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February 10, 2021

Dr. Karen P. DePauw  
Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education  
Virginia Tech Graduate School  
Mail Code: 0325

To Dean DePauw,

**Re.:** Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies (CGS&P), requirement for graduate students, an inclusion and diversity component, to be approved for Spring 2022 semester.

The Master of Arts, Political Science program housed in the Department of Political Science & International Studies will fulfill the new **Inclusion and Diversity Requirement** (pursuant to April 2018 the resolution adopted by the CGS&P) by implementing the plan listed below.

Please note however, that in the context of the MA PSCI program, many of the stipulations listed in the resolution have been in continuous operation for several years, and are supported formally through both in-course requirements and orientation and workshop sessions. In addition, graduate students in both the on-campus and online programs are active participants in inclusion and diversity initiatives and activities.

In fact, it would be remiss of us as scholars in the discipline of Political Science not to include formal and informal study of inclusion and diversity considerations in our pedagogy, given that politics in general, and political institutions, policymaking, political communication, political thought and history, as well as international relations in particular, cannot be adequately understood in the absence of such considerations.

Department of Political Science & International Studies Master of Arts (Political Science)  
Plan for Inclusion and Diversity Component as a Requirement for Graduation.

1. Every incoming PSCI MA student is required to participate in an hour-long session led by the PSCI & IS Director of Graduate Studies and the departmental faculty member serving as the Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator on matters of Inclusion and Diversity on and off-campus, as part of the two hour-long orientation session that must be attended by all incoming PSCI MA students, typically scheduled for August in the days prior to the start of the Fall semester. During this session, matters pertaining to ways, methods, and expectations to achieve an affirming, inclusive, and diverse education at Virginia Tech and in the context of the PSCI MA program will be introduced, explained, and discussed. Inclusion and Diversity issues relating to off-campus 'town and gown' relations will also

be explored. Students will also be given copies of Inclusion and Diversity affirming documents provided by the University, the Graduate School, and the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech. The students will also be asked to sign a form (filed with the PSCI & IS Graduate Studies Program Manager, at the time of writing, Ms. Karen Nicholson and stored in the individual student's departmental file) stating that they have received from the Department, these relevant documents during this session.

- 1.1. In addition, the American Political Science Association (APSA) provides considerable resources to relating to the ethics of research and Inclusion and Diversity as relating to research (available at, <https://www.apsanet.org/TEACHING/Ethics> and <https://www.apsanet.org/DIVERSITY/Diversity-and-Inclusion-Programs>), and students will be introduced to these resources in the orientation session.
- 1.2. During orientation, incoming students are also introduced to the available channels for redress and shared responsibilities as active by-standers dimensions of the Inclusion and Diversity policy at Virginia Tech, including links to the Human Resources Department's Title IX, the Dean of Students' Student Conduct, the Graduate Honor System and Disrupting Academic Bullying, the Women's Counselling Center and Cook Counselling Center webpages. Even though these are written into the PSCI MA Graduate Studies Handbook, the Director of Graduate Studies will explicitly address this issue during the orientation session.
2. Every incoming PSCI MA student must sign up for and satisfactorily pass the following required courses: PSCI 5115 Research Methods I, PSCI 5116 Research Methods II, and PSCI 5214 Contemporary Political Theory.
  - 2.1. PSCI 5115 Research Methods I: In this methods course, several sessions (of three hours each) and themes are directly dedicated to matters of Inclusion and Diversity. Cutting-edge methodological literatures relating to the empirical (statistical-'big-N', model-based, and qualitative-'small-N') study of politics and the incorporation into such study of gender, race, indigeneity, ablism, sexuality, LGBTQ matters, among other areas of emphasis, are presented and discussed during these sessions. In rare cases, an incoming PSCI MA student will be exempted from PSCI 5115 based on prior learning. In these cases, the student will be required to provide the Director of Graduate Studies with a 3-5 page paper (i.e., comparable to that required of those taking the class) which addressed the issue of incorporating adequate inclusion and diversity considerations into research design.
  - 2.2. PSCI 5116 Research Methods II: In this advanced methods course, considerations of Inclusion and Diversity are addressed in the requirement that all students successfully (i.e., achieve a score of 80% or higher, as per university standard requirements) complete the Human Subjects Research Basic Course-social/behavioral/educational research using CITI (<https://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp/training.html>). This training module is specifically designed to train researchers on the application of appropriate ethical considerations to research with human subjects. As such, the

training builds on training provided in PSCI 5115 regarding the incorporation into the empirical (statistical-‘big-n’ and qualitative-‘small-n’) study of politics of gender, race, indigeneity, ablism, sexuality, LGBTQ matters, among other Inclusion and Diversity considerations and demonstrates to students what is required to meet or exceed basic ethical standards relating to research design which upholds the principles of Inclusion and Diversity.

- 2.3. PSCI 5214 Contemporary Political Theory: In this mandatory course, students are required to engage with issues of inclusion and diversity at all stages of learning and examination. Given that the Political Science subfield of Political Theory sits at the intersection of Philosophy (broadly, the study of what is true, good, beautiful) and History (the study of collective change over time), then the subject matter of a class in *contemporary* Political Theory must address the mechanisms (the how’s, why’s, who’s and when’s) of change that affect what ‘we’ as political agents consider to be true, good, or beautiful at a given moment and in a given place. As such, contemporary political theory simply cannot be taught in the second decade of the twenty-first century United States without directly addressing Inclusion and Diversity considerations. Depending on Faculty research specializations, readings included in a typical PSCI 5214 syllabus have in the past and will continue to include well-known works such as Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*; Edward Said’s *Orientalism*; W.E.B Dubois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*, Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*, and Ibrahim X. Kendi’s *How to be an Antiracist*.
3. Every PSCI MA student must earn a passing grade (B- or above) in all three courses to be allowed to move forward with their Program of Study. No student will be allowed to defend a thesis proposal if the student’s plan of study shows a failing grade. None of the three core courses cannot be taken Pass/Fail (notwithstanding COVID-19 special conditions as per university requirements). Given that inclusion and diversity concerns and questions are key components of all three courses, no PSCI MA student will be able to move forward to the thesis writing and defense stage without having participated in the relevant activities with regards to inclusion and diversity offered in these three courses as well as the orientation day Inclusion and Diversity training.
4. The PSCI & IS Director of Graduate Studies, the PSCI & IS faculty member serving as the departmental Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator, and/or the PSCXI MA Program Manager will throughout the academic year announce various Inclusion and Diversity activities, events, workshops, and scholarly/pedagogical opportunities offered by the Graduate School, the University, the College to all PSCI MA students via email (the PSCI MA student email listserv, [pscigrads@vt.edu](mailto:pscigrads@vt.edu)), provided that the Graduate School, the University, or the College notifies PSCI & IS of such activities, events, workshops, and opportunities in a timely fashion. PSCI MA students are always strongly encouraged to be active participants in these activities and events, and to immerse themselves in Inclusion and Diversity enhancing activities and organizations both on and off campus.

Dean DePauw  
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I believe that this plan meets or exceeds the Graduate School's new Inclusion and Diversity requirement as stipulated by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, Resolution 2017-18A. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Professor Timothy W. Luke  
Department Chair



Andrew Joseph Scerri  
Director of Graduate Studies