

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NEBRASKA STATE COLLEGES
ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION\ACADEMIC AND PERSONNEL

ACTION: **Approve Addition of Political Science Minor for Chadron State College**

Per Board Policy 4200, which requires all new academic programs to be submitted to the Board for approval, Chadron State seeks approval to add the Political Science Minor, beginning Fall 2022.

The System Office and Chadron State College recommend approval of the Addition of Political Science Minor for Chadron State College.

ATTACHMENTS:

- CSC Political Science Minor Proposal - Nov 2021 FINAL (PDF)

**Chadron State College
Proposal to Add a New Minor
in Political Science**

1. Descriptive Information

- a. Name of Institution:
Chadron State College
- b. Name of Program:
Political Science
- c. Degrees/credentials to be awarded graduates of the program:
Undergraduate Minor in Political Science
- d. Other programs offered in this field by the institution:
None
- e. CIP code:
45.1001
- f. Administrative units for the program:
School of Liberal Arts
Department of Justice Studies, Social Sciences, and English
- g. Proposed delivery site(s) and type(s) of delivery if applicable:
Onsite In-Person at Chadron State College and Online
- h. Proposed date (term/year) the program will be initiated:
Fall 2022
- i. Description, including credit hours and other requirements (program of study) and purpose of the proposed program

Mission

The mission of the Political Science minor at Chadron State College is to foster the development of leaders in the High Plains region and beyond by providing training in the study and practice of politics at the local, national, and global levels.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to demonstrate competence in the following outcomes:

1. Articulate essential knowledge and concepts in political science;
2. Systematically interpret quantitative and qualitative evidence;
3. Evaluate arguments about governance and political processes;
4. Creatively develop arguments at the intersection of political, social, and economic issues;
5. Actively participate in and meaningfully affect political processes in local communities and beyond; and
6. Apply theoretical and empirical knowledge to solve real world problems at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Political Science Minor (18 credits)

Required Courses (12 credits)

PS 101	Introduction to Political Science	3 cr
PS 110	U.S. Politics and Civic Engagement**	3 cr
PS 210	Politics and Economics	3 cr
PS 410	Political Inquiry*	3 cr

Elective Courses - Choose two: (6 credits)

PS 321	U.S. Politics and Government	3 cr
PS 325	Rural and Frontier Political Economy	3 cr
PS 332	Global Politics**	3 cr
PS 333	Constitutional Law	3 cr
PS 337	Introduction to Law	3 cr
PS 390	Internship in Political Science	3 cr
PS 401	Study Abroad in Political Science	3 cr
PS 420	American Political Thought	3 cr
PS 429	Islam and Politics*	3 cr
PS 430	Topics in Political Science	3 cr
PS 436	Field Study in Political Science	3 cr
PS 439	Democracy: U.S. and the World*	3 cr

* Courses new to the catalog

** Courses with names or numbers being changed

Course Descriptions for New Courses:

PS 410 Political Inquiry (3 cr)

Methods of inquiry in political science will be discussed and applied. Methods will include controlled comparisons, process tracing, interpretive approaches, survey methods, experiments, and linear regression. Students will design and execute projects to apply these research methodologies as they develop an expertise in a substantive topic in political science.

Prerequisite: PS 101 and sophomore status or above

PS 429 Islam and Politics (3cr)

The relationship between the religion of Islam and contemporary politics will be analyzed. This relationship will be considered in the context of democratic politics, forms of authoritarian governance, and contentious politics in the Muslim-majority world as well as minority politics in the United States and Western Europe. Prerequisite: PS 101 and sophomore status or above.

PS 439 Democracy: U.S. and the World (3 cr)

The concept of political democracy will be critically analyzed in both historical and contemporary discourses. The emergence and evolution of political democracy will be covered with an emphasis on American political culture and institutions and frequent comparisons to other advanced democracies and developing democracies around the world. This course is cross-listed with PS 539. Prerequisite: PS 101 and sophomore status or above.

2. Centrality to Role and Mission

CSC is proposing a new Political Science Minor that will be attractive to students across campus. This minor will contribute to CSC's mission to "deliver experiences that foster knowledgeable

and engaged leaders and citizens” by providing a program of study that directly engages students with theories and practices of civic engagement, democratic citizenship, and critical thinking in a diverse and multi-cultural intellectual environment.

The *State Colleges for Nebraska Strategic Plan 2025* offers a helpful framework for considering how the proposed Program of Study in Political Science will contribute to the long-run mission of Chadron State College and the Nebraska State College System. Specifically, the Strategic Plan’s goals to 1) *deliver an array of high-quality academic programs and curricular activities that successfully prepare students for the range of careers they will experience after graduation* and 2) *expand capacity for the Colleges to produce graduates who meet the workforce needs for Nebraska and to strengthen their role as change agents for the rural communities they serve* are both furthered through this program. Below are the specific indicators for these two goals that the proposed program will meet.

Indicator 7: Students Completing Academic Experiential Learning Activities

The political science program will offer students distinct opportunities for experiential learning activities. Dr. Curtis is building a record of placing students in competitive government internships that can be embedded into course credit in this proposed minor. In the summer of 2021, Laura Clay, a student majoring in Legal Studies with minors in History and Creative Writing worked as an intern for Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse. She applied for his internship after Dr. Curtis advertised the opportunity to her and worked with her to craft a resumé and cover letter. Currently, there is no opportunity for Ms. Clay to have earned academic credit toward a program of study for this internship.

The inclusion of an option for internship credit in this program expands opportunities for experiential learning activities in the Social Sciences. In the future, this program could include a regular internship opportunity in Lincoln with the Nebraska State Legislature. Because of CSC’s location, interns could also work in South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, and beyond. Dr. Curtis has also successfully recruited students from majors across campus to participate in extra-curricular experiential learning activities such as the Model Arab League team. Not only does this demonstrate the centrality of experiential learning to the political science program, it also serves as evidence for a wide interest in political science among students at CSC.

Indicator 10: Distribution of Instruction Delivered by Full-Time Faculty

All courses taught in the political science program of study are taught by full time faculty at Chadron State College. PS 333 and PS 337 are taught by Dr. Michael Bogner, and the rest of the courses are taught by Dr. Justin Curtis. This creates a cumulative academic experience for students who can then building lasting mentoring relationships with permanent faculty at CSC.

Indicator 14: Enrollment Growth in Targeted Workforce Programs

While political science is not among the targeted workforce programs identified by the NSCS, it does offer a meaningful complement to several of these programs in terms of both skills and knowledge. Students entering the workforce with a Rangeland Management degree will be better suited to advocate on behalf of their interests and engage with various bureaucratic and government agencies if they have a background in the core principles of political science. Similarly, students who graduate with a degree in Criminal Justice will be better suited to serve increasingly diverse communities and see the connections between the criminal justice system and broader political processes and interests by complementing their education with this minor.

3. Evidence of Need and Demand

In just two semesters of teaching Introduction to Political Science (PS 101) at Chadron State College, Dr. Curtis has been asked about the availability of a Political Science Program of Study by no fewer than five students whose major programs included Business, Social Work, Rangeland Management, and Education. Political Science is a field of study that easily complements many of the major programs at CSC. The program will offer students an insight into policy-making that will appeal to students interested in Business, Rangeland Management, and the sciences. It will also offer development in civic engagement, advocacy, and diversity and inclusion that will appeal to students from programs in Education, Social Work, Justice Studies, and other applied fields of study. Finally, political science's methodological rigor will be valuable to students in the humanities who may want to complement their studies of the arts with analytical skills in the social sciences.

The other faculty members in the Social Science program, Dr. Thomas Smith, Dr. David Nesheim, and Dr. Kurt Kinbacher, are particularly enthusiastic about the development of a Political Science Program of Study because a minor in political science serves as a common-sense complement to the Bachelor of Arts in History that these three professors coordinate.

In addition to Dr. Curtis's students, faculty members from the Justice Studies programs (Legal Studies and Criminal Justice) have also expressed their desire for a Minor in Political Science that would enhance the education of many of their students. Additionally, Dr. Kim Cox, from the English program, has been in contact with an incoming freshman who has expressed an interest in pursuing a political science minor to complement his studies in the humanities.

CSC strongly believes that the proposed Minor in Political Science will enhance recruitment and retention efforts in the JSSSE department. By offering a minor made up of many courses that students pursuing the Social Science Field Endorsement also take, if these students determine that they are no longer interested in pursuing a career in education, they can apply the credits that they have earned toward this program and thus continue to graduate on time.

4. Adequacy of Resources

Faculty and Staff Resources:

Currently, Dr. Curtis is the only full-time, tenure-track political scientist in the Department of Justice Studies, Social Science, and English. When initially hired in Fall 2020, he was assigned to teach a course outside his area of specialization and received permission from VPAA Powell for a one-time, three-credit course release for new course development. CSC also temporarily doubled the number of sections of first-year Essential Studies Program (ESP) courses in political science to allow time for interest to build among students.

The three new courses will be added to Dr. Curtis's course rotations without the need for additional faculty resources because these new courses will replace courses in the previous political science faculty member's rotation that have become outdated and/or redundant. Currently, Dr. Curtis's rotation has included "Topics" courses that covered the material in the proposed PS 429 and PS 439 courses, so these new courses simply codify these offerings in the catalog. PS 410 will replace Dr. Curtis's biannual offering of EDUC 121, "The Academic Life." Two political science courses, PS 333 and PS 337, are cross-listed as Legal Studies courses and will continue to be taught by full-time faculty from Justice Studies as part of their existing loading practices. Thus, adding the Minor in Political Science will not require any additional faculty resources.

Physical Facilities

The addition of this program will not require the addition of any new physical facilities.

Instructional Equipment and Informational Resources:

No additional instructional equipment will be required for this program of study.

Budget Projections for the first five years of the program:

CSC does not foresee any additional costs for adding this program of study to the CSC catalog. However, it is likely that this program of study will be attractive to prospective students and provide an opportunity for a program of study that many institutions comparable to Chadron State already offer their students.

5. Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication

While nearly every four-year institution in Nebraska offers either a major or a minor in political science, and most offer both, this new program of study offers students at CSC three distinct opportunities. First, the option to take PS 325 (Rural and Frontier Political Economy) aligns with CSC's current Master Academic Plan, which aims "to establish CSC as a model Rural Servicing Institution for Frontier and Remote and High Plains regions." Second, the new PS 410 class focuses specifically on developing real-world analytical skills increase the marketability of all graduates. Third, this program offers the option for students to earn credit working as an intern. This option will serve as the beginning of ongoing opportunities for students to work with elected officials in Lincoln, Cheyenne, Pierre, Denver, or beyond, including Washington D.C.

6. Consistency with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education

An undergraduate minor in Political Science aligns with several goals within the CCPE's Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education:

- This proposed minor in political science will "create inclusive environments that foster student success and offer lifelong learning opportunities that are responsive to students' and workforce needs." It will also expand CSC's ability to "foster critical thinking skills and provide their graduates with the knowledge and workplace skills needed to be successful employees, innovative entrepreneurs, and responsible citizens on a global stage." (from *Meeting the Needs of Students*).
- This minor supports CSC graduates by "preparing individuals for productive, fulfilling lives and by developing and nurturing the citizens and future leaders of Nebraska." The political science minor will offer students practical, hands-on methodological training through the lens of empirical social science. This training is particularly necessary for students in a world increasingly full of misinformation. Students that complete this program of study will be ready to lead and serve in their communities at the local, state, national, and global levels (from *Meeting the Needs of the State*).
- Finally, the proposed minor will enhance CSC's ability to "fulfill its role and mission in an exemplary manner and will compare favorably with peer institutions." Political science is a core field of study in most colleges and universities in the United States, including the other institutions in the Nebraska State College System. The political science minor would offer an important complement to many students' programs of study at CSC (from *Meeting Needs by Building Exemplary Institutions*).