

## **2017-2018 Institutional Effectiveness Report**

Name of Program/Department: Department of Political Science and Geography

Year: 2017-2018

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### **Program Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Political Science and Geography is to provide instruction that enables students to complete, as part of their general education requirement, an introductory-level course in political science that includes material dealing with the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers. Students may earn a major, minor, or collateral in political science. The program offers its majors a broad understanding of political phenomena, including political institutions, political processes, political behavior, political thought patterns, and contemporary political issues. The course of study for the major prescribes a set of core courses in the discipline's traditional sub-fields of American government, comparative politics, international relations, political philosophy, and political methodology. Students elect the remainder of their primary work from a range of course offerings pertaining to foreign and/or domestic American government and politics. The flexibility of the curriculum permits students to pursue a program of courses tailored to their individual interests and career goals. Graduates with a major in political science receive the broad training and develop the general competence in the discipline to equip them for successful careers in public service, politics, the military, journalism, and quasi-public agencies, commerce and industry, teaching, and other occupations for which preparation in the field is desirable, or to undertake postgraduate professional study in political science, public administration, or law.

### **Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)**

1. Political Science graduates will understand political phenomena and demonstrate proficiency in the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers.
2. Political Science students will be able to critically analyze written material and demonstrate a proficiency in oral communication.
3. The Political Science Department will provide opportunities for students to connect classroom instruction with real world experience through internships, study abroad programs, and guest speakers.
4. The Political Science Department will encourage students to create their own path of study by providing flexibility in the curriculum.

### **Executive Summary of Report**

The Institutional Effectiveness report details the student learning outcomes and assessment measures used in the 2017-2018 academic year. The report illustrates the department met the target on one of the student learning outcomes but not on the second. For our first student learning outcome, our target was to have 80% of students correctly answer ten embedded questions asked of all students taking POL 101 and 103. Seventy-seven percent of students correctly answered these embedded questions in POL 101 and seventy-one percent of students correctly answered these embedded questions in POL 103.

A third student learning outcome was that students would be able to interpret statistical analysis, as measured in the POL 295 final examination and on the final statistics problem set in POL 295. The target for this goal was for students to achieve 80% or higher. For the POL 295 final examination, this target was achieved as students performed at the 38% level. For the final statistics problem set, this benchmark was not achieved as students performed at the 38% level.

Based on these outcomes the Department of Political Science and Geography decided to implement the following improvements for 2017-2018:

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

SLO 1.0: Political Science Students will perform at the 80% level or above [benchmark = 60%] when describing and explaining content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers in POL 101.

SLO 2.0: Political Science Students will perform at the 80% level or above [benchmark = 60%] when describing and explaining content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers in POL 103.

SLO 3.0: Political Science Students will perform at the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%] when evaluating and interpreting statistical output and analysis.

### **Assessment Methods**

SLO 1.0: Political Science students, in POL 101 on average, will perform at the 80% level or above [benchmark=60%] when DESCRIBING and EXPLAINING content areas in political science, specifically when explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers as measured by three multiple choice questions embedded in tests across as POL 101 classes.

SLO 2.0: Political Science students, in POL 10. on average, will perform at the 80% level or above [benchmark=60%] when DESCRIBING and EXPLAINING content areas in political science, specifically when explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers as measured by three multiple choice questions embedded in tests across as POL 103 classes.

SLO 3.0: Political Science students in POL 295 will EVALUATE and INTERPRET statistical output at the 70% level or above [benchmark=60%] as measured by performance on the final examination and two additional problem sets. One tested qualitative and mixed methods skills, using exercises from the course workbook. Another tested quantitative reasoning and methodology, both using statistical problems from the workbook, as well as data analysis exercises in SPSS.

## Assessment Results

SLO 1.0: Political Science Students, in POL 101 on average, performed at the 77% level [benchmark = 60%] when DESCRIBING and EXPLAINING content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers as measured by the three multiple choice questions embedded in class tests across all POL 101 and 103 sections. Since our goal was 80%, this target was not achieved.

SLO 2.0: Political Science Students, in POL 103 on average, performed at the 71% level [benchmark = 60%] when DESCRIBING and EXPLAINING content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers as measured by the three multiple choice questions embedded in class tests across all POL 103 sections. Since our goal was 80%, this target was not achieved.

SLO 3.0: Political Science Students in POL 295 on average performed at the 38% level [benchmark=60%] when EVALUATING and INTERPRETING statistical output and ANALYSIS on the POL 295 final examination and performed at the 38% level when EVALUATING and INTERPRETING statistical output and ANALYSIS on the final statistics problem set. Since the benchmark was 60%, neither target for POL 295 was achieved.

## Action Items

As none of our targets were met in the 2017-2018 academic year, the department will continue with these measures in the 2018-2019 year for SLOs 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0.

In addition, the department offers a fourth required course (PO 285 – Political Theory). The department will work to implement a SLO for this course to discern what students know and what they can evaluate and interpret.

## Appendix.

The 10 embedded questions for SLO 1 are:

1. The separation of powers in the United States government refers to the distribution of authority between/among which of the following?

- A. The Senate and the House of Representatives.
- B. The two major political parties.
- C. The national government and the state governments.
- D. The legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.

2. Which of the following was the first constitution of the United States of America?

- A. The Articles of Confederation
- B. The Declaration of Independence
- C. The Constitution
- D. The Bill of Rights

3. The basic premise of federalism is that

- A. supreme political authority remains with the states.
  - B. power is divided between national (central) and state (regional) governments.
  - C. ultimate authority rests with the same political units closest to the people.
  - D. a national government has ultimate sovereignty over a country's land and people.
4. The Supreme Court's ability to declare actions by the legislative and/or executive branches unconstitutional is called:
- A. Veto
  - B. Jury nullification
  - C. Lobbying
  - D. Judicial review
5. The President using his veto over a piece of legislation enacted by the Congress is an example of \_\_\_\_\_ in action.
- A. the power to persuade.
  - B. checks and balances
  - C. socialism
  - D. the Great Compromise
6. "Gerrymandering" is when:
- A. Politicians trade votes on spending legislation
  - B. State legislatures draw legislative districts to benefit one political party over another.
  - C. Committee chairs intentionally "table" a bill to kill it
  - D. A senator talks on and on to bring the Senate to a halt
7. In Congress, disagreement over policy occurs most often along \_\_\_\_\_ lines.
- A. Geographical
  - B. Committee
  - C. Institutional
  - D. Political party
8. The share of votes a state has in the Electoral College is determined by:
- A. The political parties
  - B. The state's number of Representatives and Senators
  - C. The size of the state's economy
  - D. The year the state was admitted to the USA
9. What was the last major expansion of the electorate?
- A. gender
  - B. race
  - C. age
  - D. wealth
10. When a bill passes the House and senate in different forms, the differences are resolved by:
- A. the Rules Committee of the House of Representatives
  - B. the President
  - C. a conference committee
  - D. the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader

The 10 embedded questions for POL 103 are:

American core (same as POL 101)

1. The separation of powers in the United States government refers to the distribution of authority between/among which of the following?
  - a. The Senate and the House of Representatives
  - b. The two major political parties
  - c. The national government and the state government
  - d. The legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government
  
2. Which of the following was the first constitution of the United States?
  - a. The Articles of Confederation
  - b. The Declaration of Independence
  - c. The Constitution
  - d. The Bill of Rights
  
3. The basic premise of federalism is that
  - a. supreme political authority remains with the states.
  - b. power is divided between national (central) and state (regional) governments.
    - c. ultimate authority rests with the same political units closest to the people.
    - d. a national government has ultimate sovereignty over a country.

Theory core

4. "Anarchy," in international relations theory, refers to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. chaos
  - b. interdependence
  - c. the lack of an overarching governing body
  - d. fascism
  
5. A political ideology that values "human freedom on economic, cultural, and social issues" is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. liberalism
  - b. conservatism
  - c. fascism
  - d. monarchism

Comparative core

6. Which of the following attributes **most closely** describes what is found in a 'nation-state'?
  - a. a similar population, spread across the borders of multiple countries.
  - b. a diverse population, spread across the borders of multiple countries.
  - c. a similar population, contained within the borders of one country.
  - d. a diverse population, contained within the borders of one country.
  
7. An electoral system that elects individual candidates based on a plurality of votes (whoever gets the most votes wins) is classified as a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. descriptive representation system
  - b. proportional representation system
  - c. first-past-the-post / majoritarian system

d. multi-member system

8. In a parliamentary system, under what condition would a one-party cabinet be most likely to form?

- a. When the prime minister's party has a majority of seats in the lower house of the legislature
- b. When a coalition agreement is reached between the largest parties
- c. When the president wins re-election
- d. When the prime minister's party wins a majority of votes in the national election

International Relations core

9. This school of thought in international relations assumes that states are predominantly concerned with their national security and power, when making important decisions related to foreign policy.

- a. liberal institutionalism
- b. constructivism
- c. realism
- d. feminism

10. What choice are the 'prisoners' most likely to make in the Prisoner's Dilemma?

- a. Mutual cooperation
- b. Mutual defection
- c. One will cooperate and one will defect
- d. Both will cooperate and defect simultaneously