

# WHY POLITICS?

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS THE STUDY OF POLITICS?

WHY UCD?

STRUCTURING YOUR DEGREE

THE BCL LAW WITH POLITICS DEGREE

KEY SKILLS LEARNED

WHAT WILL I STUDY?

SUBJECT AREAS

TESTIMONIAL

LIST OF MODULES

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

## INFORMATION ON STUDYING UCD POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

### WHAT IS THE STUDY OF POLITICS?

Studying politics is about asking big questions. Questions about how we govern ourselves, what it means to be a citizen, who gets to decide the fate of nations and what happens when peace and stability breaks down. Politics is inescapable, since we all have to live with other people to some extent. For Ireland in the 21st century political questions on both national and international levels are more pressing than ever before.

As a student of politics you will of course learn about sovereignty, elections, constitutions and government but over three years your studies will take you much further. You may also choose modules on international relations, and learn about the forces that come into play when states choose to work together, and the tensions that erupt when they don't. Our modules on development studies look at why some countries are poor and what can be done to change the

situation. 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. 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. 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 a number of areas, including: 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 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.



**Studying politics is about asking big questions. Questions about how we govern ourselves, what it means to be a citizen, who gets to decide the fate of nations and what happens when peace and stability breaks down.**

## STRUCTURING 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 (Bachelor of Arts) or a BSocSc (Bachelor of Social Science). 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 (BA)

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

## 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 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.



## WHAT WILL I STUDY?



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 the Politics first year core modules.

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.



You will have lively debates and participate in group works as well as learn how to write good essays.

## SUBJECT AREAS

Politics is a broad subject, our core courses will give you the key skills needed. After that you can decide to take a broad overview of politics as a discipline or you can focus your studies on the following areas;

### Irish Politics

Studying Irish politics opens up questions about how decisions are made within this country, who the main political actors are, and how the main institutions of state function. It includes finding out what the main political parties stand for, and the ways in which they may resemble or differ from parties in other countries. Courses are also offered on the politics of Northern Ireland, with opportunities to study the troubles and the peace process, and the international as well as domestic aspects of the politics of conflict resolution.

### Political Theory

- Examines critically key ideas and values at stake in politics, including freedom, equality, community, democracy and justice.
- Considers what, if anything, makes political authority legitimate - power or the consent of the governed.
- Explores whether all these principles apply globally or only among citizens within national democratic states.

### International Relations

Studying International Relations teaches you;

- The development of the modern international system, focusing especially on the post-Cold War era.
- 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.
- EU decision-making and of key developments in EU history, and examines the implications of EU membership for national sovereignty.

### European Politics

- You will learn what the EU is all about. This includes an introduction to the composition and competencies of the major actors (European Commission, Council of Ministers, European Parliament, European Court of Justice). We also explore how the EU works and how European law is made.
- You will also learn about how the EU's policy output and powers affect the lives of European citizens.
- In addition, we analyse the dynamics of decision-making under the Lisbon Treaty, focusing on the impacts of Eastern enlargement on the EU, and the future of the EU.

### Comparative Politics

We study the political systems of all the world's democracies. In addition, we examine how a comparative approach can deepen our understanding of issues such as the distribution of power, state-society links, voting behaviour, political parties, government and policymaking, and public policy.

### Development Studies

You will have acquired a good understanding of key current debates about development: why and how have some countries 'developed' while others have not? In addition, students will become aware of how global institutions work for or against development and of how particular issues - including trade, foreign aid, migration, and conflict - interact with development.

### Human Rights

You will learn the concept and justifications of human rights, the kinds of moral rights that people have and the practical and theoretical challenges that a theory of human rights has to face.

### Democracy and Citizenship

- Examines diversity in contemporary societies, which is the focus of a number of important debates - for example, the long-standing debate on what is needed to include women as equals in society and political life.
- Investigates new demands for equal treatment from those who differ from what is taken to be the social mainstream in race, origin, sexual orientation, religion, language and other cultural practices, or abilities, among others.



### Nationalism & Ethno-conflict

- Engages with the debates on the nature of ethnicity, identity, nationality and the ways ethnic conflict comes about.
- Evaluates the different ways in which ethnicity is manifested and managed, and the changing forms of nationalism in the contemporary world.

## TESTIMONIAL

**Having had an interest in politics before college, the variety of available options from the School of Politics and International Relations really appealed to me as a prospective student. Once I started the course, I understood why SPIRe is ranked as the top political science department in Ireland. The first year of the course really gives you a solid foundation upon which to build. As you develop interests in particular areas of politics and international relations you can easily branch out into specific topics such as EU politics, development, conflict resolution and international political economy. For anyone who finds themselves really invested in the programme initially, SPIRe also offer a fantastic 'Single Subject Major' programme which gives you the opportunity to truly engage with every facet of political science.**



**Stephen Crosby - 2nd Year Politics Single Major Student**

## LIST OF MODULES

The following are a range of Politics modules that will be offered in the academic years 2017-18\*.

- Foundation of Political Theory & International Relations
- Foundations of Contemporary Politics
- Irish Politics
- Globalisation and Development
- Global Development Goals
- Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
- Theories and Concepts in International Relations
- Introduction to European Union Politics
- Irish Foreign Policy
- Individuals and the State: Social Contract Theory from Hobbes to Rousseau
- Comparative Politics
- Research Methods in Political Science
- Law Politics and Human Rights
- Capitalism and Democracy
- Contemporary Autocracies
- Political Institutions & Development
- Political Behaviour & Psychology
- Trump, Brexit and Global Politics
- International Justice
- Integration Fragmentation and the Global System
- Gender in War & Peace
- International Political Economy
- Middle East Politics
- EU in the World

- Politics and Policy of the EU
- Parties and Party Systems
- Justice in Education
- Introduction to Asian Politics
- Data Analytics for Social Sciences
- Political Risk & Foreign Investment
- Political Activism in the Middle East
- Advanced Seminar in Politics

\* subject to change

## CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

A wide range of employment opportunities in the public and private sector are 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 the 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

School of Politics and International Relations (SPIRe), University College Dublin, Newman Building, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland.

tel: +353-1-716 8397 email: [spire@ucd.ie](mailto:spire@ucd.ie) webpage: [www.ucd.ie/spire](http://www.ucd.ie/spire)

