

Narrator 00:00:03

What is political science?

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Broadly construed, political science is the social scientific study of political institutions and political behavior. The study of political institutions includes topics, such as the effect of the design of electoral systems on the quality of representation in government, the formal and informal elements of the legislative process and the implications for the making of law, and the impact of domestic political institutions on the incidence of international conflict.

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Under the rubric of political behavior, political scientists study how and why people choose to participate in politics, the determinants of vote choice, and the nature and origins of public opinion. For this reason, students studying political science develop a strong substantive understanding of both political institutions and behavior. They also learn the theories that help them better understand the political world and the methods by which these theories are tested and refined.

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Political science students can choose courses from different subfields of the discipline, such as American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and pre-law. The study of institutions and behavior is central to these subfields, although the substantive emphasis differs. Normally, courses in American politics focus on domestic politics in the US, while courses in comparative politics examine government and politics in other nations. International relations classes address issues in foreign policy, international conflict, and the institutions intended to govern the interactions between nations. Pre-law classes involve, legal institutions and the behavior of legal actors.

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As we can see, the knowledge and skills acquired with the study of political science provide a strong foundation for graduate training in law, political science, or other social sciences. Students graduating with a degree in political science can also pursue a wide variety of other careers, such as public administration, campaign management or consultation, grassroots political organization, corporate governmental affairs, foreign service, journalism, lobbying, and

teaching.