Meeting on Graduate Studies

Motives and Guide to applying for Graduate School in Political Science?
Master’s Degree

• As a step toward
  – Job
  – Pay Raise
  – Ph.D.
  – General Interest

• MA degrees are becoming more important for job advancement

• Less commitment than Ph.D.
Where do I go for an MA?

• Avoid high tuition and debt.
• Difference between MA degrees is less varied, although some departments better than others.
• Consider whether your aims require moving somewhere else to go to school.
• UTEP offers an MA in political science.
Why earn a Ph.D.?

• Becoming a Professor
  • Changing the world through teaching and research
  • Working for yourself, rather than someone else

• Government
• Media
• Business

• Nonprofit and International Organizations
• Consulting
• Research and Survey Institutes
What do I need to get into a good program?

• High grades (GPA), especially in major
• High Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores (often a key in popular programs) -- Math and verbal skills both important
• Focused interest in the faculty and specializations of the program (demonstrated in application essays) – You should match up with potential future mentors
• Letters of recommendation from people central to your undergraduate or MA studies
• Foreign language requirements or math preparation (statistics, algebra, calculus)
• Progress in research or participation in conferences
What is graduate school like, especially for a Ph.D.?

- Focus is one substantive progress toward becoming an independent and creative scholar, not on GPA.
- Obtain knowledge of various literatures and methodologies.
- Three years of classes often followed by comprehensive exams, and then two+ years of dissertation research.
- At the end you will be a specialist in some academic area.
- Diversity valued (race, ethnicity, gender, nationality)
Life style and other concerns:

- Investment in time, motivation, and emotions is non-trivial and not to be taken lightly – this is a serious commitment, especially beyond a Masters’ Degree
- Must be prepared to invest in books, computers, conference travel, etc.
- Must take care of life issues: family, health care, transportation, shelter
- You will likely need to move to another state or even country
- Unless you are so already, you will not be rich – this is an investment
- Emotionally and physically draining experience – but rewarding
How do I choose a program?

• Try to get into the best programs that study what you want to study

• Programs have certain specialties – if you do not match well, this lowers chances of acceptance – be clear about your interests relative to department

• Attempt to assess quality: rankings, job placements, student/faculty ratio, # and type of recent publications, facilities – this is all crucial at Ph.D. level
• Cost and resources – many departments offer stipends and tuition waivers, as well as other fringe benefits (health care, conference travel, grants, etc.).  

Try to avoid paying for your Ph.D. – there seems to be a relationship: the more they invest in you, the more they will care about you and the outcome of your studies.

• Geography? Dangerous if only to be near family – may not be in the right department depending on your goals.

• The role of mentor’s cannot be over-stated – they will greatly influence your life in very good and bad ways!!!!