

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Politics defines the world and drives our lives. Political activity is about the exercise of power. Power itself comes in many forms, including the power to control other people, the power to allocate resources, and the power to manipulate consequences. Power can be blatantly obvious or very, very invisible. It can be unsettling, exciting, and deeply compelling. So can politics.

Political Science and International Relations are complementary and inter-related disciplines that explore power and politics in many different contexts. They provide concepts with which to explain, justify and critique the modern world. They examine ideologies such as colonisation and socialism. They explore systems of ideas like the new right, religious fundamentalism, and postmodernism. They analyse social movements that call for justice, development, gender equality or environmental protection. They help us to understand processes of electoral competition, government, and policy-making in New Zealand and a range of other countries across the world. They uncover the structures and motivations behind cooperation, conflict and war in the international system. They dig into issues of power, conflict, diplomacy, arms control, democracy, revolution, terrorism, developmental politics, civil society, human rights, foreign policy, humanitarian aid, and the international political economy.

Globalisation links people, cultures and countries much more closely than they have ever been. International Relations studies the relationships among countries and the roles of governmental and non-governmental organisations and multi-nationals. In an increasingly inter-connected world, people who understand and can work with these complex relationships have a significant advantage.

understanding of not only world events but also the events of daily life. Being able to step back and see a larger (political) process at work is very empowering at an individual level. It can take the sting out of tense or emotional situations and provide you with strategies that enable you to behave constructively and proactively. Being able to rise above difficulties and move on is enormously valuable in any work environment, particularly when professional issues or competing interests are involved.

Political Science and International Relations are embedded not only in social processes and group dynamics, but also different cultural realities. This raises your sensitivity to the taken-for-granted aspects



WHY STUDY POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS?

Studying these disciplines brings many benefits. There is the personal satisfaction and social confidence that comes from training your brain and raising your

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Areas covered include how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities, to life/work planning, graduate destination information and current issues or material relevant to the employment scene. Your comments and suggestions always welcomed.

of cultural experience, making you more open to different points of view and value systems. The ability to move comfortably within and between different cultures and political systems is fundamental to international business and trade activities, development support, humanitarian aid and peacekeeping missions. People with this kind of understanding are more likely to be successful in multi-national corporations and professional practices, non-government organisations (NGOs) such as aid agencies, and government agencies including diplomatic services and defence forces. They are also valuable 'at home' working in organisations where cultural or ethnic identity has a relationship with other social or political processes.

Both Political Science and International Relations are linked to the media and public perceptions and these connections are studied specifically. Those able to work with spin, impression management and damage control techniques, either for the purpose of debunking them or doing them convincingly, are also dealing with deeper issues of truth, accuracy and the right to know. These issues underpin many political, social and educational institutions, business enterprises and systems of justice, particularly where public accountability is a requirement.

WHAT SKILLS DO POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GRADUATES HAVE?

Political Science and International Relations graduates have a great toolkit of skills to take to work. These include:

Conceptual analysis: Graduates have learned to get their heads around the big issues, including models of government, cultural imperatives, false equivalents, the effects of war, historical intentions and complex current realities. Working productively with this range of information develops skills of abstract thinking and in-depth analysis, which transfer well to many jobs, especially those that deal in conceptual models and/or strategic planning. These include policy analysis, management roles, professional roles in law and economics, technical writing and promotion of the arts.

Consequential thinking: To a large extent Political Science and International Relations is about



intentions, decisions and their various consequences. Graduates are adept at identifying the consequential effects of decisions and actions taken historically and in the present. They learn to make connections and formulate arguments. They learn to look for the hidden detail that changes everything. They become quite astute at predicting outcomes. Jobs that draw on these skills include all levels of management, particularly human resources, financial service roles, customer service positions, and any job that involves decision-making and problem solving.

Influencing and persuading skills: When it comes to getting what you want, graduates have an excellent understanding of what works and what doesn't, having studied political agendas throughout the world and throughout history. It comes back to the element of power that underpins political business everywhere. Many job roles contain an expectation that you will be able to implement decisions, mobilise resources, or motivate others. These outcomes require influencing and persuading skills and are particularly relevant in supervisory roles, but also come into play in roles that involve interviewing for information, such as immigration officer or human resources consultant. Influencing skills make all the difference to sales, marketing and journalism roles, and work well for court lawyers and politicians.

Language skills: These skills encompass the biggies – written and verbal communication. Employers are always delighted to find people who write effectively and express their thoughts clearly. Graduates have these skills – partly from having to think big political ideas through to a logical conclusion, and partly because they are encouraged to write clear, lively well-argued assignments, and also argue their

understanding of issues in tutorials with peers. Most work roles are enhanced by good language skills, and all positions of authority and leadership require them.

Relationship management skills: All political activity happens in the context of some sort of relationship, involving various mixes of individuals, institutions, factions, nations, opponents and allies. Effective politics means effective management of relationships. Graduates have a trained eye when it comes to tracking the quality of relationships. They understand the dynamics of giving and receiving, and the strategic benefits of pushing forward or falling back. Many organisational issues are basically issues of relationship. Consumer confidence (advertising and marketing) involves a relationship of trust between supplier and consumer. Professional ethics (psychology, social work) assume a relationship of confidentiality between client and professional. Law and order (lawyers, probation officers) depend on a relationship of acceptance between the justice system and the public. These are excellent skills to acquire and develop, and are strongly connected to the cluster of skills that comprise communication skills.

Conflict resolution skills: People get into conflicts with one another. Graduates have an in-depth understanding of large-scale conflicts and their resolution through the framework of diplomacy and international relations. This understanding is useful in its own right, but also transfers easily to smaller-scale issues and the processes of negotiation



and mediation. Every workplace has the potential for misunderstandings, unfair decisions, and grumpy Mondays. Those who handle tricky situations with tact and diplomacy are invaluable and are generally given a lot of respect. For others, such as lawyers, consumer protection agencies, mediation officers and security personnel, conflict resolution is a core work skill.

Research skills: Graduates have studied their subject through its protocols of research design and methodology. This includes defining key research questions, tracking down and interpreting official documents, practising stringent internet research techniques, and for some, learning to write research proposals and make submissions to select committees. Many job roles, including policy analysts and advisors, journalists, managers, community liaison officers and social researchers, are highly dependent on superior research skills.

WHERE DO POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GRADUATES WORK?

Political Science and International Relations graduates have skills that transfer well to many work environments. However, like many graduates they may be applying for a job which only specifies a relevant tertiary qualification. This means that understanding how your skills work in the context of a specific job description is important. Adding another degree such as Law, or doing a double major, can increase your options considerably. For some professional roles such as journalism, a further course of training is usually required.

There are, however, a range of organisations for which the particular mix of skills and knowledge acquired by Political Science and International Relations graduates is uniquely relevant, even if in some cases additional qualifications or experience are also required. These include:

Parliament: A complex organisation requiring hundreds of permanent staff to carry out its various functions including clerks, tour guides, messengers, journalists, librarians, researchers and administration staff. The Parliamentary Service is the largest employer in the parliamentary complex providing administrative and support services, which include research services and policy advice. Graduates, with their superior understanding of parliamentary functions and processes, will have a competitive edge over many other applicants for a range of



positions especially if they have done a Parliamentary internship. Research units are possibilities for those with an interest in research and ideally a postgraduate or double degree such as a law degree.

Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies:

All these organisations are functional arms of the government of the day and are required to implement its political decisions. Graduates will have developed a pragmatic level of understanding that enables them to function well in political bureaucracies. Government organisations with an affinity for Political Science and International Relations include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (requires an excellent postgraduate degree and/or Law or Economics), New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (especially with Law, Economics or International Business), Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (policy roles), the Treasury (requires excellent postgraduate or outstanding undergraduate degree), the State Services Commission, Immigration New Zealand and New Zealand Customs Service. International Relations are also important to the Defence and Police forces and intelligence services.

Local Authorities – City, District, and Regional Councils have policy and/or strategy units, which require the skills that graduates possess, especially if combined with commerce or environmental planning.

NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) include aid organisations such as World Vision, Red Cross and Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA). Political Science graduates, particularly those with International Relations have an understanding of the political underpinnings of aid programmes. A degree together with relevant life and work experience could lead to work in these types of organisations.

Community Organisations are many and varied.

They include the Forest and Bird Protection Society, Women’s Refuge, Agender New Zealand, Amnesty International, and the Aids Foundation. Where such organisations have paid positions, one or two people may combine administration, education, fundraising and policy development roles. Not only are Political Science and International Relations graduates well equipped to deal with these tasks should a job be advertised, voluntary involvement in such organisations can provide a wealth of practical experience to complement the degree and lead on to other career options.

Unions are inevitably about power differentials between employers and employees and have a large political component. At least one union, the PSA, lists ‘politically astute unionist’ at the top of its core competencies for prospective staff.

Media and Communications encompasses public relations consultancies, media intelligence groups, communications units in government departments, external relations people in large organisations, press secretaries, spokespeople, speech writers, liaison officers, journalists, political commentators, media analysts and sundry persons who may be required to represent their organisation to ‘outsiders’. Whether these roles are formal or informal, graduates are going to bring a lot of understanding to the best way of getting the right message across and are likely to perform well. **Media intelligence companies** monitor and analyse how their clients are perceived in the media and decide what information will be useful to them. An understanding of current affairs, politics and business is a huge asset in this work. Clients are across the spectrum from corporates and political parties to government and not-for-profit organisations.

GRADUATE PROFILES

Corporates and Multinational Organisations

often recruit through university careers services for management trainees and other roles. Selection is highly competitive especially when open to all degree disciplines. Political Science and International Relations graduates, however, have valuable skills and knowledge to offer, particularly by focussing on any 'international' aspects of their degree. In *banks* there are varied graduate opportunities in international and institutional operations and global wealth that may lead to positions overseas.

Universities are excellent places to work for graduates who enjoy transmitting knowledge and skills at an academic level and who wish to continue research. Graduates considering an academic career require a PhD and a record of publication to be competitive for junior positions.

Secondary school teaching in, for example, subjects such as history, political and social studies requires a teaching qualification.

JOB TITLES

- account manager
- archivist
- campaign manager/organiser
- diplomat
- external relations adviser
- immigration officer
- intelligence analyst
- intelligence agency officer
- marketing research analyst
- media analyst
- policy analyst
- political analyst
- political commentator
- political journalist/editor
- press secretary
- politician's assistant
- public affairs research analyst
- public opinion analyst
- public relations adviser
- research adviser
- social media analyst
- teacher university tutor/lecturer.

Hannah van Voorthuysen

*Deputy Head of Mission
New Zealand Embassy
Dili, Timor-Leste*



I first became interested in international issues when, as an impressionable 15 year old, I moved to Brasilia, Brazil for a year on exchange. This opened my eyes to different cultures and languages, exposed me to developing country challenges and enabled me to see various diplomats strutting around in their natural habitat – the cocktail circuit. I instantly decided that this was the career for me and subsequently did a degree in International Relations (IR) at Victoria University, finishing with a Master of Arts (MA) on New Zealand's relationship with Israel.

IR as an academic field is so new and multifaceted that you could find yourself working on economics, politics, international law, conflict, security, migration, climate change, regionalism, 'big man syndrome' and trade, all within the same 2,000-word paper. I found myself studying with people of really diverse backgrounds and experiences who challenged my own worldviews and assumptions and allowed me to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the global political system. The Honours programme in particular is excellent in this respect, as you're studying with students doing Masters of Arts in IR who are typically mid-career professionals who pop your idealistic theory bubbles with a little cold, hard, reality and cynicism.

I'm currently working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as the Deputy in the New Zealand Embassy in Timor-Leste. Working for MFAT is probably the least imaginative career for a student of International Relations, but the job is incredible and by changing roles every couple of years you are constantly learning new things. It's a real privilege to be able to represent New Zealand, especially in a place like Timor-Leste where New Zealanders have died in support of this new country's bid for independence and stability. Even now, when Timorese see the New Zealand kiwi sticker on your car, they're likely to greet you with a 'kia ora!' The skills I learned through my IR degree are essential to my job now: being able to quickly understand murky issues in an information vacuum, research skills, negotiation skills, listening, networking, respect and being able to write about complex issues in a straightforward way.

I'd recommend anyone interested in getting a holistic understanding of the world to study International Relations. The diversity of the programme is well suited to equip students with the tools they need to succeed in international organisations, government, NGOs, business, politics, journalism, or diplomacy.

Christopher Foulkes

*Regional Resource Mobilization Officer,
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, International Organization for Migration, Bangkok*



The mix of my experiences growing up overseas, and what I had excelled in at school – History, Classics, English and Debating – made Political Science and International Relations at Victoria obvious choices for me. My dream as a school leaver was to work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which influenced my decision to also study Law.

While I completed a broad range of courses during university, Political Science and International Relations courses always stood out for me. I loved the freedom I was given to select topics and perspectives that suited me, and pursue them as far as I could.

I gained three major sets of skills from my degree. First, there was the knowledge and specific content about international relations and political processes. The faculty gave me an excellent, broad understanding of the field but also encouraged me to specialise and become 'expert' in specific topics of interest, such as migration. Second, I learned the practical skills of how to present an argument, organise my thoughts, study and write clearly. Finally, and most importantly, I learned more abstract skills such as how to analyse scenarios, apply theories and to think critically.

My first two years after graduation were hugely varied. I was granted a fellowship in Hawai'i, undertook an internship in Washington D.C., worked as a consultant with the U.N. in Bangkok and finally got a job with the International Organization for Migration. In all of these roles the skills I gained during my studies have been invaluable.

In terms of advice, first and foremost, follow your passion; second, consider your strengths. A Political Science or International Relations degree offers a skill set beneficial to a range of studies and professions. It

also allows you to explore and focus on issues that really interest you and affect your everyday life – in my case, working on migration which is a critical component of our globalized world today.

Troy Simms

*Smart Metering Deployment Subject Matter Expert
Vector Ltd.*



I enrolled in an undergraduate degree in Political Science and International Relations as a blank canvas, albeit a canvas woven with questions. Why do I vote the way I do? Why do I support particular causes and disapprove of others? Why do states behave in a certain way? And why are my beliefs different to the beliefs of others? I soon realised that politics runs far deeper than just page two of the Dominion Post.

It is impossible to study politics without drawing on and appreciating everything else it touches upon – economics, psychology, sociology and history. It is the study of people and of their motivations. In the course of my career, I have found that my study supplied me with far more than meaningful, politically laced banter around the water cooler – although this has been very helpful too. Trying to understand motivations, to understand power and the interactions between actors has helped me to analyse and respond to workplace dynamics. Which situations require candour over pragmatism? When should I listen instead of direct?

The passions drawn out of you while exploring historical conflicts and questionable policies has translated into a drive to always look for improvements, to find an alternative answer. Tangible skills such as effective writing and critical thinking have helped me to back my own ideas, to make recommendations rather than suggestions and to take the lead when it is required. Exposure to alternate opinions and contrary sentiments has allowed me to accept the views of others and to test the validity of my own views against these, both in my career as I work toward a solution, or through meaningful discussion with my peers.

I'm lucky in that I worked for my current employer before my degree and returned after graduating. I found that the way I approached the role had changed significantly in line with how I had changed throughout my study. It gave me a relatively unique

perspective on the less tangible changes that come from study in general. I found myself far more driven and ambitious, ready to approach situations in a positive new light. I also learned to keep questioning and to keep discussing. Nothing is more important.

Kate Stone

*Assistant Crown Counsel
Crown Law Office*



When I finished high school I knew that I was interested in New Zealand and social change but I didn't know what that would look like as a career or a degree. After speaking to family and friends, I decided to do a conjoint degree in law and arts. I ultimately finished with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) with a combined major of Political Science and International Relations.

During my studies I really relished the opportunity to engage in discussions in lectures and tutorials about the material we were learning – trying to formulate an argument on your feet and being challenged to consider alternative perspectives on an issue.

I learned how to research and write academic papers, but I think the most important skills I gained were critical analysis and the ability to develop a structured, logical and well-founded position. Through Political Science studies I had the opportunity to study Chinese politics in China on a field study, and I also undertook an internship in Parliament as part of my Honours programme. Both of these experiences gave me first hand insight into the working of government.

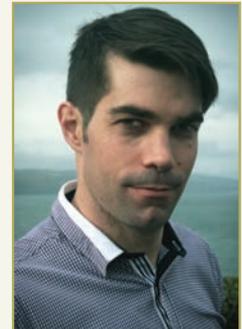
When I finished university I worked as a junior lecturer in Law for a year. However my research in youth justice led to a desire to work at the coalface. I juniored for an experienced barrister, which led me to a job as a criminal defence lawyer with the Public Defence Service. After two years I have now moved to Crown Law where I get to work on a wide array of public interest litigation.

In my experience it is worthwhile experimenting with a variety of subject areas before settling on your major to find a discipline that resonates with you. Political Science studies and the opportunities it afforded me gave me the background that was

instrumental in my decision to practice law in an area that interacts with the political realm.

Dylan Page

Risk Profiling Analyst, Risk Assessment Team Compliance, Risk & Intelligence Services, Immigration New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment



I chose to study International Relations because I've always been interested in the interactions between countries, groups of countries and non-state actors. How conflicts occur, are managed and resolved was a particular interest of mine, and after completing an undergraduate degree with a double major in History and International Relations I went on to an Honours and Master of Arts in International Relations.

The subject of my master's thesis was the role of women in the peace process in Bougainville following the conflict there in the 1990s. With the help of a research grant from Victoria University I was able to travel to Bougainville and interview local men and women who had been involved in the conflict and peace process. It was a great experience and helped me gain a much deeper understanding of the complexities in resolving conflicts and addressing the injustices that arise from them.

In my current job I'm part of a small team in Immigration New Zealand whose purpose is to ensure that people associated with groups or governments which have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and/or gross human rights abuses do not enter New Zealand. The role requires me to assess and analyse complex and often contradictory information and to write clearly and succinctly about the decisions I've made.

My degree has been incredibly useful in my current job not just in providing me with an understanding of conflict and post-conflict environments and international politics, but also by helping to develop the analytical and communication skills I use every day.

I would definitely recommend studying International Relations. Not only will you gain a better insight into the big forces shaping the world today, but you'll also gain skills which will help you no matter what career path you choose to take.

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT VICTORIA

Victoria has a large and successful Political Science and International Relations programme. Our staff have strong links with prestigious institutions worldwide, collaborate with international colleagues, and introduce students in New Zealand's capital city to the cutting edge of international political debate. Our staff produce world class research and regularly engage in media commentary and public policy debate, including advising the New Zealand government and other governments in the Asia Pacific region. Victoria's unique position, located in the nation's capital, offers students the opportunity to observe policy-making and meet with policy-makers in Parliament and the public service.

The Political Science and International Relations programme at Victoria offers a particularly wide range of expertise in politics and international relations. It is also the only programme in New Zealand offering a separate undergraduate major in International Relations. The programme offers around 30 undergraduate courses in Political Science and International Relations a year. Our courses provide diverse perspectives on domestic and international politics, including political ideas (capitalism, multiculturalism, socialism, justice, freedom), the politics of particular countries and regions around the world (New Zealand, the US, Europe, China, Japan, the Pacific, East and Southeast Asia), and important political issues (dictatorship and democracy, human rights, politics and the media, managing ethnic conflict, building new states, war, peace and security, civil war and humanitarian intervention, the UN and international institutions, the politics of the international economy).

Our 100 level courses offer a broad grounding in New Zealand politics, International Relations, political ideas and comparative politics. Our 200 and 300 level courses offer opportunities for greater specialisation. Courses in Political Science and International Relations are open to all students irrespective of their majoring subject and fit well with other disciplines including History, Philosophy, Law, Sociology, Economics, Geography, Anthropology, Commerce and Public Policy.

We also offer a full range of postgraduate degrees. For Bachelor of Arts (BA) graduates looking to enhance their academic qualifications or mature students looking for a change in career direction, we offer 12-month taught Master's degrees in International Relations, Political Science, and Strategic Studies. These courses allow students to gain Master's level expertise through an intensive taught programme, without completing a BA (Honours) in Political Science or International Relations. They recruit a mixture of talented students who have just completed their BA and mature students with wide-ranging career experience in New Zealand and overseas (including in the public sector, military, NGOs and international organisations).

For those looking for an academic career, we also offer a BA (Hons) degree, research MA and PhD.

Our graduates go on to a wide range of jobs but, given our Wellington location, it's not surprising that many choose politics and the public sector. We have recent graduates working in the Prime Minister's Office, MPs and Ministers' offices and in a variety of ministries including Foreign Affairs and Trade, Health, Justice, Business Innovation and Employment and Defence.

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