

**The College of New Jersey
Political Science Department
Assessment Plan
2012-2017**

In conjunction with the Department's Strategic Plan adopted July 19, 2011, and the Vision, Mission Statement, Learning Goals, and Shared Values stated in that document, the Department has developed the following Assessment Plan. This plan brings a more formal structure to a series of activities previously used to evaluate the successfulness of the Political Science program and major, including the review of student course evaluations, peer observations, informal discussions among colleagues, departmental discussions and actions, and periodic external reviews. The plan also replaces the more narrowly focused One Question/One Answer assessment program now in place.

The first step taken has been to restate the Departmental Learning Goals of the Strategic Plan as more measurable Learning Outcomes to be achieved by Political Science majors.

Political Science Learning Outcomes

1. **Breadth of Knowledge:** Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the general boundaries of the discipline, key substantive knowledge in and the linkages between the four major subfields of political science, and the connections between political science and related fields, especially economics, history, international studies, law, and public policy.
2. **Depth of Knowledge:** Students will be able to demonstrate a deep understanding of a) central concepts, distinctions, questions, and theories related to the discipline, b) the in-depth workings of fundamental political processes and institutions at the national and international level, and c) selected topics important to a particular subfield.
3. **Core Values:** Students will be able to integrate into their work the meaning and historical evolution of the core, if contested, values in Western political thought (such as justice, equality, freedom, human rights, and due process); competing theoretical perspectives; and their own belief systems.
4. **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to read analytically, understand complex relationships and concepts, identify underlying assumptions, "dissect" scholarly texts, and synthesize their own politically-related interpretations, arguments, or positions.

5. **Original Research:** Students will be able to conduct original research using appropriate primary and secondary sources and the empirical research tools characteristic of the discipline.
6. **Communication Skills:** Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats and settings, presenting oral and written arguments that are cogent, compelling, and well substantiated.
7. **Historical, Social and Cultural Sense of Place:** Students will be able to recognize and understand the impact of diverse settings on political phenomenon—to locate themselves within an historical, social, and cultural setting, to grasp politics in a conceptual manner, and to transfer that conceptual understanding to other situations.
8. **Application of Knowledge:** Students will be able to apply their political science knowledge in first-hand experiences with practical politics, public policymaking or implementation, and public affairs and be aware of connections between what they learn in the classroom and the workings of the outside world.
9. **Active Learning/Public Service:** Students will be actively engaged in the learning process both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities so as to stimulate their curiosity, interest them in public life, foster openness, and increase their self-confidence.
10. **Career Preparation:** Students will pursue realistic ideas for applying their knowledge and skills in meaningful employment and/or further educational opportunities after graduation, in part through internship and independent research opportunities.

Assessment Mechanisms

The basic assessment model to be used by the Department incorporates one broad direct measure, one broad indirect measure, and several specialized measures, the broad outlines of which are discussed in Barbara Walvoord's second edition of *Assessment Clear and Simple* (See Chapter 3). Our model includes the following elements:

- A key direct measure to be used in assessing the Political Science program will be the review of each student's senior seminar paper (and at fixed intervals the related oral presentation) in POL 498/Seminar in Political Science, the capstone seminar required of all majors. As noted in Jan Hardt's article, "Killing Two Birds with One Stone; Using Rubrics to Make the Grading and Assessment of Political Science Capstones Easier," undergraduate capstone courses, are an "exit" point from the major and, hence, a logical place to test whether student have been

able to integrate and synthesize everything they have learned in their program of study (p.3). While the capstone course may be a challenge for the student and the instructor on many levels, they are typically focused less on new material to be introduced and more on “what do students know and how well have they learned?” (p.6). More, specifically, do students through their required seminar papers and oral research presentations, demonstrate a mastery of the learning outcomes set by the Department. A three to four member Departmental Assessment Committee will examine the seminar papers written each calendar year and at set times the related oral presentations to determine the degree to which specified learning outcomes have been achieved. Learning Outcomes 1 through 9 will be analyzed in this manner. Each year the department will focus on approximately two particular learning outcomes, so that all ten will be examined over the course of four years. Committee members will utilize a rubric to examine particular outcomes. Seminar instructors will be on the Committee and complete a rubric targeting selected outcomes in conjunction with grading the course; other Committee members will do so as they independently read a sample of the papers. This approach has been explored by the International Studies faculty in the Department in conjunction with one learning goal for that major.

- A key indirect measure will be the use of a student survey administered to all seniors that asks how well they achieved each of the Departmental learning goals, with options given on a five-point scale (e.g., extremely well, very well, adequately well, not very well, or not at all). Additional questions would explore the aspects of the student’s education in the Department that aided student learning and what the department might do differently to foster student learning. Periodically information will also be gathered on student involvement in extracurricular activities to-date through a separate survey. Surveys will be administered in each senior seminar during the calendar year, with the findings analyzed initially by the Departmental Assessment Committee and then by the Department faculty as a whole. They will be administered in keeping with the Assessment Schedule that follows.
- Focus groups will be used to discuss information gathered in the student surveys.
- Career related outcomes (Learning Outcome 10) will be examined periodically though the examination of data from the Office of Career Services, reports provided by Records and Registration on the number of Political Science senior majors previously enrolled in internships and independent studies, and other specialized questions used in surveying seniors.

- Additional measures may be used to measure progress in achieving other goals in the Departmental Strategic Plan that are not linked to specific learning outcomes.

The Department will concentrate on selected learning goals each year on a five-year cycle according to the following schedule. By focusing on results for the calendar year, the Departmental Assessment Committee will have the spring semester to analyze and report on the learning outcomes designated for reporting that academic year. In all cases, the Political Science Faculty will discuss committee findings in the latter part of a given academic year.

Assessment Schedule

The matrix below includes four sections: (1) the academic year in which each learning outcome will be analyzed; (2) the assessment method used to measure the learning outcome; (3) the learning outcome to be measure; and (4) the course(s) where each learning outcome will be assessed. After each measure is an indication as to whether it is direct (D) or indirect (I).

Year	Assessment Method(s)	Learning Outcome(s)	Where Accessed
2012-13	Staff Reports/Student Survey OCS Reports (I) Focus group (I)	#9 Active Learning #10 Career Preparation	POL 498 Career Services and Rec. & Reg.
2013-14	Capstone Paper (D) Capstone Paper (D) POL 200 Paper (D)	#4 Critical Thinking #5 Original Research	POL 498 POL 200 and 498
2014-15	Capstone Paper/Presentation (D) Celebrations. Of Student. (D) Achievement COSA (D) Capstone Paper (D)	#6 Communication Skills #7 Sense of Place	POL 498 & COSA POL 498
2015-16	Capstone Paper (D)/Student Survey (I)	#1 Depth of Knowledge #2 Breadth of Knowledge	POL 498
2016-17	Student Survey (I) Capstone Paper (D)	#8 Appl. of Knowledge #3 Core Values	POL 498 POL 498

References

Hardt, Jan. "Killing Two Birds with One Stone; Using Rubrics to Make the Grading and Assessment of Political Science Capstones Easier." APSA 2010 Teaching & Learning Conference Paper. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1555928>.

Walvoord, Barbara. Assessment Clear and Simple, 2nd edition. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2010.

Revised: September, 28, 2012

Political Science Matrix

02/11/13

Major Requirements		Course	Major Program			Outcomes		(X)			
(12 courses)											
Major Requirements (12)			1. political science breadth	2. political science depth	3. core values	4. critical thinking	5. original research	6. communication skills	7. historical, social, and cultural setting	8. applications	9. active learning/public service
A. Developmental Sequence (4)	Fr.	POL110 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT or	X	X	X			X			
	Fr.	POL230 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	X	X	X			X			
	So.	POL200 POLITICAL ANALYSIS				X	X	X			X
	Jr.	POL390 TUTORIAL POLITICAL SCIENCE		X		X	X	X			
	Sr.	POL498 SEMINAR POLITICAL SCIENCE		X		X	X	X			
B. Field Distribution (4)											
1. American Politics (1)		POL110 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT	X	X	X			X			
		POL207 CITIZEN DEMOCRACY		X						X	X
		POL215 GENDER AND POLITICS	X		X			X	X		
		POL300 POLITICS & PUBLIC MANAGEMENT		X						X	X
		POL305 AMERICAN PUBLIC POLICY		X						X	X
		POL311 PRSDNCY & CNGRESS		X		X			X		
		POL315 PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS& MEDIA		X		X			X		
		POL316 PUBLIC OPINION,VOTING & ELECTION		X		X			X		
		POL318 URBAN POLITICAL ECONOMY	X			X		X		X	X
		POL320 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW		X		X		X			X
		POL321 CIVIL LIBERTIES			X	X		X			X
		POL323 LAW AND SOCIETY	X	X		X	X			X	
		POL328 STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT		X			X			X	
2. International Politics (1)		POL230 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	X	X	X			X			
		POL330 AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY		X		X	X	X			

		POL333 VIETNAM AND AMERICA	X	X	X	X		X			
		POL335 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION		X		X	X		X		
		POL337 INTERNATIONAL LAW		X		X		X			
		POL340 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES		X		X	X	X			
3. Comparative Politics (1)		POL150 INTRO. COMPARATIVE POLITICS	X	X	X	X					X
		POL250 POLITICS & SOCIETY DEV. COUNTRIES	X			X		X			
		POL350 POLITICS IN EUROPE		X		X	X				X
		POL352 COMP. POL. DEVELOPMENT		X		X	X				X
		POL353 POLITICS IN EAST ASIA		X		X	X	X			X
		POL357 MIDDLE EAST POLITICS		X		X	X	X			
		POL360 POLITICS IN RUSSIA		X		X	X	X			
		POL380 POLITICS LATIN AMERICA		X		X	X	X			
4. Political Theory (1)		POL270 WESTERN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY	X		X	X		X			
		POL274 ORIGINS U.S. CONSTITUTION	X		X	X		X	X		
		POL372 HISTORY AMERICAN POL IDEAS		X	X	X	X	X	X		
		POL377 ISSUES CONTEMP. POL. THEORY		X	X	X	X	X	X		
C. Concentration (4)		POL291 TOPICS POLITICAL SCIENCE		X		X		X			
By advisement. May		POL370 TOPICS POLITICAL SCIENCE		X		X	X	X			
include courses from		POL390 TUTORIAL POLITICAL SCIENCE				X	X	X			
A & B as well.		POL391 INDEPENDENT STUDY POL. SCI.		X		X	X	X			
		POL476 HONORS INDEPENDENT STUDY		X		X	X	X			
		POL495 HONORS THESIS POL SCI.		X		X	X	X			
		POL399 INTERNSHIP IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS						X		X	X
		POL498 SEMINAR POLITICAL SCIENCE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
D. Eight courses must											
be at the 300 level or above											

Details/Notes

Political Science Objectives

1. To develop each student's understanding of political science (and politics), key substantive knowledge in the discipline and its major fields, and the connections between political science and related fields, especially history and economics.

2. To lead students to examine the workings of fundamental political processes and institutions at the local, national, and international level while offering the opportunity to explore a field of political science in more depth.
3. To have students appreciate the meaning and historical evolution of the core values in Western political thought such as justice, equality, freedom, human rights, and due process; understand competing theoretical perspectives; and develop their own belief systems.
4. To mentor students in developing advanced skills in critical thinking so that they may read analytically, understand complex relationships and concepts, identify underlying assumptions, and “dissect” a scholarly text.
5. To teach students to conduct original research, independently and in teams, using scholarly sources and the empirical research tools characteristic of the discipline.
6. To refine the communications skills of students so that they can present oral and written arguments that are cogent, compelling, and well-substantiated.
7. To develop in students the ability to locate themselves within an historical, social, and cultural setting, to grasp politics in a conceptual manner, and to transfer that conceptual understanding to other situations.
8. To engage students in first-hand experiences with practical politics and public policy and suggest to them connections between what they learn in the classroom and what goes on in the world.
9. To engage students actively in the learning process so as to stimulate their curiosity, interest them in public life, foster openness, and increase their self-confidence.
10. To prepare students for meaningful employment and further educational opportunities after graduation, in part through internship and independent research opportunities.

Liberal Learning

Intellectual Growth	Domains of Knowledge
1 Academic Inquiry	Arts and Humanities
2 Writing	10 Literary, Visual and Performing Arts
3 Speaking	11 World Views and Ways of Knowing
4 Information Literacy	Social Sciences and History
5 Foreign Language	12 Behavioral, Social or Cultural Perspectives
Civic Responsibility	13 Social Change in Historical Perspective
6 Race / Ethnicity	Natural Science and Quantitative Reasoning
7 Gender	14 Natural Science
8 Global Perspectives	15 Quantitative Reasoning
9 Community Engagement	

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