

Meeting on Graduate Studies

Motives and Guide to applying for
Graduate School in Political
Science?

Master's Degree

- As a step toward
 - Job
 - Pay Raise
 - Ph.D.
 - General Interest
- MA degrees are becoming more important for job advancement
- Less commitment than Ph.D.

Where do I go for an MA?

- Avoid high tuition and debt.
- Difference between MA degrees is less varied, although some departments better than others.
- Consider whether your aims require moving somewhere else to go to school.
- UTEP offers an MA in political science.

Why earn a Ph.D.?

- **Becoming a Professor**
 - Changing the world through teaching and research
 - Working for yourself, rather than someone else
- Government
- Media
- Business
- Nonprofit and International Organizations
- Consulting
- Research and Survey Institutes

What do I need to get into a good program?

- High grades (GPA), especially in major
- High Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores (often a key in popular programs) -- Math and verbal skills both important
- Focused interest in the faculty and specializations of the program (demonstrated in application essays) – You should match up with potential future mentors
- Letters of recommendation from people central to your undergraduate or MA studies
- Foreign language requirements or math preparation (statistics, algebra, calculus)
- Progress in research or participation in conferences

What is graduate school like, especially for a Ph.D.?

- ❖ Focus is on substantive progress toward becoming an independent and creative scholar, not on GPA.
- ❖ Obtain knowledge of various literatures and methodologies.
- ❖ Three years of classes often followed by comprehensive exams, and then two+ years of dissertation research.
- ❖ At the end you will be a specialist in some academic area.
- ❖ Diversity valued (race, ethnicity, gender, nationality)

Life style and other concerns:

- Investment in time, motivation, and emotions is non-trivial and not to be taken lightly – this is a serious commitment, especially beyond a Masters' Degree
- Must be prepared to invest in books, computers, conference travel, etc.
- Must take care of life issues: family, health care, transportation, shelter
- You will likely need to move to another state or even country
- Unless you are so already, you will not be rich – this is an investment
- Emotionally and physically draining experience – but rewarding

How do I choose a program?

- **Try to get into the best programs that study what you want to study**
- **Programs have certain specialties – if you do not match well, this lowers chances of acceptance – be clear about your interests relative to department**
- **Attempt to assess quality: rankings, job placements, student/faculty ratio, # and type of recent publications, facilities – this is all crucial at Ph.D. level**

- Cost and resources – many departments offer stipends and tuition waivers, as well as other fringe benefits (health care, conference travel, grants, etc.).**
Try to avoid paying for your Ph.D. – there seems to be a relationship: the more they invest in you, the more they will care about you and the outcome of your studies.
- Geography? Dangerous if only to be near family – may not be in the right department depending on your goals.**
- The role of mentor's cannot be over-stated – they will greatly influence your life in very good and bad ways!!!!**