The proposition that politics is the “comprehensive science,” as claimed by Aristotle, provokes debate at Bowdoin as elsewhere. Some argue that it is not a science; others that it is not comprehensive. Yet the bases for the claims and counterclaims both rest on the pervasiveness of matters political throughout society; on the perennial quest of human beings for the discovery and application of a common set of purposes regarding their common life; and on the multiplicity of skills needed to explore and understand such matters. Generations of students have found the study of politics a fascinating endeavor for these very reasons.

Courses within Bowdoin’s Department of Government and Legal Studies are divided into four fields: American Government, Comparative Politics, Political Theory, and International Relations. Courses are further grouped within introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels.

First-year students interested in government choose among a wide range of seminars (limited to sixteen students) and introductory lecture courses (limited to fifty students). Each is designed to provide an introduction to one of the major disciplinary subfields. In the seminars, students are encouraged to analyze and discuss important political concepts while developing research and writing skills. Recent first-year seminars have considered such topics as The Pursuit of Peace; Fundamental Questions: Exercises in Political Theory; Questioning the Modern; East Asian Politics; and The Korean War.

Intermediate-level courses are designed to introduce students to or extend their knowledge of a particular aspect of government and legal studies. Examples of intermediate courses include The American Presidency, The Politics of the European Union, Classical Political Philosophy, Japanese Politics and Society, and Environmental Policy and Politics.

Advanced courses give seniors and qualified juniors with appropriate backgrounds the opportunity for in-depth exploration of topics within their fields of concentration. This can occur in the context of a seminar (limited to fifteen students), through independent study with a member of the department, or through the honors program.

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Major and Minor Programs

In their junior and senior years, students going on in government normally pursue either a nine-course major or a five-course minor program. Majors are required to complete a four-course concentration in one of the department’s subfields, as well as to take at least one course in each of the other three subfields. Courses for the major may include a first-year seminar and two introductory courses and must include at least one advanced-level course. Many government students elect to spend one or two terms in study-away programs either abroad or in the United States, and are able to transfer up to two credits applicable to their government major.

Study Away

The Washington Semester Program, based at American University in Washington, D.C., offers students an ideal opportunity to pursue their studies at the seat of our government. The program offers courses on a variety of topics, including American politics (national government and public law), economic policy, foreign policy, gender and politics, international environment and development, justice, and peace and conflict resolution. Courses are taught by American University faculty and often include as guest speakers members of Congress, Supreme Court justices, ambassadors, business leaders, top journalists, and domestic and international policy makers.

Government students may also choose from among several study-away programs outside the United States. In recent years, students have participated in programs at the London School of Economics and the University of Cape Town, in South Africa.

Advanced Study and Honors

Government majors are expected not just to develop a broad understanding of the field, but also to reach a level of intellectual depth and sophistication in their particular area of concentration that permits them to do substantial advanced research. Every government and legal studies major is required to complete an advanced seminar or to produce a substantial independent study project under the direction of a member of the faculty. Many top students will go on to complete a two-term honors project, each overseen by an advisory committee of three members of the department.

Students seeking to graduate with honors in government should contact the honors director for specific information. They must prepare an honors paper, which is normally the product of two semesters of independent study work, and have that paper approved by the department. A
committee of faculty members works closely with students to help them choose topics and obtain necessary research materials. Honors candidates are expected to defend their theses orally in the spring.

Faculty

Shelley M. Deane, assistant professor of government, B.S. (Manchester), M.A. (Warwick), Ph.D. (London School of Economics), specializes in the Middle East, conflict resolution, and security issues.

Paul N. Franco, professor of government, B.A. (Colorado College), M.Sc. (London School of Economics), Ph.D. (Chicago), teaches the history of political philosophy and contemporary political theory.

Michael M. Franz, assistant professor of government, B.A. (Fairfield), M.A., Ph.D. (Wisconsin–Madison), teaches courses in citizenship and representation in American politics and political behavior.


Laura Henry, assistant professor of government, B.A. (Wellesley), M.A., Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), teaches Western and Eastern European politics, comparative politics, and social movements.

DeWitt John, Thomas F. Shannon Director of Environmental Studies and senior lecturer in government and environmental studies, B.A. (Harvard), M.A., Ph.D. (Chicago), teaches courses in environmental policy and directs Bowdoin's Environmental Studies Program.


Richard E. Morgan, William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Constitutional and International Law and Government, B.A. (Bowdoin), M.A., Ph.D. (Columbia), teaches constitutional law and political science, with a specialization in the history, law, and politics of the First Amendment.


Jean Yarbrough, Gary M. Pendy Sr. Professor of Social Sciences, B.A. (Cedar Crest), M.A., Ph.D. (New School for Social Research), teaches political philosophy and American political thought. Professor Yarbrough is chair of the department.

After Bowdoin

The study of politics in the Department of Government and Legal Studies has traditionally provided a liberal arts background in government for careers in teaching, public service, journalism, business, and law.

Among graduates of the department, some go on to law school each year, or to graduate schools of business administration. Others choose graduate school in political science for a career in college teaching or government consulting and research. Some go on to do graduate work in schools of international relations, area studies, and diplomacy for careers in journalism, international business, or the foreign service. Others pursue opportunities for government service, from the Peace Corps or Vista to legislative assistant or to electoral politics, at the local, state, or national levels.

For more information about Bowdoin, please write or call Dean of Admissions
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Brunswick, ME 04011-8441
207-725-3100
www.bowdoin.edu
admissions@bowdoin.edu

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Honors Projects

Recent honors theses in government and legal studies include:

- Glad Tidings of a Crisis without Equal on Earth: An Interpretation of Nietzsche's Theory of Morality
- The Paradox of Peaceful Conquest: Enforcement of European Union Privatization and Administrative Reform Interests during Its Fifth Enlargement
- Balancing Modernization and Tradition in the United Kingdom: Constitutional Reform and the Threat to Parliamentary Sovereignty
- Against the Calm and Tideless Sea: The Political Ideas of Sir Isaiah Berlin
- Rally Round the Constitution: Designing a Thesis in Divided Societies
- Nostalgia for Socialism in Central and Eastern Europe: A Comparison of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia
- Displaced Lives: The Domestic and International Politics of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons
- Islam, Modernization, and the Role of the Political Elite: Dubai's New Model of Rentierism
- The Philosopher-King Remembered: Plato and Nietzsche on Political Leadership
- No-Good NGOs? The Role of NGOs in Transitional Divided Societies
- Anti-terrorism Legislation in the U.S., U.K., and Japan
- A Lack of Plasticity: Devising a More Progressive Federal Stem Cell Policy
- A Constitutional Guardian of Personal Liberty: The History and Application of Substantive Due Process

For more information, visit http://www.bowdoin.edu/government/