

MA in Political Theory and Public Ethics

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences	Programme length: 12 months F/T 24 months P/T
For students entering in October 2004	Date of specification: 14 August 2003
Programme Director:	Mr Andrew Williams
Board of Studies:	GIPIS
Accreditation:	The University of Reading

Summary of programme aims

Providing a deeper understanding of political theory than that offered at the undergraduate level, the programme aims to acquaint students with examples of the most important work in Anglo-American political theory, their historical antecedents, and their implications for issues of public concern. In doing so, it aims to connect political theory with work in such related disciplines as history, philosophy, and political science. It also aims to develop a range of general analytical and presentational skills, as well as those more specialised skills necessary for students to pursue advanced social scientific research.

Transferable skills

By requiring students to prepare for weekly discussions using recommended bibliographic materials, the programme will develop students' capacity to analyse the logical structure of theoretical arguments, to assess their validity and soundness, and to interpret and evaluate complex texts. It will enhance their presentational skills by requiring them to make oral presentations to groups of fellow students. It will also improve their writing skills through the production of essays and a dissertation. In addition, the programme is designed to provide training for doctoral programmes as part of the ESRC 1 + 3 scheme, and so will enable students to acquire various quantitative and qualitative research skills.

Programme content

The MA in Political Theory and Public Ethics consists of 180 credits; a taught element (120 credits) and a dissertation (60 credits). The central elements are the two compulsory core modules, 'Approaches to Political Theory' (30 credits) and 'Ethical Issues and Political Theory' (30 credits), which run for two terms (Autumn and Spring). In addition, students choose either optional modules totalling 60 credits or the full complement of research training (60 credits), which run concurrently with the core modules. Students may take up to 40 credits in another MA programme subject to the approval of the Director of GIPIS. Students must also write a dissertation (60 credits) which is planned in consultation with a supervisor and submitted for assessment in September.

For ESRC-Recognised MA with Research Training

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
PIM13	<i>Approaches to Political Theory</i>	30	M
PIM14	<i>Ethical Issues and Political Theory</i>	30	M
PIM12	<i>Dissertation</i>	60	M

	<i>Research Methods:</i>		
PIM01	<i>Philosophical Issues in the Social Sciences</i>	10	M
PIM02	<i>Data Collection and Analysis</i>	20	M
EDMES1	<i>Essentials of Research Methods for Social Sciences</i>	20	M
EDMES2	<i>Transferable Skills for Social Sciences</i>	10	M
PIM22	<i>Research in Political Theory</i>	Non-ass	M

For MA without Research Training

Three Required Modules

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
PIM13	<i>Approaches to Political Theory</i>	30	M
PIM14	<i>Ethical Issues and Political Theory</i>	30	M
PIM12	<i>Dissertation</i>	60	M

Optional Modules

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
PIM20	<i>War, Peace and International Ethics</i>	30	M
PP/M/60	<i>Philosophy of Law</i>	30	M
3/PP/26	<i>Modern European Philosophy</i>	20	H
LWM03A	<i>International Law & World Order</i>	30	M
LWM02A	<i>International Human Rights</i>	30	M

Plus

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
PIM22	<i>Research in Political Theory</i>	Non-ass	M

Part-time/Modular arrangements

The programme can be followed part-time over a period of 24 months.

Progression requirements

None

Summary of teaching and assessment

Teaching

A wide range of methods of delivering the curriculum are employed in different components of the course, including the following:

1. Lectures are given on some elements of *Philosophical Issues in the Social Sciences*
2. Small group seminars are the preferred means of teaching in *Approaches to Political Theory* and *Ethical Issues and Political Theory*
3. Group workshops emphasising hands on experience of research methods plays a major role in *Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis*
4. Individual hands on computer exercises are a required component of *Quantitative Data Analysis*

5. The university wide module, *Essentials of Research Methods* is delivered via a web-based tutorial
6. Individual research, supplemented by one-to-one tutorials, is provided for the dissertation

Assessment

1. A wide range of assessment techniques are employed, selected for their appropriateness to the specific content of particular modules:
2. *General Research and Transferable Skills* is assessed by portfolio methods in which students are required to report to their supervisor on what they have learnt and how it is relevant to their research and future career.
3. *Essentials of Research Methods* is assessed by multiple-choice questions upon completion of each strand of the module
4. *Research Methods*, comprises three elements, and is assessed by the following combination:
5. *Philosophical Issues in the Social Sciences* -- by a 3,000 word essay that enables students to display both depth of understanding of the issues and their application to research.
6. *Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis* -- by a methodological review of the methods used in a published research monograph within their chosen field.
7. *Quantitative Data Analysis* --- through the completion of a series of computer-based data analysis exercises employing data relevant to their substantive field.
8. *Approaches to Political Theory* and *Ethical Issues and Political Theory* are assessed by two 4,000 word essays
9. *Dissertation* is assessed by a 12,000 word dissertation displaying a capacity for sustained, self-directed research.

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
70 – 100%	Distinction
60 – 69%	Merit
50 – 59%	Good standard (Pass)
<u>Failing categories:</u>	
40 – 49%	Work below threshold standard
0 – 39%	Unsatisfactory Work

For Masters Degrees

To pass the MA students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation *and have no mark below 40 in any module*. The total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 70 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 50 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 50 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

For PG Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40 in any module*. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 50 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 50 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

For PG Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40 in any module.*

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a 2.1 Honours degree or its equivalent and, for students whose first language is not English, an IELTS score of 7.0.

Admissions Tutor: Dr R. J. McKeever

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Programme Directors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

GIPIS has its own handbook as well as a full induction programme at the beginning of the university year. Student progress is monitored via termly progress reports written by the Unit Convenor and provided to the Director of Studies. Through its formative essays scheme GIPIS also gives individual help to students whose early assignments have revealed the need for remedial effort to enhance their writing skills.

Career prospects

Students with a postgraduate degree in Political Theory may be able to pursue careers in a wide range of areas in government, business, research, journalism, publishing, teaching, and the work of non-governmental organizations. A number of students also go on to further post-graduate studies at the PhD level.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

The Graduate Institute has exchange arrangements with Charles University, Prague, and with the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Each year a weeklong study trip to Brussels is organised to visit EU and other governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Educational aims of the programme

1. General familiarisation with the full range of quantitative and qualitative research skills and underlying issues.
2. A sound understanding of the main epistemological and theoretical issues in the social sciences.
3. Training in and hands-on experience of a range of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis.
4. Convey advanced knowledge and understanding of cutting edge research in political theory.
5. Draw attention to how epistemological, theoretical and methodological issues inform and are informed by research in political theory.

6. Provide an opportunity to engage in a sustained piece of independent and critical research within the context of close and supportive supervision.
7. Non-subject specific research skills and generic skills and knowledge appropriate to a research career.
8. Personal development and employment related skills of wide applicability

Programme Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course all students will have had the opportunity to acquire the following:

1. Thorough knowledge and understanding of cutting edge research in political theory.
2. Appreciation of the relationship of epistemological, theoretical and methodological issues and political theory.
3. Completion of a sustained piece of independent research in which students apply advanced research methods suitable to political theory.
4. Non-subject specific skills and knowledge in: bibliographic and computing techniques; teaching experience; ethical and legal issues; exploitation of research and intellectual property rights.
5. Personal development and employment-related skills in: communication, including writing, dissemination and media skills; research management and team-working; personal and career development, including using new technologies for researching and retrieving information on employment and other relevant opportunities for personal development.

Those taking the research version of the course should also have acquired:

6. Comprehension of basic principles of research design and strategy; understanding and practical competency in applying a broad range of research methods and tools; the ability to manage research; and understanding alternative epistemological positions.
7. Critical awareness and appreciation of the practical implications of major theoretical and epistemological debates in the social sciences, such as those concerning: positivism and realism; feminism; post-modernism; critical theory.
8. Competency in using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, including: elite and mass interviewing; archival and documentary methods; observational and ethnographic techniques; secondary analysis of published sources; questionnaire design; sampling techniques; experimental and comparative analysis; use of official and other publicly available datasets; and the processing and coding of data.
9. Competency in qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, including: content and textual analysis; ethnographic and narrative analysis of political processes; computer-based coding of political variables; uni-, bi- and multi-variate analysis of survey or aggregate secondary data; methods of scaling and data reduction.
10. Competence in the use of SPSS data analysis software.

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Cutting edge research in some of the central areas of Anglo-American political theory.

Those taking the research version of the course should also have acquired:

2. Basic principles of research design and strategy; understanding and practical competency in applying a broad range of research methods and tools; the ability to manage research; and understanding alternative epistemological positions.

3. Critical awareness and appreciation of the practical implications of some major theoretical and epistemological debates in the social sciences, such as those concerning: positivism and realism; feminism; post-modernism; critical theory.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1. Debate and presentation in seminars, essay-writing, and personal supervision for dissertation. Assessed by submission of written work.

2 - 3 Seminars, some lectures, web-based tutorials, computer exercises. Assessed by submission of written work, including essays and exercises.

Skills and other attributes**B. Intellectual skills – able to:**

1. Analyse the logical structure of theoretical arguments, and assessing their validity and soundness.
2. Interpret and evaluate complex texts.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1. Debate and presentation in seminars, essay-writing, and personal supervision for dissertation. Assessment by submission of written work.

C. Practical skills – able to:

1. Competency in using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, including: elite and mass interviewing; archival and documentary methods; observational and ethnographic techniques; secondary analysis of published sources; questionnaire design; sampling techniques; experimental and comparative analysis; use of official and other publicly available datasets; and the processing and coding of data.
2. Competency in qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, including: content and textual analysis; ethnographic and narrative analysis of political processes; computer-based coding of political variables; uni-, bi- and multi-variate analysis of survey or aggregate secondary data; methods of scaling and data reduction.
3. Competence in the use of SPSS data analysis software.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

2 - 3 Seminars, some lectures, web-based tutorials. Assessed by submission of written work, including essays and exercises.

D. Transferable skills – able to:

1. Non-subject specific skills and knowledge in: bibliographic and computing techniques; teaching experience; ethical and legal issues; exploitation of research and intellectual property rights.
2. Personal development and employment-related skills in: communication, including writing, dissemination and media skills; research management and team-working; personal and career development, including using new technologies for researching and retrieving information on employment and other relevant opportunities for personal development.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1 - 2 Seminars, some lectures, web-based tutorials. Assessed by submission of written work, including essays and exercises.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme handbooks.