

# Political studies

**Who has political power and why? What is globalisation? Why is European integration such a hot potato for British governments?**

Politics is about how people live together and make decisions, and how people and states use their power.

## Why study political studies?

Politics is a fascinating subject to study at degree level. It's exciting because new technology brings major political developments – such as the Arab Spring movement - to our TVs and computers in a flash. Studying politics is also challenging because it encourages you to develop your own ideas and debating skills. This will be a great asset in any career you choose. A degree in politics will help you spot opportunities and take full advantage of them.

## What will I study at university?

There are now over 18,000 students of politics enrolled on 1,650 courses across the UK. Many combine politics with other subjects such as:

- History
- Economics
- Sociology
- Geography
- Philosophy
- Business studies
- Communication and media studies.

Some politics degrees are more specialised, such as:

- International Relations - looking at relationships between states, the impact of globalisation, and the role of international institutions
- Security Studies - which has become more important with the rise of global terrorism and threats to the environment
- Comparative Politics - investigating how and explaining why national politics vary
- Public Administration - looking at public services, political institutions, decision-making and power structures.

**“Politics is who gets what, when, and how.”**

Harold Lasswell

Political Scientist

The first year at university is intended as a broad introduction to the subject, with more advanced modules in the second and third years. Important modules may include:

- Political Theory - looking at the major ideas and philosophies which have influenced the way societies are organized
- Political Institutions - studying political systems in different countries. It analyses the way governments and legal systems are structured and compares how they make decisions and enforce laws
- International Politics - looking at dealing with controversial issues such as migration, human rights, and global warming, and how countries interact with one another.



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### What skills will I gain?

Political studies is a very flexible degree, which will prepare you for lots of different jobs. The most important skills you will develop include:

- Analysis skills – which help you understand and explain complex problems and make sensible decisions
- Research techniques – searching methodically for answers to questions
- Communications skills – understanding how people interact and knowing how to argue persuasively
- IT – working confidently with statistical data.

### Work experience and placements

Several politics departments offer placements in Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the European Parliament, pressure groups and local government. This is a great opportunity to gain direct experience of working in a political environment. You'll be able to test your theoretical knowledge of politics and boost your employability at the same time.



### What do graduates say?

“Politics gave me not just an understanding of political institutions and processes relevant to everyday life...but also provided me with the critical tools needed to devise the ideas and strategies which are a key part of successful public and media relations”.

Chris Calland, Senior Account Manager, PLMR

### After my degree... what next?

You will have acquired a good understanding of politics on a local, national and international level as well as touching on related topics such as economics, history and law. You will also have gained a number of transferable skills, including being able to debate and examine issues from all standpoints, an ability to identify, analyse and find solutions to problems and to make reasoned arguments. You will have gained excellent communication skills.

Some options you could think about:

- Media and publishing – a politics degree can provide skills for working in the national and local press, broadcasting, and publishing
- Business – data analysis and communication skills are highly regarded employers
- Pressure groups - think-tanks and trade unions, who try to shape public policy
- Political consultancy – companies and charities employ parliamentary officers to keep them up to date with political thinking
- The Civil Service Fast Stream is a programme for graduates to become the future leaders of the Civil Service. It is consistently ranked highly among graduate employers
- Politics – graduates can work as researchers for MPs to prepare for a political career.

# SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR SCHOOLS

## Further resources

- **The Political Studies Association** has a gateway to politics-related resources on the Internet, including links to politics departments, journals, constitutions, election results, data archives, libraries, media and other resources. [www.psa.ac.uk](http://www.psa.ac.uk)
- **Demos** is a think-tank focused on power and politics. Its approach challenges the traditional, 'ivory tower' model of policymaking by giving a voice to people and communities. Key research programmes focus on Family and Society, Violence and Extremism, Citizens and Public Service and Welfare. Demos also recruit interns at a variety of career stages, including during gap years or after university. [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk)
- **The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)** is an independent think-tank engaged in cutting edge defence and security research. RUSI brings to the fore vital policy issues to both domestic and global audiences, with a growing reputation as a 'thought-leader institute'. [www.rusi.org](http://www.rusi.org)
- **The British International Studies Association** is an independent academic organisation which promotes the study of International Relations and related subjects through teaching, research and the facilitation of contact between scholars. It is the professional organisation for academic and practitioners of International Relations in the United Kingdom and beyond. Their website has information about courses and employability. [www.bisa.ac.uk](http://www.bisa.ac.uk)
- **Chatham House**, home of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, is a world-leading source of independent analysis, informed debate and influential ideas on how to build a prosperous and secure world for all. The institute produces independent analysis, offering ideas to decision-makers and engaging government, the private sector and members of society in debates and discussions. [www.chathamhouse.org](http://www.chathamhouse.org)

