Political Science

Degree conferred
Bachelor of Arts

Languages of study
Study in German. Many courses are also offered in French, and some in English.

Commencement of studies
Commencement of studies in the Autumn Semester (September) or in the Spring Semester (February)

Access to further studies
This bachelor programme qualifies students for the master programmes **Eastern European Studies** and **European Studies**.

Political science deals with some of the most important questions of our time: how is political power justified, and what conditions are needed for a stable democracy? How can we explain the attraction of authoritarian leadership? Why do international conflicts break out, and what conditions are needed for stable peace? How can we explain social and economic inequality, and what consequences does it have? The Political Science programme in Fribourg focuses on these and many other crucial questions about living together as a society. It also teaches analytical and methodological skills to help answer them on a systematic and empirical basis.
As part of their bachelor studies in Political Science, students attend courses on the comparative analysis of political systems and their institutional components, political attitudes and political behaviour, international and transnational relationships, as well as political economy, policy research and social inequality. They also have the opportunity to attend political philosophy courses on the theory of justice, democratic theory and epistemology; furthermore, they learn qualitative and quantitative research methodologies as well as how to use the data analysis tool R/RStudio.

Profile of the study programme

One particular focus of the study programme is the comparative analysis of political regimes, attitudes and behaviour. In addition to Western Europe, this routinely includes political systems of Eastern Europe and other world regions. No other Swiss university offers this focus.

Fribourg Profile
The course can be completed entirely in German. A few compulsory course components are taught in German or English. However, French-language components are available every semester, which makes the course suitable also for French-speaking students with a working knowledge of German. Module 6 can be taken entirely in French.

The bachelor programme is divided into five basic modules and one elective module:

Module 1: Basics and methods
This module teaches the basics of empirical political science. The compulsory lecture «Introduction to political science» provides an overview of the sub-disciplines of political science. The remaining module components teach quantitative and qualitative research methods, skills in the open-source programming language R for data analysis, and research design and scientific writing.

Module 2: Democracy and autocracy
The module centres on the comparison of political regimes and their institutions, actors and political cultures. It also deals with the effectiveness and foundations for the legitimacy of democratic and authoritarian leadership. The regional focus of this module is on Eastern Europe, but other world regions are also routinely taught, including a regular course on Swiss politics.

Module 3: Europe in a complex world
This module deals with topics of international conflict and cooperation: war and peace, national interests and security issues, international organisations, (neo)colonial relations, human rights and international law. It also includes components on transnational relations between social actors, such as social movements and international NGOs, as well as transborder political cultures and social exchanges. The regional focus is on Europe and its global relations, but some course components without a European focus are available, and these deal in particular with countries referred to as the «Global South».

Module 4: Equality and inequality in the political process
This module includes components on (international) political economy, policy research and social (in)equality from other study programmes, such as Gender Studies. The module also includes optional components on the welfare state and social policy. All the components which comprise this module deal with the distribution of economic resources or social status and an explanation of these phenomena from the perspective of political science. The module further includes aspects of political theory covering issues of justice.

Module 5: Advanced comparative politics
The POL05 module looks at comparative politics at a more advanced level, thus setting the focus of the Political Science course. The compulsory lecture examines in greater depth issues relating to the comparative analysis of political institutions, attitudes, and/or behavioural patterns in various political regimes. Participation in an advanced course on quantitative research methods is also compulsory in this module. The seminar paper in this module gives students the opportunity to put their own empirical data analysis (qualitative or quantitative) into practice.

Module 6/7: Elective Political Sociology or Political Anthropology
In this module, students attend courses relevant to political science compiled from partner programmes «Sociologie» (mainly in French) and «Sozialanthropologie» (mostly in German).

Learning outcomes and career openings
The Political Science course imparts broad knowledge of political

institutions, processes, ideas and conflicts in national, European and international contexts – a basis for analysing complex situations in society. Students acquire skills in project management, analysis of political or organisational measures, and the formulation of reasoned recommendations. They also learn how to understand and prepare data and analyse it using the statistical computing software R, as well as how to apply quantitative and qualitative empirical social research methods.
Graduates work in a wide variety of professions, such as public administration, political parties, parliaments, associations, trade unions, NGOs and international organisations; they also work in media and communications, market research, opinion polling and business consultancy, as well as in science and research. The course offers a sound basis for postgraduate social science studies and a doctorate. In the interests of their career orientation, students have the option of doing an internship in a business or political organisation.

Studies organisation

Structure of studies

120 ECTS credits + 60 ECTS credits in a minor study programme freely chosen, 6 semesters

Curriculum

https://studies.unifr.ch/go/c

Admission

The following **Swiss school-leaving certificates** grant **admission to bachelor programmes** at the University of Fribourg:

- Swiss academic Maturity Certificate
- Federal vocational or specialised Baccalaureate + supplementary examination of the Swiss Maturity Commission (passerelle)
- Bachelor Degree from a Swiss university, from an accredited Swiss university of applied sciences (HES/FH) or from a Swiss university of teacher education (HEP/PH)

A **complete list of all further recognised Swiss school-leaving certificates** is to be found on the webpages of swissuniversities (*in French and German only*): https://studies.unifr.ch/go/fr-admission-swisscertificates; https://studies.unifr.ch/go/de-admission-swisscertificates
Foreign upper secondary school-leaving certificates are recognised only if they correspond substantially to the Swiss Maturity Certificate. They must qualify as general education. Foreign school-leaving certificates are considered to be general education if, among other things, the last three years of schooling include at least six general education subjects, independent from each other, in accordance with the following list:

1. Language of instruction (at the school)
2. Second language (a foreign language)
3. Mathematics
4. Natural sciences (biology or chemistry or physics)
5. Humanities and social sciences (geography or history or economics/law)
6. Elective (computer sciences or philosophy or an additional language or an additional subject from category 4 or 5)

The general **admission** requirements to the **bachelor programmes** at the University of Fribourg for holders of foreign school-leaving certificates as well as the **admission requirements for individual countries** are to be found on the webpages of swissuniversities: https://studies.unifr.ch/go/en-admission-countries
In addition, applicants with foreign school-leaving certificates must present **proof of sufficient language skills in French or German**.
All guidelines are available at *(only in French and German)*: https://studies.unifr.ch/go/adm-guidelines

The assessment of foreign school-leaving certificates is based on the «Recommendations for the Assessment of Foreign Upper Secondary School-Leaving Certificates» adopted by the Chamber of universities of swissuniversities on 21.11.2024 (https://studies.unifr.ch/go/swissuniversities24fr; https://studies.unifr.ch/go/swissuniversities24de). The admission requirements are valid for the respective academic year. The Rectorat of the University of Fribourg reserves the right to change these requirements at any time.

Alternatives

Also offered as a minor study programme (60 ECTS credits).

Contact

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