

Sample career project paper

Upon graduation from college, graduates should clearly have an idea of what they plan to do with their futures. Many career options exist for today's political science majors. Three possible career options for political science majors include becoming a reference librarian at a university, choosing a career as a secondary school teacher, and working as a paralegal.

The first career option for a person with a bachelor's degree in political science is to work as a college or university academic reference librarian. All colleges and universities, both public and private, have extensive libraries on campus. These post-secondary institutions employ faculty level reference librarians to assist students needing help accessing library materials and resources, engage in research, classify materials, expand collections, perform instructional duties, and act as library liaisons between academic departments on campus.¹ Academic libraries employ reference librarians who specialize in, and represent, specific subject areas in which they hold bachelor's degrees or have background knowledge.² Therefore, political science majors who wish to become academic librarians will be able to find reference librarian jobs specializing in political science, law, and government documents.³ In order to become an academic librarian, one must obtain a master's degree in library and/or information science from a university accredited by the American Library Association (ALA).⁴ The ALA's Web site, located at www.ala.org, provides a list of American universities offering library science degrees accredited by the ALA.⁵ With a bachelor's degree in political science combined with a master's degree in library and information science, a person may begin applying for posted reference

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Librarians," U.S. Department of Labor, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos068.htm> (accessed March 8, 2008).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ American Library Association, "2007-2008 Directory of Institutions Offering ALA-Accredited Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies," American Library Association, <http://www.ala.org/ala/accreditation/lisdirb/lisdirectory.cfm> (accessed March 8, 2008).

librarian positions at academic institutions focused on an applicant with a political science background.⁶ An on-site interview, as well as submitting a résumé, cover letter, and letters of recommendation is a necessary part of the application process for this desired position.⁷ My career goal is to become an academic librarian at a college or university. In the fall of 2008, I will be attending San Jose State University, an ALA accredited university, where I will complete a master's degree in library and information science. Because of my double major in political science and history, I hope to have a wider choice of reference librarian job opportunities at academic institutions after graduation.

A second career opportunity for a person with a bachelor's degree in political science is to become a secondary school teacher, which includes grades seven through twelve.⁸ Whereas elementary teachers are trained and required to teach all subject areas, secondary teachers specialize in teaching certain subject areas.⁹ Given their background knowledge in politics, government, and history, political science majors are especially qualified to teach social science subjects in secondary schools, including history, economics, civics, and geography. In California, these job opportunities are readily available, as California law requires that history be taught in seventh, eighth, tenth, and eleventh grades as well as civics and economics in twelfth grade.¹⁰ To become a secondary school teacher of social science subjects, a person must first obtain a single subject credential in social science from a university, completing a four-year academic program.¹¹ Next, upon graduation, the political science major must apply for an

⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Librarians."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Teachers – Preschool, Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary," U.S. Department of Labor, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos069.htm> (accessed March 8, 2008).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ California State Board of Education, "History-Social Science Content Standards," California Department of Education, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/hstmain.asp> (accessed March 8, 2008).

¹¹ CSU, Chico Department of Education, "Single Subject Program Information," California State University, Chico, http://www.csuchico.edu/educ/progs_single.html (accessed March 8, 2008).

additional year to a university's education credential program, complete the program requirements, including student teaching, and finally interview for available teaching jobs in history, economics, or civics in grades 7-12.¹² As a history major with the social science credential option, I continue to follow an academic track that, if I so choose, would lead me directly into the teaching credential program. However, having completed 45 hours of observation in a local high school history classroom during the fall semester of 2007, I soon realized that secondary school teaching was not for me. Surprisingly, I found the lunch hours spent interning in the high school's library reinforced my decision that librarian work is where my true career interest lies.

A third career option for a person with a bachelor's degree in political science is to become a paralegal. Law firms, government agencies, and corporate legal departments employ paralegals to assist lawyers in performing legal tasks in law offices.¹³ Paralegals working in the private sector, either for law firms or corporate legal departments, assist private attorneys and often specialize in certain areas of the law.¹⁴ Those working in the public sector for government agencies work for individual agencies as well as community legal service projects providing assistance to needy people.¹⁵ Examples of activities paralegals perform include: assisting lawyers prepare for meetings, trials, and hearings, drafting documents for lawyers, managing law firm activities, and organizing and recording legal materials.¹⁶ Armed with a political science background, paralegals have a better understanding of how laws and governments work together and function in a democracy. On a smaller scale, they can focus on current trends and laws within the community. To become a paralegal, a person must obtain a certificate in paralegal

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Paralegals and Legal Assistants," U.S. Department of Labor, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm> (accessed March 8, 2008).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

studies, currently available in programs at many colleges and universities.¹⁷ Not required, but beneficial and recommended when searching for employment as a paralegal, is certification in a professional paralegal society, such as the National Association of Legal Assistants, Certified Legal Assistants, Certified Paralegals, Advanced Paralegal Certifications, Registered Paralegals, or the American Alliance Certified Paralegals.¹⁸ With a bachelor's degree in political science and a certificate in paralegal studies, a person would be ready to pursue a career as a paralegal in the private or public sector. Although I find the study of law interesting, I do not intend to pursue a paralegal career because my interests lie in historical rather than legal research.

Graduates should have a career path and plan of action in mind upon graduation. With bachelor's degrees in political science, graduates have many options from which to choose. Luckily, I realized relatively early my interest in becoming a college or university academic reference librarian, specializing in political science, history, law, or government documents.

Bibliography (Chicago Style)

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¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Paralegals and Legal Assistants." U.S. Department of Labor. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm> (accessed March 8, 2008).

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