

# Why Politics?

## What Will I Study?

Politics and international relations deal with the conflicts, potential for cooperation, and exercise of power that arise when people have to live together both within and across societies. Politics is inescapable, since we all have to live with other people to some extent, which is why Aristotle claimed over two thousand years ago that politics was the most valuable science and pursued the most important goals. For Ireland in the 21st century – by some measurements the most globalised country on earth – political questions on both national and international levels are more pressing than ever before.

In studying politics and international relations, we try to understand what happens, to figure out what should happen, and to determine how this might be realised. Much of political study involves seeking to understand national and international political institutions, systems and forces – parliaments, presidents and power, votes, vetoes and violence – but it also seeks to explain the changes that occur in these and to articulate what further possibilities for change exist. But politics equally involves what is called political theory, examining what institutions, options and lives we ought to have: what justice demands, what freedom requires, what democracy could be. This is equally true on the international scale – we can explain war, trade and global poverty, discuss the existing mechanisms for coping with these issues and examine what moral demands these facts place on individual nations and individual human beings.

## Why UCD?

University College Dublin's School of Politics and International Relations is the largest and most diverse in the state and combines a variety of approaches to all political matters with special expertise in particular areas. Such areas of particular expertise include: European studies, development studies, comparative politics, Irish politics, political theory, international relations and British-Irish studies.

Our school has a strongly international group of students and staff, and our graduates are found all over the world, in governments, universities and other organizations. In Ireland and the EU, our graduates are found at the highest levels of government and are equally prominent in the media, civil service and business sectors.

The study of politics informs you about the world around you, teaches you to analyse and evaluate that information and trains you to present that information in a compelling and useful way. These skills have meant that our graduates are always in high demand.

*UCD's School of Politics and International Relations is the largest and most diverse in the state and combines a variety of approaches to all political matters.*





*If you have a general interest in current affairs, and enjoy reading, essay writing and discussion, Politics may suit you very well.*

## Mapping Your Degree

If you have a general interest in current affairs, and enjoy reading, essay writing and discussion, Politics may suit you very well. The undergraduate degree module in Politics can be taken as part of a BA or a B SocSc, as a major with a minor subject, as a joint major with another subject, or as a minor. It usually takes three years. It is also possible for students, after their second year, to spend a year at another European university through the Socrates exchange scheme. When these students return to UCD and have completed their final year, they are awarded a BA (International) degree. Politics is also available as part of the BCL (Law with Politics).

## Popular Subject Combinations

- Politics and Economics
- Politics and History
- Politics and Sociology
- Politics and Philosophy
- Politics and Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish)



## Key Skills Learned

- Critical thinking
- Evaluation of evidence (written, material)
- Analytical skills
- Research ability
- Time management skills
- Expression (oral, written)
- Intellectual independence

## First Year Modules

Level One Politics modules introduce students to the central areas of politics, giving them a solid foundation on which to develop their understanding of the contemporary world. Those students who continue to levels 2 and 3 in Politics will be able to deepen their understanding and to pursue the areas of politics and international relations that interest them most.

Students who pre-select Politics & International Relations as one of the subjects will be guaranteed places in minimum of two of the following four modules.

- **Introduction to the Irish Political System**
- **Political Theory: Models of Democracy**
- **The Democratic Management of Ethnic Conflict**
- **Introduction to International Politics**

Completion of two Level One Politics modules is a basic requirement before progression to a Politics Major. Students will be able to take more than two modules subject to availability of places.

The object of the foundation programme is to introduce students to the main features of politics, and especially of democratic government, in their practical and theoretical aspects. Students attend a combination of lectures and tutorials, and their final assessment is based on various forms of continuous assessment through tutorials, including attendance, participation, exercises and a final examination.

Lively and informed discussions are at the heart of learning in politics; to enjoy and succeed in Politics, students are expected to prepare to be actively engaged in tutorials, as well as regularly attending lectures, and completing the exercises and essays set in tutorials.

Lively and informed discussions are at the heart of learning in politics.



## Module Outlines

### Introduction to the Irish Political System

— Professor John Coakley, Professor Richard Sinnott

The objective of this module is to introduce students to the operation of the Irish political system. The module examines the historical, constitutional, social and political context of Irish politics. It goes on to deal with the ground rules within which Irish elections take place, the evolution of the Irish party system, patterns of voting behaviour and the conduct and outcomes of elections and referendums. The final part of the module considers the functioning of the political institutions that emerge from the electoral process: the Dáil, the Seanad, the government and major offices such as those of President and Taoiseach. Other important forums for political activity—including local government and the relationship with Northern Ireland and Great Britain—are also considered.

TEXT: J. Coakley and M. Gallagher (eds) Politics in the Republic of Ireland (4th edition)

### Political Theory: Models of Democracy

— Dr Iseult Honohan, Dr Graham Finlay

This module provides an introduction to political thought, focusing on changing concepts and models of democracy, particularly through the thought of Aristotle, Mill and Marx. Four questions recur throughout the module: What values should be embodied in political life - freedom, equality, community? How much public participation can or should there be? Does democracy need particular social conditions? Does 'human nature' determine what is politically possible?

TEXTS: Aristotle, Politics; J.S. Mill, On Liberty and Other Essays; Marx, Later Political Writings (T. Carver, ed)

### The Democratic Management of Ethnic Conflict

— Professor David Farrell, Professor Jennifer Todd

Ethnic conflict is a searing problem that cannot be ignored. This course examines its causes, varying nature, and attempts at finding solutions. We begin with an examination of the main causes of ethnic conflict, with particular attention to nation-state formation and the politics of post-colonialism. We then explore a variety of forms of ethnic conflict – with examples from Northern Ireland to Palestine to Macedonia and from South Africa to the Basque Country to Quebec. We examine the ways in which different democratic forms can exacerbate or ameliorate conflict, and the various levels of conflict

resolution from the design of democratic institutions to the role of international NGOs (e.g. in helping develop political parties and observing elections). Themes include: plural and divided societies, conflict and violence, democratic breakdown, institutional design, civil society, lesson learning.

TEXT: To be confirmed.

### Introduction to International Politics

— Dr Tobias Theiler, Professor Daniel Thomas

This module offers an introduction to the main issues in contemporary international politics as well as to the development and workings of the European Union. It first looks at the development of the modern international system, focusing especially on the post-Cold War era. It then examines a range of substantive issues that occupy students of contemporary international politics: war and other forms of inter-state conflict, global trade and communication, migration, economic inequality, global environmental issues, terrorism, human rights, and the role of multinational corporations and transnational pressure groups. The final part of the module turns to the European Union. It provides an understanding of EU decision-making and of key developments in EU history, and examines the implications of EU membership for national sovereignty.

TEXT: To be confirmed

### Option/Elective Module

The following module is suitable for Politics students who wish to deepen their studies as well as for students in all other programmes as electives:

### Issues in World Development — Dr Andy Storey

This module will introduce students to some of the key current debates about global poverty. Why are some countries poor, and what policies might help alleviate that poverty? Specific issues to be addressed include: relations between rich and poor countries; international trade; foreign direct investment and the role of multinational corporations; foreign aid; migration from poor to rich countries; and the relationship between violent conflict and development. TEXT: Todaro, M. Economic Development

# The BCL Law with Politics Degree Course

The BCL (Law with Politics) is an exciting four-year interdisciplinary law degree that combines the BCL curriculum with the undergraduate Politics course. The primary objective of the degree is to provide students with a thorough academic exposure to the discipline of Law and to show how that discipline relates to the discipline of Politics.

The BCL Law with Politics degree seeks to equip students with

- Knowledge of fundamental legal concepts and principles
- Understanding of law in its broader political and social context
- Ability to analyse law and to engage in legal reasoning
- Critical awareness of the overlapping concerns of political and legal theory particularly in the areas of law and morality, rights, constitutionalism, democracy, justice, and legitimacy
- Competence in the methods of political science (Irish politics, comparative politics, international relations, the European Union) and political theory
- Research skills within the fields of Law and Politics.

The degree has a modular and semesterised format with the Law and Politics subjects distributed over the four years of the programme. The ratio of 2/3 Law to 1/3 Politics will allow all the core Law subjects to be covered in full along with those required by the professional legal bodies.

The curriculum for the degree in both subjects includes compulsory core modules and a choice of optional modules.

## Further Studies

The following are a range of Politics modules offered in the academic year 2009-2010.

- Individuals and the State: Social Contract Theory from Hobbes to Rousseau
- Comparative Politics: Continuity, Conflict, Change
- Theories and Concepts in International Relations
- Approaches to Analysing Politics
- Law, Politics, and Human Rights
- Globalisation: Causes and Consequences
- Ethnicity, Identity and Nationality
- Achieving the Millennium Development Goals
- Politics of the European Union
- Politics of Multi Ethnic States
- International Justice
- Political Communication
- Understanding Irish Voting Behaviour: an Applied Statistical Analysis Approach
- Integration, Fragmentation and the Global System
- Political Transition in Post-Communist Europe
- Explaining Conflict and Settlement in Northern Ireland
- Citizenship and Diversity
- International Political Economy
- Political Change
- The Sovereign State and the International States System

- Middle East Politics
- The European Union: Polity, Politics & Policy
- Genocide and the International Community
- The Politics of Terrorism
- Indigenous Rights

## Career Opportunities

A wide range of employment opportunities in the public and private sector is open to graduates of the various Politics programmes both in Ireland and abroad.

Areas include:

- The Irish Civil Service
- The European Commission
- The International Agencies such as UN, IMF and World Bank
- NGOs
- Print and Broadcasting Media
- The Diplomatic Service
- Business
- Administration and Research
- Public Representatives
- Academic Life

Graduates are also extremely well qualified to pursue further study at Masters and PhD level.

## Further Information & Contact Details

UCD School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin,  
Newman Building, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland;

tel: +353-1-716 8397 fax: +353-1-716 1171

email: [politics@ucd.ie](mailto:politics@ucd.ie) webpage: <http://www.ucd.ie/politics/>

