The Department of Political Science prepares students for careers in law, academia, government, business, journalism, and political work. Most majors are interested in law school; however, an increasing number are also interested in pursuing graduate degrees in political science, public policy, and international studies. In fact, several department graduates go on to dual or joint degree programs that allow them to pursue both law and graduate degrees in one structured program.

The department's pre-law program assists students with preparation for law school through academic advising, moot court participation, preparation for the LSAT, and facilitating contact with law schools. Political Science graduates have been admitted to law schools at North Carolina Central University, Duke, the University of North Carolina, Howard, Campbell, Tulane, Wake Forest, Cornell, University of Chicago, Florida, and many more. Moreover, political science majors have been accepted to many graduate schools including: North Carolina Central University, University of North Carolina, Duke, North Carolina State University, Howard, American, and McGill in Montreal. Professionally, political science majors are lawyers, judges, elected officials, businesspersons, journalists, academics, and government officials. Noted graduates include renowned attorney and sports agent, Butch Williams; political scientist Floyd Hayes; North Carolina Supreme Court Associate Justice and now US House of Representatives G. K. Butterfield, former state legislator and Judge Toby Fitch.

The department has an in-house computing and writing lab. It also has two professors with law degrees (one holds a PhD/JD and the other a JD from Harvard University).

Dr. Lenneal Henderson serves as the Dan Blue Endowed Chair in Political Science. Dr. Henderson is an internationally renowned scholar. His presence in the Department of Political Science has enhanced greatly the academic climate. The Department is home to several clubs and organizations including the Political Science Club, the Civic Engagement Task Force, Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society, and Phi Alpha Delta pre-law fraternity.

Origins of the Department of Political Science

In 1943, Dr. Joseph Taylor wrote to NCC President James E. Shepard and suggested that new courses be added to the “History-Social Science Department,” and signed the letter, “Joseph H. Taylor, Department of History.” Nonetheless, at that time, Dr. Taylor presided over an apparently informal Division of Social Sciences. In May 1953, the Division of Social Sciences was officially established with majors in History, Political Science, Social Science, and Sociology. At the July 23, 1963 executive committee meeting, five new departments were created in the Division of Social Sciences. They were the Commerce and Economics Department, headed by Dr. Tucker; the Geography Department, headed by Dr. Theodore Speigner; the History and Social Sciences Department, headed by Dr. Helen G. Edmonds; the Political Science Department, headed by Dr. Violet Wurfel; and the Sociology Department, headed by Dr. Joseph Himes. This was the official breakup [sic] of the division of social sciences into five separate departments. (Research Courtesy of Dr. Jerry B. Gershenhorn, History) While Dr. Taylor oversaw the creation of the Department of Political Science, Dr. Jackson Jordan is listed as the first person hired to teach in what is now the Department of Political Science. He was hired in 1934/35.

The Department of Political Science, from Dr. Taylor to Dr. Jeffrey Elliot, has had the benefit of having a diverse group of individuals to serve as chairs. This group share impressive educational backgrounds from the nation’s most prestigious universities and include individuals who have served in the highest levels of government. In addition to creating the Department of Political Science, in June of 1948 Dr. Taylor also started and directed for 14 years a very successful Summer School, designed to provide an additional opportunity to attend school for students not enrolled in the fall and spring semesters. The Summer School program he directed institutionalized summer school on this campus. Dr. Taylor received degrees from Michigan Normal College, the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. from the University of California. Dr. Taylor was first hired in 1939. He remained employed with the university for nearly 24 years. Dr. Taylor is quoted as saying the following: “My students are human beings, and I treat them as such. The only difference between them and me is that I have had more experience than they; I have been over the roads they are now traveling and therefore should be in a position to guide them “(8-6-1963 Summer Echo, Courtesy of the National Archives). This sentiment has been shared by future chairs of the department and has helped to set the standard for faculty in their relationship with students.

Chair: 1963-1966

Dr. Violet Wurfel has the distinction of being the first and only female chair of the Political Science department. She served as chair from 1963-1966. Educated at the University of Virginia, Dr. Wurfel received a doctorate degree at a time when the
number of women with PhD’s was very small. She also engaged in graduate level study at the world renowned University of Heidelberg prior to coming to NCCU. She began her tenure at NCCU in 1962, became chair in 1963, and served on the faculty of the university until 1979. The Department of Political Science offers a scholarship in her honor to students who have excelled inside and outside of the classroom.

Chair: 1966-1969
Dr. Russell Adams became chair following Dr. Wurfel. His tenure as chair lasted from 1966-1969. He was first hired in 1965. Dr. Adams received a bachelor’s degree in political science at Morehouse College and his master’s and doctorate degrees from the University of Chicago. In addition to his service as a professor and Chair of the department, Dr. Adams was a prolific writer. His publications include the frequently referenced *Great Negroes, Past and Present*, that was first published in 1963. This is a biographical survey of leading African Americans (NCCU Archives). He also contributed many other publications designed to have an interdisciplinary approach to the study of African American history and politics.

Chair: 1969-1977
Immediately following Dr. Adams’ tenure as Chair, Dr. Se Jin Kim took over the leadership role. He served as Chair from 1969 until 1977. Dr. Kim received his master’s and doctorate degrees from the University of Massachusetts. He conducted post-doctoral work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He received an outstanding educator award in 1972 and he was a Fulbright-Hayes winner during the 1974-1975 academic year. Dedicated to teaching, research, and service, Dr. Kim left NCCU in 1977 to accept a prestigious government post in South Korea.

During Kim’s tenure as chair, the public administration concentration was created in 1973. This program was led by Dr. Tyrone Baines, who came to the Department of Political Science in 1972. In 1985, the Master’s of Public Administration (MPA) was established by Dr. Clarence Brown who came to the political science department in 1973. Dr. Brown established the MPA with “the mission… to prepare students from diverse backgrounds to become professionals with the ability to ethically apply the knowledge and skills required for leadership and management for the public interest.” (Courtesy of the website -- Department of Public Administration). In 2001, public administration became an autonomous department.

Chair: 1977-1979
Dr. Golan Choudhury became Chair following the tenure of Dr. Kim. Formerly a member of the Pakistani Cabinet, Choudhury came to NCCU as a visiting professor in 1974. In 1975 he became the Director of the Center for International Studies. He served as chair of the department from 1977-1979, but continued to serve in his role as professor and Director for the Center for International Studies.

Chair: 1980-1997
Dr. Joseph Aicher assumed the role of chair in 1980. He remained chair until 1997, making him the longest serving chair since the department became a separate unit, 1980-1997. Dr. Aicher was first hired as an assistant professor of political science in 1970 after receiving his bachelor’s degree from St. Francis College in Pennsylvania, his master’s degree from Marquette University, and a doctorate degree from Duke University. Under his tenure as chair, he saw the number of majors substantially increase from 60 to well over 400 by the time he retired from the university in 2006. Dr. Aicher “is most famously known for bringing the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) program to NCCU in the mid 90’s. “I saw a need to help students here prepare for the exam, so I organized a study assistance program that I thought would be helpful, and over the years it has been instrumental in helping many students excel and improve their SAT scores.”

He is very proud of both the pre-law program and the SAT program that he organized during his early days. Aicher is quick to point out that he has had six students who have earned perfect scores on the SAT since the program began.

In keeping with teaching, service and research that is representative of chairs of the department, Dr. Aicher served as assistant coach of the NCCU football team and served as the academic coach for a time during which he saw an 85 percent graduation rate.

Chair: 1998-2005; 2010-
In 1998, Dr. Jarvis Hall became chair of the department. He held this position until 2005. A graduate of North Carolina A &T, and the University of Michigan, Dr. Hall became only the second African American to receive a doctorate degree in political science at Duke University. Under his tenure as chair, Dr. Hall was instrumental in getting students more engaged in the political process. For example, he helped students lead a march for voting rights and organized students to travel to a pivotal 2004 primary in South Carolina where students engaged in Get Out the Vote campaigns. Dr. Hall also served as Director of the Academic Community Service Learning Program for two years at NCCU. He continues his service at NCCU, where he is currently an Associate Professor and Director of the Institute for Civic Engagement and Social Change. He also serves as the interim chair of the department (2010).
Chair: 2005-2009

Dr. Jeffrey Eliot followed Dr. Hall as chair of the department. He served as chair from 2005 until his untimely death on December 12, 2009. Dr. Elliot came to the department of political science in 1981 after graduating with honors from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees and a Doctor of Arts in Government from Claremont Graduate University. He has also received honorary doctorate degrees. An accomplished scholar, Dr. Elliot epitomized the mission of the university-teaching, research and service. He became the heart of the department, integrating his intellect, research skills and life experiences into his teaching pedagogy. He was an author of 55 books, numerous magazine articles, and was interviewed many times concerning his expertise. He was instrumental in gaining students’ entrance and tuition at NCCU as well as hiring professors and secretaries. He enjoyed traveling and collected African Artifacts (source, NCCU webpage, obituary). Dr. Elliot had a high level of respect for all he encountered. He especially saw the best in our students. His last message to the graduating class of December 2009 was as follows: “To the graduating class of 2009, I wish you much success in the days that lie ahead. Always remember that no matter what obstacles you may encounter, you can triumph over adversity through faith, hard work, discipline, and struggle. I extend my love, prayers, best wishes, and support to you all in your future endeavors. We live in a world torn by injustice. It is not enough to strive for status, money, power, and worldly possessions. You must become drum majors for justice. You must invest your talents to make this a better world for all those who so depend on you. These are perilous times, both at home and abroad. The world needs your wisdom, commitment, courage, and sacrifice if we are to build a country worthy of our values and gifts.” This describes the type of student that our chairs wanted to create; it remains part of our mission.

Dr. Rolin Mainuddin served as interim chair for the winter 2009 semester. Dr. Jarvis Hall has temporarily returned to the position as chair.

The Department of Political Science is located in the Edmonds Classroom Building.

Prepared by Jarvis Hall, Ph.D.
Ms. Artemesia Stanberry
February 12, 2010