

2019-2020 Institutional Effectiveness Report

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

Year: 2019-2020

Name of Preparer: Dr. Richard A. Almeida, John Monroe Johnson Holliday Professor of Political Science

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 instruction on the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers. The Department offers a major, minor, and collateral in Political Science. The program offers its students a broad understanding of political phenomena, including: political institutions, processes, behavior, ideas, and contemporary 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 government and politics. The flexibility of the curriculum permits students to pursue a slate of courses tailored to their individual interests and career goals. Graduates who major in political science receive broad training and develop general competencies in the discipline which equip them for successful careers in public service, quasi-public agencies, politics, the military, journalism, teaching, and commerce and industry, as well as professional study in political science, public administration, and 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 2019-2020 academic year. The report illustrates the department did not meet the targets for either SLO 1 or SLO 2. For our first and second student learning outcomes, our target was to have 80% of students correctly answer ten embedded questions asked of all students taking POLI 101 and 103. Slightly more than 76% of students (76.39%) correctly answered these embedded questions in POLI 101 and 74% percent of students (74.21%) correctly answered these embedded questions in POLI 103.

A third student learning outcome (SLO 3.0) is that students would be able to conduct statistical analysis, as measured in the POLI 295 final examination and on two POLI 295 problem sets, one qualitative and one quantitative. The target for this goal was for students to achieve 70% or higher. This learning outcome was not assessed in the 2019-2020 academic year due to an oversight resulting from a change in instructor for POLI 295.

Based on these data the Department of Political Science and Geography decided to implement the following student learning outcomes for academic year 2020-2021:

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 POLI 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 POLI 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 POLI 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 ten multiple choice questions embedded in tests across all POL 101 classes.

SLO 2.0: Political Science students, in POLI 103 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 ten multiple choice questions embedded in tests across as POL 103 classes.

SLO 3.0: Political Science students in POLI 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 in-course problem sets. One tests qualitative and mixed methods skills, using exercises from the course workbook. Another tests 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 POLI 101 on average, performed at the 76% 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 POLI 101 and 103 sections. Since our goal was 80%, this target was not achieved.

SLO 2.0: Political Science Students, in POLI 103 on average, performed at the 74% 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 POLI 103 sections. Since our goal was 80%, this target was not achieved.

SLO 3.0: Political Science Students in POL 295 were not evaluated on either learning objective in academic year 2019-2020.

Action Items

As no targets were met in the 2019-2020 academic year, the department will continue with these measures in the 2020-2021 year for SLOs 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0.

In addition, the department offers a fourth required course (POLI 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 I

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

Appendix II

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