**Political Studies at UCT**

The department embraces a wide range of research and publication interests with particular focus on the areas of South African politics and policy analysis, civil-military relations, comparative politics, political ethics, intellectual history and local government. Members of the department have published widely, both in scholarly and research journals and in more popular publications, on aspects of the South African transition from apartheid to democracy. This continues to be a major interest, with special attention to problems of the consolidation of democracy, the role of the armed forces in democratisation and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but there is an emerging trend towards empirical research and surveys as well as policy analysis. The department is closely linked to the Centre for Social Science Research with two staff members having joint appointments. Based on expertise developed in research, members of the department have made contributions to a range of government activities especially in the areas of defense, development, education, local government, mediation, policing and voting.

**WHAT is Politics?**

Politics is about power: its use, abuse, function, operation and effects. In political studies we study the role and operation of power in relations between people, within states, and between states. There are few things in society and between societies that cannot be put to political analysis. Despite the breadth of the subject matter, much of the time political scientists study the politics of the state and focus on “big questions” such as:

- Why do revolutions occur?
- What are the best conditions for a stable democracy?
- Why do countries go to war?
- What are the effects of a free-trade regime on African countries?

**WHY study Politics?**

In order to answer the big questions that face all societies, we require a thorough grounding in the various thinkers, approaches, theories and case studies developed in the discipline. With some familiarity with these tools of analysis we are able to make intellectual sense of the world we live in. Our country with its conflict-ridden political history is an ideal setting for the study of politics. It is a new democracy facing significant political and policy challenges in a world that is rapidly changing.

The study of politics focuses on how people make, adjudicate and enforce rules that govern how we live our lives, whether at the level of the local community, the nation-state, or the international system. It focuses largely on the study of formal institutions such as political parties, legislatures and executives within specific countries, as well as international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund or United Nations. We also focus on how ordinary people interact with these institutions through the study of elections, public opinion, civil society, social movements and protest.

**WHAT can I do with Politics?**

While a Major in politics does not provide you with a “ready-made” career at the end of your three years of study, it does provide you an indispensable foundation for a range of careers. Imagine a job as a professional journalist without knowing the fundamentals about the world of politics? Or a young manager in a large company in South Africa without any prior knowledge about how the country became a democracy and how our democratic system works? Besides the need to understand politics for specialist careers, there is also the need for every citizen to be familiar with tools to analyse politics and be aware of the impact of politics on individual citizens. How else can we become critical, participatory citizens of a vibrant democracy in Africa?

In the past our students have typically gone on to pursue careers in law, journalism, human rights organizations, non-governmental organizations, government, and the public service, business and research.
The Department of Political Studies offers

From 2016, the Department of Political Studies will offer a new, single major in "Politics and Governance". This major will allow students to specialise in the three sub-fields of:

- Politics
- International Relations
- Governance

The study of politics focuses on how people make, adjudicate and enforce rules that govern how we live our lives, whether at the level of the local community, the national-state, or the international system.

International Relations is the study of interactions between state and non-state actors across international borders. At UCT, the study of International Relations includes courses on international organisations, conflict, comparative politics and foreign policy.

Governance is the study of the decisions that governments make to resolve social, economic and developmental problems, and the institutions tasked with carrying out these decisions. The study of Governance at UCT equips students with the critical ability to analyse the content and effects of policy, the capacity of institutions, and the practice of government.

Within South Africa, our former students have pursued careers as researchers in civil society organizations, as officials in local, provincial and national government, as key decision-makers in political parties, and as Members of Parliament. Internationally, our students have gone on to work as researchers in international organizations and donor agencies, and as officials and diplomats in the development and foreign ministries of South Africa and other foreign countries.

Entrance Requirements: same as for General Degree Programmes

Politics is often met with strong emotional responses, from suspicion and mistrust, to grand visions and justice. Contrary to what many people think, to study Politics is not necessarily to “go into” politics or become a politician.

The study of politics is essentially about understanding, appreciating, and in many cases seeking to influence the various ways that people discuss, make and implement decisions which affect how they live in the world.

The Politics and Governance major will not qualify a student to occupy a specific profession. Indeed, it has the potential to offer students more than this. It will equip a student with a set of versatile intellectual skills to examine, critique and make direct contributions to the public institutions that our society regards as being important. A Politics major is an excellent foundation for further studies in Law as well as an important partner subject to Economics. The building of a democratic South Africa offers an exciting range of employment opportunities for Politics graduates, in research organisations and Universities, government institutions (including the diplomatic corps), and the many United Nations and international agencies operating in South Africa.

For further information
Visit our website: www.politics.uct.ac.za
email: Verona.langenhoven@uct.ac.za
Tel: 021-650-3381