Politics

“Studying politics equips students who have a sense of justice with the intellectual tools to make a difference.”

Professor Janine Hayward
Head of Department

Politics is one of the oldest academic disciplines. It is the study of how power is organised and used, nationally and internationally. Power relations affect every aspect of our lives, determining what we may think, say and do, and how we can co-operate to make the world a better place.

What better time to study politics? So much of what we see in the news is about politics, including Brexit, the US election, the civil war in Syria, and the Treaty of Waitangi. By studying politics, you will gain a balanced, analytical and insightful understanding of topics that may be sensationalised in the media.

Empower yourself to know the difference.

Study politics.

0800 80 80 98 | otago.ac.nz | txt 866 | university@otago.ac.nz
Why study Politics?

Politics is a practical field of study that empowers you to better understand the world and take part in informed decision-making. It is also an intellectually stimulating field.

Whether we like it or not, politics affects all of our lives. No matter where in the world you venture, politics is always a popular and sometimes delicate topic of conversation. Whether you want to forge a career in politics, or simply understand the world a little better, everyone would benefit from learning about politics.

Our graduates find exciting, challenging and highly-rewarding careers in a broad range of fields across New Zealand and around the world. Many of our graduates continue on to study towards a postgraduate degree at prestigious international universities.

“I was initially worried about how I would cope at a famously elite global university. However, I can honestly say the quality of education at Otago is world class.”

Ben Abraham, BAHons graduate, Rhodes Scholar, University of Oxford PhD candidate

Politics at Otago

Otago Politics lecturers are all experts in their fields, and all are actively engaged in research that enriches their teaching.

Our approach to the study of politics is a blend of traditional and modern analysis. The breadth of the discipline of politics is reflected in the wide range of papers on offer at Otago. At Otago, politics is arranged into four fields:

• International Relations – study international conflicts and co-operation between states
• New Zealand Politics – understand the politics of Aotearoa
• Political Theory – ask important theoretical questions about the nature of power and justice
• Comparative Politics – compare the politics of a range of countries and regions

Background required

Studying Politics at Otago assumes no prior knowledge. If you have an interest in national and international affairs, you should consider including some politics in your degree.

Major in Politics

You can study politics as a major within two degrees:

• Bachelor of Arts (BA)
• Bachelor of Arts and Science (BAsc)

Politics is also part of the Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) degree programme.

Double major/degree options

Politics is an excellent subject to study alongside another of interest, either as a double-major in the BA, alongside a Science subject in the BAsc, or as a double degree with Law or Commerce, and other options.

Politics for every student

Politics is also available as a minor within a range of degree options, or simply as an additional interest paper to strengthen your degree.

Consider what an understanding of people and power, conflict and co-operation would add to a degree in areas such as Law, International Business, History, Economics, Geography, Management or Psychology.

International student exchange

The opportunity to study at an international university and understand another culture is an invaluable educational experience for a student of politics.

Postgraduate study

The department offers a range of postgraduate programmes. The twelve-month long Master of Politics (MIntSt) degrees are excellent options for students interested in specialising in a particular area of politics or seeking an extra edge when considering their future career options. We also offer two research degrees – the Master of Arts (MA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

“The strength of Otago’s Politics Department is its breadth. In one degree you can take anything from political philosophy to environmental politics.”

Carys Goodwin, BA(Hons), DipLang graduate University of Cambridge MPhil candidate

Career opportunities

Politics graduates have the ability to analyse issues logically, to challenge conventional assumptions, to consider different options and viewpoints, make informed decisions, and act with flexibility, adaptability and creativity.

In addition to these specialist skills, our programmes enable you to develop a range of personal and professional skills that are highly valued by employers.

A politics degree has helped many graduates secure jobs such as policy analysts, diplomats, working with refugees, journalists, business leaders, lawyers, public servants, consultants, and even politicians!

Further information

otago.ac.nz/politics

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facebook.com/PoliticsOtago

Marica Frost

BA Politics, LLB
Refugee and Protection Officer, MBE

Marica Frost loved social studies at high school. “I was always really interested in foreign affairs, and studying Politics at the University of Otago was an extension of that.”

“I absolutely loved studying Politics at Otago. Every year there’s such a variety of interesting papers that are so relevant and applicable, especially in today’s political climate. It was always a struggle to choose which ones to study – I would have done them all if I could!”

“The lecturers are world-class. They are really interested in you. They are so passionate and inspiring and teach in a way that’s comprehensible to young people. They make you want to learn.”

“My studies were excellent preparation for my role as a Refugee and Protection Officer with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. The role is the perfect fit for everything I studied and everything I am interested in. Studying politics at university provided me with such a broad understanding of various states, their people and different structures of governance. Having this knowledge has been invaluable for my role as we see a range of claimants from all corners of the world.”

Ella Gordon-Latty

BA Honours, 1st Class - Politics & Geography combined
Co-CEO, Wave Makers

Ella Gordon-Latty chose the University of Otago because her father had studied there. “Otago’s a place where you learn to stand on your own two feet and define who you want to be.” Ella’s experiences confirmed this. “Going to Otago was potentially one of the single most formative experiences of my life.”

“Otago teaches you to be self-sufficient and self-motivating. Also, I met the most incredible people there, and now have a world-class network to tap into. They are people who were my contemporaries, as well as those who were senior to me who have a shared history. When you say you studied at Otago, that holds a lot of credibility.”

“Studying Politics gave me one of the most powerful insights – it enabled me to understand the mechanics of power. It gave me a framework for understanding world events and analysing context, which are absolutely vital for the business world.”

“Understanding the context of the world and the forces at play gave me the ability to follow my own trajectory. To go where I want and get involved in a wide range of things.”