

Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

Basic Course Information

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| 1. | Awarding Institution: | Nottingham Trent University |
| 2. | School/Campus: | Social Sciences/City |
| 3. | Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study: | MA Politics, F/T, P/T |
| 4. | Normal Duration: | 1 year (F/T); 2 years (P/T). |
| 5. | UCAS Code: | |

6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

Following recent global events, politics – as we know it – is in crisis. Alongside the gradual decline in ‘formal’ political engagement there has arisen a deep suspicion of the twentieth-century promise of globalisation, and in this so-called ‘post-truth’ context many of the values and institutions of the liberal democratic order have been brought into question. The MA Politics provides you with the skills and knowledge sufficient with its aims of exploring what constitutes political participation today, and does so by providing you the unique opportunity for combining academic research with a period of work-based learning – either through existing links you might have with an institution/organisation or through links established throughout the course.

Building on the *Department of Politics and International Relation’s* outstanding results in Student Satisfaction Surveys (PTES 2017), the MA Politics has been designed to reflect the research specialisms of its members. The course examines debates concerning engagement/disengagement with conventional political institutions, values and processes, the evolution of modern political systems, and the relationship between sustainability, citizenship and ethics; all of which are actively explored through our ‘*Citizens, Parties and Political Action*’ and ‘*Ethics, Ecology, Identity*’ research groups. As such, you are guaranteed that our teaching is research-informed and that you will have the opportunity to study and reflect on the cutting-edge developments in research and practice in the discipline. At least one module on the course is shared with the MA International Relations, and in the past this has helped establish a useful basis for the cross-fertilization of knowledge and research that traverses the disciplines.

We welcome applications from both home and international students,

preferably with some previous experience in social sciences, although all applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The core aims of the MA Politics are to:

- *Deliver a course at postgraduate level that enables you to engage in a critical and informed analysis of issues relating to contemporary debates concerning the theme of 'participation';*
- *Produce graduates who demonstrate an advanced knowledge and understanding of political research methods and methodologies;*
- *Produce graduates who possess a systematic and critical awareness of key theories, methods, practices, and issues in Politics as a discipline at the national, regional and global levels;*
- *Enable graduates to communicate clearly, show initiative, independence and accountability, and evaluate material critically and engage positively in lifelong learning.*

7. Course outcomes

Course outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of your course if you take advantage of the opportunities for learning that we provide.

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of advanced theories and concepts underpinning the discipline of Politics, and their relationship to current debates in political science, political theory/philosophy, and environmental ethics;
2. Critically analyse the relationship between citizens, the democratic process, and political institutions in contemporary British politics.
3. Critically evaluate the changing nature of regional politics, and their relationship to technology, globalization, and political ideology;
4. Critically evaluate the interplay between a range of contemporary local and global issues.

Skills, qualities and attributes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Design and manage an extended piece of academic and/or work-based research based on a contemporary political issue/problematic of your choosing.

2. Reflect critically on feedback provided by both peers and the course team, and when appropriate provide feedback on peers' work in a constructive manner in a collegiate setting;
3. Gather, collate and manage qualitative and/or quantitative data as a means of exploring complex social problems in areas of your choosing;
4. Show initiative in the design and formulation of an extended research/work-based project, taking personal responsibility for its completion whilst working to a strict deadline;
5. Work independently and/or collaboratively with peers who are likely to have a range of academic, personal and national backgrounds;

8. **Teaching and Learning Methods**

The MA Politics will encourage extensive knowledge of the discipline, proficiency in the use of relevant software, a capacity for independent thought, and strong information, data, and time management skills.

Teaching methods comprise a combination of formal lectures, student-led workshops, debates and presentations. NTU's online learning environment - NOW - is used as means of communication between staff and students and as a continually accessible store for course materials, discussion boards, links etc., to enhance your learning experience.

A strong synergy between research and teaching ensures that study materials are kept relevant and up-to-date. All members of the team engage in a range of research and professional activities, present papers at national and international conferences and publish books and articles in a variety of academic journals. Details of our research specialisms can be found [here](#).

The course will be delivered intensively through three academic terms. On the full-time route, you will take two modules in the first term, two modules in the second term, and finally, your dissertation or work-based portfolio will take place throughout the summer period. If you opt for the part-time route, in your first year you will take one module in the first term, and one in the second. In your second year you will do the same, but also complete the dissertation research project or work-based research project throughout the summer months.

For each module, each week will consist of two, approximately two-hour classes. Whilst specific details regarding the timetabling of classes cannot be provided until the onset of the course, in previous years the course has been taught over the period of two days.

In addition to the direct 'contact time' established through each module, you will also become part of NTU's research culture, engaging directly with both its *Divisional Research Seminar Series*, held throughout the whole academic year, and also NTU's yearly *Social Science conference*, usually held in February.

To complete the MA Politics you must pass all modules and accrue 180 credits of study. A Postgraduate Diploma in Politics will be awarded for the completion of 120 credits. A Postgraduate Certificate in Politics will be awarded for the completion of 60 credits.

9. **Assessment Methods**

Assessment plays a key role in the learning process, providing an impetus to learning and enabling you to be given feedback for personal development and growth. The MA Politics has a varied, fair, and consistent assessment regime based upon clearly specified criteria and uses a variety of assessment techniques to ensure that the range of learning outcomes are met.

Subject knowledge and understanding are tested through a variety of means. Writing skills are tested via essays, article reviews, reports, and portfolios/e-portfolios. There are no exams on this course. Assessments will be both 'formative' and 'summative'. Formative assessments give you the opportunity to review and consolidate aspects of your learning, particularly with respect to modifying your work for your final 'summative' deadlines. Each module has a combination of both, and the course has been designed specifically to 'scaffold' this combination from module to module, ensuring that the knowledge/skills gained throughout can be applied cumulatively as the course unfolds.

Whilst the majority of your assessments are written-based your interpersonal communication skills will also be developed; both individually and, at times,

collectively through individual and group presentations. In addition to receiving individual feedback from your tutor you will also be encouraged to both provide and critically reflect on the feedback of your peers. In this sense your skills will be tested both on an interpersonal and intrapersonal level; a key 'transferable skill' that will likely prove essential for whatever future career you choose to pursue after the course.

Each module on the MA Politics adopts an explicitly national, regional and/or global perspective on a range of political, economic, social and environmental issues. Most of its modules are team-taught, which allows for a responsive and varied curriculum which reflects the individual and collective research interests of the team.

10. **Course structure and curriculum**

The MA in Politics consists of 180 credits made up of four 30-credit modules – three core and one optional – and a dissertation research project or work-based research project (60 credits).

Core (compulsory) modules:

- *Citizens, Values and Political Participation;*
- *Political Party Development;*
- *Researching Political Issues;*

Plus one from the following optional modules:

- *Sustainability, Citizenship and Identity;*
- *Global Governance;*

Plus

- *Dissertation or work-based research project*

Core modules are designed specifically to reflect current developments and thinking in the theme of political participation. The course is structured around three core modules: *Citizens, Values, and Political Participation* and *Party Political Development* explore key up-to-date debates surrounding the theory and practice of participation in both UK and European politics, and *Researching Political Issues* provides the foundations, methods and skills to

study and/or engage directly with such Politics.

The available optional modules align specifically to the theme of the MA Politics, and offer you the opportunity to broaden your understanding of what constitutes political engagement today. *Sustainability, Citizenship and Identity* explores participatory politics via environmental, philosophical and theoretical debate, whilst *Global Governance* relates specifically to the theory and practice of political participation in the global arenas. You will be informed if any of these modules are not available in a given year, but you can be assured that the combination of core and optional modules will provide you with a coherent package of knowledge and learning.

The final component of the course is the *Dissertation*. The *Dissertation* module offers you the choice of two possible pathways. Here you can opt for the 'standard' route, which comprises the development of a coherent and viable research proposal on a topic of your choice, with its eventual assessment being a 12,000 word written dissertation. The other possible route will involve a period of work-based learning, spending time engaging with a chosen institution/organisation either in the local Nottinghamshire community or further afield - through paid work or volunteering. If applicable, here you might choose to build on any previous or existing work-based experience, or instead establish new links during your time on the course. Either way, this option will be explained in detail early in the course, as too will our existing links with a range of such potential organisations. If this pathway is successfully arranged, your assessment will comprise a written research plan and a research project (inclusive of a short reflective diary) of between 8,000 to 10,000 words.

As a key formative requirement of the course, each module will ask you to maintain an employability e-portfolio which documents the knowledge/skills/experiences gained throughout, as too reflecting on their potential applicability to the wider world of work beyond your studies. This will be formatively assessed towards the end of the module, and you will have the opportunity to discuss your ideas with our employability/fourth-year tutor – as too, more generally, the NTU employability team.

11. **Admission to the course**

For current information regarding all entry requirements for this course, please see the 'Applying' tab on the NTU course information web page.

12. **Support for Learning**

The course begins with an induction programme which will explain its aims, delivery and expectations. A course handbook will be provided which explains how the course works and outline the support provided by the teaching team and the University.

During the course, communication between staff and students is conducted both via email and on a face-to-face basis. All teaching staff will provide regular 'office hours' when they are available to see students. Throughout your time at NTU you will be also be assigned a personal tutor who will provide both pastoral and academic support.

Depending on which pathway you choose to take via the *Dissertation* module, you will also be assigned a specific tutor to support you throughout this final aspect of your degree. Here you will either be assigned a tutor whose academic expertise suits your chosen research topic, or will have the guidance of a dedicated tutor who will provide regular assistance in completing both your period of work-based learning and its resultant research project.

As an MA Politics student you will have access to the University's [libraries](#) and computer facilities, and the further computer, technical and administrative resources provided by the School of Social Sciences. NTU's online workspace – NOW - is used by all members of the course to support and enhance module delivery, and is the principal means of disseminating course information.

The Boots Library - located in the heart of the city campus - will be the main resource for your studies. Many course materials can be accessed online, and there is an ever-growing number of e-books and electronic journal utilised. Excellent communication between library personnel and the course team ensures that appropriate and up-to-date material is available to you, and there will be a dedicated slot during induction (and later throughout the course) outlining the various library resources available, alongside how to find

them.

Support within the *Division of Politics and International Relations* is supplemented by effective School-based academic and pastoral support, which is widely publicised and used well by existing students. As stated earlier, if you are an international student you will also have the option of in-session English support to help you with developing and sustaining your writing skills.

Discussed in more detail below, the *MA Politics* will have regular Course Committees where a representative of your course can share your experiences and provide on-going feedback; feedback we value very highly and will encourage you – and the course team – to reflect on continually as the course progresses.

13. Graduate destinations / employability

NTU has a justified reputation among the UK's universities for the high level of employability of its graduates, and throughout the course you will be strongly encouraged to actively engage with its comprehensive employability services. The *MA Politics* will provide you with a range of 'transferable skills' – i.e. skills which can be transferred and/or applied to a wide range of potential career pathways. Such skills include:

- *The ability for independent and critical thought;*
- *Analysing and evaluating complex and at times unfamiliar problems;*
- *Working to tight deadlines;*
- *Presenting your ideas with confidence and clarity both in writing and in speech;*
- *Working and learning collaboratively with peers from a range of personal, academic and national backgrounds.*

As a key component of the course, each module will encourage you to keep an employability e-portfolio. Here, in liaison with both individual tutors and NTU's [employability](#) team, you will identify the knowledge/skills (both subject-specific and transferable) gained throughout the course and begin the process of matching them with a range of potential career pathways. Whilst this isn't always the primary reason students elect to choose a post-graduate degree in

Politics, the optional pathway within the *Dissertation* module – outlined in section 10 above – has been designed specifically for those seeking a more ‘hands on’ attempt to link academic with experiential learning, and in the past we have had students engage in particularly fruitful partnerships with a range of local organisations.

14. Course standards and quality

The quality management of the course is developed in-line with University regulations and guidelines. The Course Committee – consisting of all members of the course team and student representatives – meets once a term and it is here that we discuss and reflect on the how the course is running.

The course is also monitored by an external examiner, and their comments are invited at meetings of the Board of Examiners and their recommendations addressed through the Course Committee and subject team meetings.

15. Assessment regulations

This course is subject to the University’s Common Assessment Regulations (located in its [Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#)). Any course-specific assessment features are described below:

As an MA Politics student you can discuss your assessments at any time with individual module leaders and/or the course leader. All assessments will be explained clearly and each assessed learning outcome will be stated clearly on each module’s grading sheet.

Your work will be assessed via the University’s [Grade-Based assessment](#) scheme, and in-line with university policy all assessed work will be graded and returned within 15 working days. Feedback is provided either electronically or in person, depending on the nature of the assessment. Some modules will also encourage students to engage in self and peer feedback.

16. Additional Information

Collaborative partner(s):

Course referenced to national QAA

Benchmark Statements:

Course recognised by:

Date implemented:

March 2018

Any additional information: the MA Politics shares one core module with the MA International Relations, as well as one optional module.

