POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, M.A.

The St. Louis campus is no longer accepting applications for this program. The M.A. in Madrid is still accepting applications.

Saint Louis University's Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Affairs program allows academically talented students to advance their knowledge and analytical skills by focusing on an interdisciplinary problem-oriented area within political science.

SLU's M.A. in political science and public affairs is open to individuals who have earned a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in political science or a related social science discipline from an accredited university and demonstrate outstanding potential.

Curriculum Overview

The M.A. in political science and public affairs requires 30 credits.

M.A. students in St. Louis may choose one of four concentration areas—American politics, international affairs, public policy and administration, or political thought. All M.A. students at Saint Louis University-Madrid (https://www.slu.edu/madrid/) complete a concentration in international relations and crisis.

Students enrolled at either St. Louis or Madrid may take elective courses at the other location.

American Politics Concentration

This concentration provides a substantive grounding in the academic study of American politics, strong methodological skills, and options to focus on particular areas of interest, such as public law. This concentration is appropriate for students with a variety of interests and goals, including additional graduate study in political science and related fields as well as law school.

Political Thought Concentration

This concentration provides substantive grounding in the history of Western political thought, and the opportunity to explore issues in contemporary political theory and philosophy.

Public Policy and Administration Concentration

This concentration is designed for students interested in a practical understanding of how political and social policies are developed and administered. Like a Master of Public Administration, it prepares students to work in local and national government, nonprofits, and the private sector.

International Affairs Concentration

This concentration provides theoretical and substantive grounding in international relations and comparative politics. Topics covered include the process of democratization, international security, warfare, and economic development.

International Relations and Crisis Concentration (SLU-Madrid)

This concentration familiarizes students with the key theoretical, political, and social dimensions of the global governance of insecurity, and the emergence, management and consequences of crises today.

Careers

An M.A. in political science and public affairs prepares students for careers in government, foreign service, national or international business, nonprofit organizations and NGOs, and future graduate study. Possible careers include campaign aide, diplomat, nonprofit manager, and labor relations specialist. Students seeking admission to a Ph.D. program may also bolster their record with an M.A. from Saint Louis University.

Admission Requirements

A bachelor's degree with at least 18 credits of undergraduate courses in political science or a related social science field is strongly encouraged.

Successful applicants usually possess a GPA of 3.40 (overall and in political science courses) and, for international students whose bachelor's education was not taught in English, TOEFL or similar scores which indicate advanced level English language abilities.

Applicants are not required to submit GRE scores but may do so if they wish to have them considered as part of their application.

Application Requirements

- Online application: https://gradapply.slu.edu/apply/
- Two letters of recommendation written by people who can speak to your academic and/or professional skills. These letters should come from someone in a supervisory position, for example a professor, academic advisor, or workplace supervisor.
- Transcript(s). Provisional offers of acceptance can be made based on unofficial transcripts. Admitted students will need to submit an official transcript upon enrollment.
- A statement of purpose in which you detail why you wish to pursue a master's degree, how your background prepares you for this academic program, and how you plan to use the skills or knowledge you learn in the program to achieve your future goals. The total statement of purpose should not exceed 4 double-spaced pages and may be shorter.
- A writing sample which demonstrates your academic writing abilities. This may be a term paper you wrote for a course, an honors thesis or other independent research, or a policy brief. If you do not have a suitable writing sample, please choose a policy area or research topic in which you are interested and write a research memo in which you introduce the topic, identify a compelling research question or questions, explain how you might go about conducting research on the topic, and identify implications of studying this topic. Writing samples should be at least 5 double-spaced pages and may be longer.
- Curriculum vitae or résumé

Requirements for International Students

All Saint Louis University admission policies and requirements for domestic students apply to international students. International students applying to SLU must also meet the following additional requirements:

- Demonstrate English language proficiency (https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/office-admission/undergraduate/english-language-proficiency/)
- Academic records must include an English translation. Unofficial copies may be accepted in some cases for initial admission review, however official copies must be received prior to enrollment. Course-by-course transcript evaluations are accepted.

Students must submit financial documents to be issued an I-20 for their F-1 visa application. Proof of financial support must include:

- A letter of financial support from the person(s) or sponsoring agency funding the student's time at Saint Louis University
- A letter from the sponsor's bank verifying that the funds are available and will be so for the duration of the student's study at the University

Review Process

A committee of political science department faculty members reviews applications. **Complete applications received by March 1 (for enrollment beginning in August) or November 1 (for enrollment beginning in January) will receive full consideration.** We will continue reviewing applications after these deadlines if space allows. If applying after the priority deadline, you are welcome to contact the graduate program coordinator to see whether applications are still being considered.

Tuition

Tuition	Cost Per Credit
Graduate Tuition	$1,450

Additional charges may apply. Other resources are listed below:

Information on Tuition and Fees (https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition/)

Miscellaneous Fees (https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/fees/)

Information on Summer Tuition (https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition-summer-current/)

Scholarships, Assistantships and Financial Aid

The Department of Political Science offers partial funding in the form of scholarships that cover a percentage of tuition charges in the semester(s) awarded. Offers are typically renewable for a second year for students who remain in good academic standing, as defined in the program handbook.

The department awards scholarships based on merit and/or need. New applicants to the program who wish to be considered for funding should submit their application for admission by the listed priority deadline. There is no separate process for applying for funding. Funding decisions will be made at the same time as admissions decisions, and it is not possible to guarantee funding before an offer of admission has been made.

The University has additional sources of funding for graduate students. Information on these sources, as well as instructions for applying, is available from the Office of Graduate Education (https://www.slu.edu/academics/graduate/graduate-scholarships-fellowships-assistantships-awards.php).

Information on need-based financial aid is available from the Office of Student Financial Services (https://www.slu.edu/financial-aid/).

Learning Outcomes

1. Graduates will be able to explain how political systems operate within the context of their chosen M.A. concentrations.
2. Graduates will be able to critique competing theoretical explanations and produce a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature in their chosen field of study.
3. Graduates will be able to design original research and seminar projects that investigate political processes with appropriate methodologies and contribute to ongoing scholarly debates.
4. Graduates will be able to explain the results of their research in public forums and justify their methodological choices.
5. Graduates will be able to analyze the values that inform political institutions, behavior and policies.
6. Graduates will be able to demonstrate honest and ethical research practices.

Requirements

Students on SLU's St. Louis campus will choose one of four formal concentrations. All students on SLU's Madrid campus (http://www.slu.edu/madrid/) complete the concentration in international relations and crisis.

All students will complete a total of 30 credits for the M.A. degree. All students are required to pass a field exam on their formal concentration or individual topic of interest administered at the beginning of the student's final semester of coursework.

Students may complete an internship for up to six credits as part of the M.A. in political science and public affairs. Students will work under the direction of a preceptor at the internship location and a faculty member in the department. The internship should involve 200 hours of work central to the organization students are working with, and students will also need to write a paper related to the work in order to receive course credit. Students may substitute up to 3 hours of POLS 5910 (https://catalog.slu.edu/search/?P=POLS%205910) Graduate Internship (1-6 cr) for a concentration attributed course, and an additional 3 hours of POLS 5910 (https://catalog.slu.edu/search/?P=POLS%205910) Graduate Internship (1-6 cr) for elective courses.

No more than 12 credits of the M.A. may be taken outside political science, and no more than 6 credits may be independent study classes or internships. Some classes have prerequisites. Depending on their undergraduate preparation, students may be required to take specific undergraduate classes prior to enrolling in post-baccalaureate classes.

Non-Course Requirements

- Students who choose to write master's theses will work closely with a faculty director and a committee of two other faculty members chosen with the director's guidance. The M.A. thesis is a two-semester project. Students will complete a thesis proposal in the first semester and the thesis itself during the second semester. Students who are not able to defend their proposal successfully during the first semester will not be allowed to continue to the second semester of thesis work.
- All students in the political science M.A. program must take and pass a field exam during their last semester of coursework. All students must pass the written portion of the exam. An additional oral exam will be required at the discretion of the exam committee.

Continuation Standards

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 in all graduate/professional courses.

Individualized Concentration in Political Science and Public Affairs

Students are encouraged to explore courses outside the department related to their field of study, for example, courses in women's and gender studies, geographic information systems, and regional studies courses offered by the Department of Linguistics, Literatures, and Cultures.

All students are required to select a concentration. Suppose a student wishes to pursue a topic that is not covered by one of the formal concentrations. In that case, they may propose an individualized course of study that can be formalized through a "contract" concentration. All contract concentrations must be approved in advance by the student's advisor and the graduate program coordinator. Students wishing to consider a contract concentration should work with their advisor and/or the program coordinator as early as possible. All contract concentrations cover 30 credit hours and must include the following components:

1. A foundational course or courses on the content of the student's topic of interest
2. A foundational course on methods of inquiry with the Graduate Methods attribute (https://catalog.slu.edu/previous-catalogs/2025-2026/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/political-science/political-science-ma/#methods)
3. A course with the Graduate Thought Foundations attribute (https://catalog.slu.edu/previous-catalogs/2025-2026/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/political-science/political-science-ma/#thought)
4. A range of elective courses (https://catalog.slu.edu/previous-catalogs/2025-2026/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/political-science/political-science-ma/#elective) constituted as a coherent domain of study

American Politics Concentration

Code	Title	Credits
American Politics Foundation attributed course (p.)		3
American Politics attributed courses (p.)		9
POLS 5020	Advanced Topics in Research Methods	3
POLS 5750	American Political Thought: Meanings of Citizenship	3
POLS 5970	Research Topics in Political Science	3
Skills attributed course (p.)		3
Political Science Elective Courses (p.)		6
Six credits may be an internship or MA thesis *		
Total Credits		**30**

* Students who conduct a Thesis (6 credits of POLS 5990 Thesis Research (3 cr)) will use 3 credits of Thesis to replace the POLS 5970 Research Topics in Political Science (1-3 cr) requirement.

Public Policy and Administration Concentration

Code	Title	Credits
Policy Foundation attributed course (p.)		3
Policy Elective attributed course (p.)		9
POLS 5020	Advanced Topics in Research Methods (linkurl^#skills^Skills attributed course)	3
Skills attributed course (p.)		3
POLS 5970	Research Topics in Political Science	3
Political Thought Foundation course (p.)		3
Political Science Electives (p.)		6
Six credits may be an internship or M.A. thesis *		
Total Credits		**30**

* Students who conduct a Thesis (6 credits of POLS 5990 Thesis Research (3 cr)) will use 3 credits of Thesis to replace the POLS 5970 Research Topics in Political Science (1-3 cr) requirement.

Political Thought Concentration

Code	Title	Credits
Thought Foundation attributed courses (p.)		6
Thought Elective attributed courses (p.)		6
POLS 5020	Advanced Topics in Research Methods	3
Skills attributed course (p.)		3
POLS 5970	Research Topics in Political Science	3
Political Science Elective Courses (p.)		9
Six credits may be an internship or M.A. Thesis *		
Total Credits		**30**

* Students who conduct a Thesis (6 credits of POLS 5990 Thesis Research (3 cr)) will use 3 credits of Thesis to replace the POLS 5970 Research Topics in Political Science (1-3 cr) requirement.

International Affairs Concentration

Code	Title	Credits
International Relations Classes (p.)		6
Comparative Politics Classes (p.)		6
POLS 5020	Advanced Topics in Research Methods	3
Skills attributed course (p.)		3
POLS 5970	Research Topics in Political Science	3
Political Thought Foundation (p.)		3
Political Science Electives (p.)		6
Six credits may be an internship or M.A. thesis *		
Total Credits		**30**

† POLS 5840 Global Health Politics & Policy (3-6 cr) can count as a Comparative Politics course or an International Relations course, but it cannot count as both.

* Students who conduct a Thesis (6 credits of POLS 5990 Thesis Research (3 cr)) will use 3 credits of Thesis to replace the POLS 5970 Research Topics in Political Science (1-3 cr) requirement.

International Relations and Crisis Concentration (SLU-Madrid)

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
POLS 5590	Crisis of Leadership †	3
POLS 5610	International Relations: Theory & Practice †	3

POLS 5630	The European Union: Politics and Political Economy †	3
POLS 5662	International Contemporary Challenges †	3
POLS 5663	Key Contemporary Crises †	3
POLS 5910	Graduate Internship *	3
Students must complete a 3 credit graduate internship with a national or international, governmental or non-governmental body.		
Research Methods		
POLS 5020	Advanced Topics in Research Methods *	3
Political Science Electives		**9**
Select 9 credits		
POLS 5100	Seminar in American Politics *	
POLS 5320	Environmental Politics and Policy-Making *	
POLS 5510	Democratization ‡	
POLS 5520	Political Change ‡	
POLS 5530	Authoritarian Politics: Rigging Elections and Clinging to Power ‡	
POLS 5550	Politics of Economic Development *	
POLS 5650	War, Peace, and Politics ‡	
POLS 5661	Shifting Trends in Regional and Interregional Politics †	
POLS 5664	International Political Economy in Times of Crisis †	
POLS 5665	Historical Perspectives on Crisis: The 30 Years' European Crisis †	
POLS 5690	Theories of World Politics ‡	
POLS 5730	Contemporary Political Ideologies *	
POLS 5840	Global Health Politics & Policy ‡	
POLS 5990	Thesis Research *	
For students conducting a Thesis, 6 credits are required.		
Total Credits		**30**

† Madrid campus only
‡ St. Louis campus only
* Offered on both St. Louis and Madrid campuses

Roadmap

This roadmap is just one example of a semester-by-semester plan of study for this program. There are other plans students can and do take. The plan of study for each particular student is established in consultation with each student's academic advisor; *this roadmap does not replace academic advising appointments.*

Roadmap notes:

- This Roadmap assumes full-time enrollment unless otherwise noted.
- Courses/Milestones marked with an "!" are critical and must be completed in the semester listed in the Roadmap to ensure a timely graduation.
- Course availability and sequencing are subject to change.

Course	Title	Credits
Year One		
Fall		
Concentration course		3
POLS 5020	Advanced Topics in Research Methods (Methods Requirements)	3
	Credits	**6**
Spring		
Concentration course		3
Skills attributed course		3
Elective		3
	Credits	**9**
Year Two		
Fall		
Concentration course		3
Thought Foundations attributed course (or elective, if Political Thought concentration)		3
POLS 5970	Research Topics in Political Science (independent research paper)	3
	Credits	**9**
Spring		
Concentration course		3
Elective		3
Comprehensive Exam		
	Credits	**6**
	Total Credits	**30**

Madrid

The Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Affairs provides you with an overview of the key shifts in international politics and the international system today and focuses on lines of fracture and transformation.

The world of international politics, shaped by questions of war and peace, social movements and inter-state relations, emerging insecurities and vulnerabilities, global re-orderings and crises of global leadership has seen the number, intensity and impact of crises, emergencies and conflicts increase in recent years. We could say that the international system as a whole is undergoing a profound crisis.

To understand this period of transition and radical re-orientations, Saint Louis University's Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Affairs, with a concentration in International Relations and Crisis, will familiarize you with the key theoretical, political and social dimensions of the global governance of insecurity and the emergence, management and consequences of crises today.

Political Science and Public Affairs, M.A. Handbook (https://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics/docs/polsci-ma-handbook.pdf)

For more information about the M.A. in Political Science and Public Affairs contact graduate-admissions-madrid@slu.edu (graduate-admissions-madrid@slu.edu?subject=Contact%20the%20Office%20of%20Admissions)

Curriculum Overview

The M.A. in Political Science and Public Affairs, with a concentration in International Relations and Crisis, is a 30-credit program. These are divided into 18 credits of required courses, three credits of internship and nine credits of elective courses. Students have the option of writing a three-credit M.A. thesis.

In the course of this program, you will engage a variety of genres of crisis, each with its distinct forms of manifestation, from systemic crises and global re-orderings to institutional crises of effectiveness, crises of global economic governance, crises of global leadership, political crises of representation, crises of the nation-state, humanitarian and environmental crises, and new wars.

Crises are turbulent and uncertain times, but they also constitute an opening, a re-orientation, and provide the terrain on which progressive social forces can emerge and shape events. The program will provide you with the key concepts, methods and critical thinking skills to diagnose, analyze and work towards resolving many of these current and future challenges.

This program will give you the opportunity to contextualize key contemporary crises, understand their complex emergence and manifestation, and diagnose their wide-ranging consequences. The training will focus on providing you with the necessary skills both for scenario-building and complex analysis and for critical leadership, aiming to produce graduates able to imagine and shape a more hopeful future for international politics.

This program is designed for those holding a B.A. in Political Science/International Relations, or a related field, particularly those interested in developing a deeper understanding of key contemporary crises, their complex causality and manifestation, and developing resourceful and imaginative solutions.

Faculty

The faculty at Saint Louis University-Madrid are experts in their respective fields. They are internationally recognized teachers, researchers and mentors. Learn about our faculty members (https://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics/faculty/faculty-profiles.php), including their education, credentials, experience and contact information.

Internships and Careers

Students must complete a three-credit graduate internship course with a national or international, governmental or non-governmental body, such as the *Elcano Institute*, the American Embassy in Spain, *Rescate Internacional*, *Acción Contra el Hambre*, the European Parliament or *El País* newspaper. This experience will give you valuable professional experience and the necessary contacts to continue in your chosen career field.

The combination of theory, practical insights and analytical skills will prepare you for work in public, civil society or private organizations. After completing the M.A. in Political Science and Public Affairs, you will be able to embark on one of the following career tracks:

- The diplomatic service.
- European institutions and international organizations.
- National and international NGOs and civil society organizations.
- Research in academia (Ph.D. programs in political science) and think-tanks.

Admission Requirements

Applicants should hold a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science/International Relations, or a related field, with an excellent academic record.

The application package must include:

- Online application form. (https://gradapply.slu.edu/apply/)
- Original academic transcripts.
- Three letters of recommendation from people familiar with your academic and professional experience, such as from a former university professor, advisor or former employer.
- Statement of purpose of 500 words that addresses your intellectual and professional goals.
- A résumé/CV.
- Writing sample of eight to 10 pages with citations and references. You may use a good paper from an undergraduate course.

SLU-Madrid is proud to be a test-optional institution, though you may choose to also submit scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Miller Analogies Test (MAT).

Upload all application materials to the online application system according to the instructions in the online application form. Send transcripts via email to graduate-admissions-madrid@slu.edu.

Deadlines

The deadlines below reflect a complete application in which all supporting documentation has been received.

Full program applicants: The M.A. in Political Science and Public Affairs starts in the fall and runs over four terms (Fall, Spring, Summer I and Summer II). Deadline: rolling admissions until May 1; deadline for assistantship and scholarship applications is April 15.

Once your application is complete, a committee of faculty members will review it for evidence of sufficient preparation for advanced study in political science/international relations and the likelihood of academic success. One member of the committee will conduct a Zoom interview to assess your suitability for the program.

If you are a non-European Union student, note that acquiring a student visa can take several months, and the process can begin only after you have been admitted and have confirmed your admission. We urge you to research the student visa process early, and our Visas for Spain (https://www.slu.edu/madrid/admissions/information-for-admitted-students/visas.php) page is a good place to start.

Tuition and Fees

SLU-Madrid is committed to providing a quality Jesuit education at an affordable price. Tuition rates at the Madrid campus are approximately 40% lower than at comparable private universities in the U.S.

If you have questions or would like to speak with a financial aid officer, email us at financialaid-madrid@slu.edu.

- Tuition and Fees (https://www.slu.edu/madrid/admissions/tuition-fees.php)
- Scholarships and Financial Aid (https://www.slu.edu/madrid/admissions/scholarships-financial-aid.php)

Contact Us

For additional information, please contact pols-admin@slu.edu or call 314-977-3149 and ask to be directed to the graduate program coordinator.