elections

devotes 20 hours to a single simulation, On the Campaign Trail, that allows student teams to organize and manage competing campaigns. Students in International Politics spend several sessions on a diplomatic simulation of pre-World War I Europe. The International organizations course includes a United Nations Security Council role-playing simulation that involves responding to a contemporary crisis.

- Field trips to nearby and far-away places. Ethics and Public Policy students have routinely traveled to national and state capitals for periods of a few days to a week or more. Wilderness Politics takes students for an extended excursion into the Boundary Waters canoe area wilderness. And courses in comparative politics have been taught in China, Nicaragua, Brazil, India, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Bosnia, and Herzegovina.
- Reading or research days where no class is scheduled. Students have independent time to use resources at other institutions, conduct on-site research, or interview during the normal school day.
- Documentary and feature films. Films can be discussed the same day, or even the same morning, rather than be divided across multiple sessions.
- Internships for a block or longer. One Course At A Time makes it easy for students to schedule internships for credit in places like Washington, D.C. And because students can intern throughout the year, they have less competition for meaningful work, allowing better and more interesting work. As a result, graduates build worthwhile and influential relationships before they graduate.

The immersion experience enabled by the block plan enhances the benefits of Cornell’s small class sizes and liberal arts approach. By the end of day two, faculty and students have interacted together for eight hours, something that would take most of three weeks on a semester schedule.

Faculty Bios & Courses

CRAIG ALLIN

Professor of Politics

Teaches courses in American politics, Constitutional law, and public policy. His policy courses include Urban Politics, Environmental Politics, and Wilderness Politics; the latter taught at the Wilderness Field Station in northern Minnesota as part of the Cornell Wilderness Term. He is the editor or co-editor of seven reference volumes and author of “The Politics of Wilderness Preservation.” He serves as an advisor to pre-law, environmental studies, ethnic studies, and Pi Sigma Alpha. Ph.D. and M.A., Princeton University; B.A., Grinnell College.

HANS HASSELL

Assistant Professor of Politics

Teaches courses in American Politics. His primary interests are campaigns and elections, political parties, and Congress. His research looks at the role of political parties in congressional primary elections, and explores how the actions of candidates, parties, and interest groups affect the decisions of citizens to become involved in the political process. Ph.D., University of California, San Diego; B.A., Pomona College.

ROB SUTHERLAND

Professor of Politics

Teaches courses in political thought, including Foundations of the First Amendment, Ethics and Public Policy, and Revolutionary Political Thought. Professor Sutherland also advises the College Republicans. Ph.D. and M.A., Duke University; B.A., University of Texas, Austin.

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CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

The politics major provides a range of experiences in three subfields: political thought, international relations and comparative government, and American politics. Minors are available in each of these subfields. The faculty offer diverse perspectives and expertise, ranging from wilderness politics to global feminism, and American political ethics to Latin American issues.

SENIOR CAPSTONE

As the capstone for the major, students can enroll in POL 483 or, for qualified students, course credit for an independent project directed toward pursuit of departmental honors. In 483 each student will choose a topic within politics to explore, through group discussion and peer review, presentations, and a paper that critically reviews existing research to advance an argument.

Cornell students are also eligible for membership in the Pi Sigma Alpha national political science honor society.

ON-CAMPUS RESEARCH

Professor Hans Hassell recently worked with students on a research project on political campaigns. The research involved compiling a data set that allowed them to better study the dynamics of a political campaign, especially as the essential tasks of campaigning have moved online. They used that data to examine how campaign messages vary over the course of the campaign and in relationship to the competitive nature of the race. Hassell's team presented its findings at the Midwest Political Science Association conference.

INTERNSHIPS/FELLOWSHIPS

Politics students are encouraged to pursue internships as an integral part of their coursework. The Cornell Fellows program supports many such opportunities and is especially valuable to politics majors, as there are six Cornell Fellowships directly related to politics. Through the Cornell Fellows, top students routinely work for the office of Sen. Charles Grassley, Global Zero, the Civil Rights Commission, and a fellowship related to sustainable agriculture in India.

The politics department also maintains excellent relationships with two external programs: The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars and The Washington Internship Institute.

AFTER CORNELL

ALUMNI CAREERS

Constituent services representative, U.S. Senator Joni Ernst, Davenport, Iowa (Class of 2015)

Owner-operator, Onyx Process Services, Detroit, Michigan (Class of 2015)

AmeriCorps/VISTA volunteer, Iowa City, Iowa (Class of 2015)

Generation progress, Center for American Progress, Washington, D.C. (Class of 2015)

Developer, American Legislative Exchange Council, Arlington, Virginia (Class of 2015)

Volunteer coordinator, Minnesota Reading Corps, Minneapolis, Minnesota (Class of 2015)

Field organizer, NextGen Climate Action, Davenport, Iowa (Class of 2014)

Legislative assistant, Iowa State House of Representatives, Des Moines, Iowa (Class of 2014)

Digital public relations, K Global, Washington, D.C. (Class of 2014)

Senior research analyst, Lewin Group, Falls Church, Virginia (Class of 2013)

Field development manager, Autism Speaks, New York City, New York (Class of 2013)

Regional field director, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Chicago, Illinois (Class of 2013)

Development assistant, Environmental Law & Policy Center, Evanston, Illinois (Class of 2013)

Paralegal, Reed Smith LLP, Chicago, Illinois (Class of 2012)

Litigation assistant, Earthjustice, Washington, D.C. (Class of 2012)

Campaign manager, David Young for Colorado, Denver, Colorado (Class of 2012)

GRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED

J.D. student, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri (Class of 2015)

J.D. student, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (Class of 2015)

J.D. student, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan (Class of 2015)

Ph.D. student, international relations, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, U.K. (Class of 2014)

M.Phil. student, international relations, University of Oxford, Oxford, U.K. (Class of 2014)

J.D. student, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Class of 2014)

J.D. student, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa (Class of 2014)

J.D. student, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (Class of 2014)

J.D. student, Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia (Class of 2014)

APARNA THOMAS

Associate Professor of Politics and Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

Teaches courses in international relations, comparative government, and gender, sexuality and women's studies. She teaches advanced courses related to women in politics, strategies to alleviate poverty, and comparative health care systems. She currently serves as Cornell's faculty advisor to the India studies program sponsored by the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. She also leads a women in politics course in India every other year. Ph.D. and M.A., Western Michigan University; B.A., Hope College.

DAVID YAMANISHI

Associate Professor of Politics

Teaches courses in international relations and comparative politics. Within international relations he focuses on state power vis-à-vis other states, the international system of states, and international political economy. His comparative politics courses deal with the themes of democratization, development, and human rights both globally and with special emphasis on Latin America and Europe. Ph.D., C.Phil, and M.A., University of California, Los Angeles; B.A., Michigan State University.