

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Political Science Bachelor of Arts

Department: Political Science

Degree or Certificate Level: B. A.

College/School: Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): July 2021

Assessment Contact: Ellen Carnaghan, Ph.D.

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2020 - 2021

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2020

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

Outcome 6: Students will be able to assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe and identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Courses where artifacts were collected:

- POLS 1510: Politics of the Developing World (St. Louis, In Person/Hybrid)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays
- POLS 2010: Ethics and Politics (St. Louis, In Person/Hybrid)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays, One or more exam or test questions
- POLS 2220: Urban Politics (St. Louis, In Person/Hybrid)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more exam or test questions & a research paper
- POLS 2520: Introduction to African Politics (St. Louis, Online)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays, One or more exam or test question
- POLS 2530: Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics (St. Louis, In Person/Hybrid)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays & One or more exam or test questions
- POLS 2560: Politics of Asia (St. Louis, Online)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays
- POLS 2710: Theories of Justice (St. Louis, In Person/Hybrid)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays & One or more exam or test questions
- POLS 3130: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (St. Louis, Online)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more exam or test questions
- POLS 3650: International Relations of Africa (St. Louis, In Person/Hybrid)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays & One or more exam or test questions
- POLS 3770: Feminist Theory Gender Justice (St. Louis, In Person/Hybrid)
 - Artifacts Collected: One or more essays & One or more exam or test questions

In addition to completing a rubric for each student majoring in Political Science, instructors responded to a Qualtrics survey that answered the below questions:

- 1) This year, we agreed to examine this learning outcome: Students will be able to assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them. You can determine whether or not students achieved this outcome according to the goals of your class. How did your class contribute to this goal?
- 2) Which of these instruments did you use to assess student learning for this report? (check all that apply)
 - a) One or more essays
 - b) One or more exam or test questions
 - c) A research design
 - d) Other, describe
 - e) A research paper
- 3) Did you fill in a rubric for each Political Science major in the class?
- 4) In the matrix below, please summarize what you found from the rubrics. For each of the eight outcomes on the rubric, please provide the number of Political Science majors who did not meet, met but did not exceed, or exceeded expectations.
 - a) Students were able to identify the effects of public policies on important values
 - b) Students were able to compare the effects of differing public policies on important values
 - c) Students were able to assess methods for analyzing the effect of various policies
 - d) Students were able to identify the effects of political structures on important values
 - e) Students were able to compare the effects of political structures on important values
 - f) Students were able to propose institutional changes that would advance certain values
 - g) Students were able to justify the importance of a given value
 - h) Students were able to analyze the structural cause of social injustice
- 5) Overall, what could majors do well in regard to assessing the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them?
- 6) Overall, what could majors do less well in regard to assessing the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them?
- 7) How did Political Science majors compare to students from other departments in terms of being able to assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them?
- 8) What tactics were effective in enhancing students' ability to assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them?
- 9) Do you have suggestions for changing the BA curriculum or approaches in individual courses in order to make sure that students will be able to assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them?
- 10) Is there anything you want to add about your students' learning?
- 11) Do you have any comments to improve this reporting process?

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (do not just refer to the assessment plan).

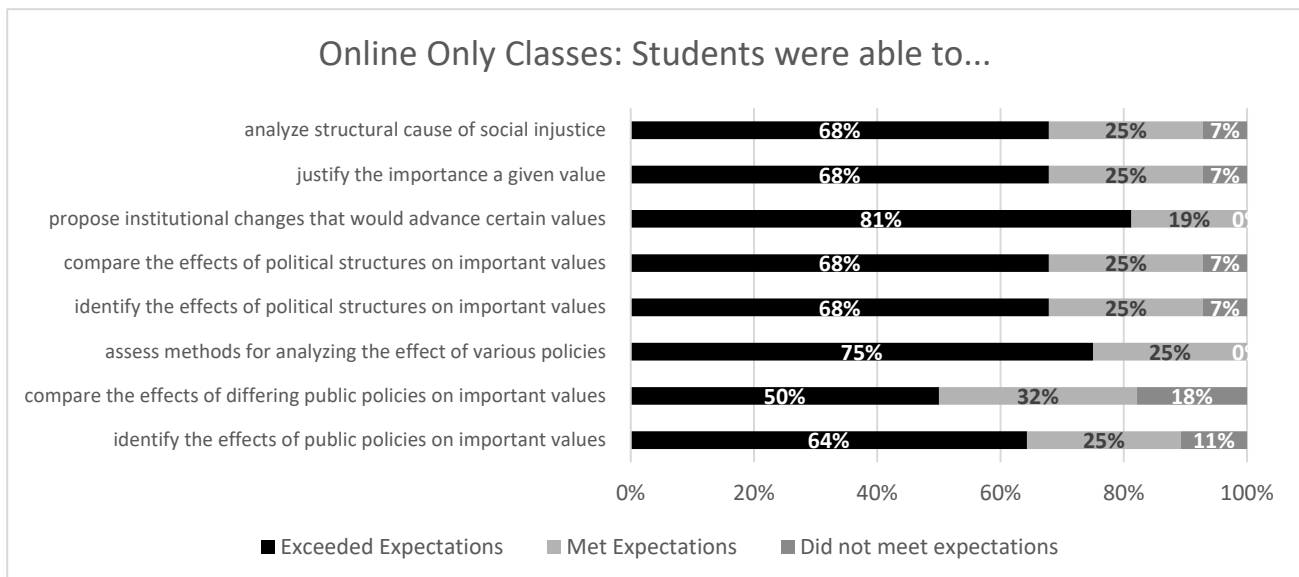
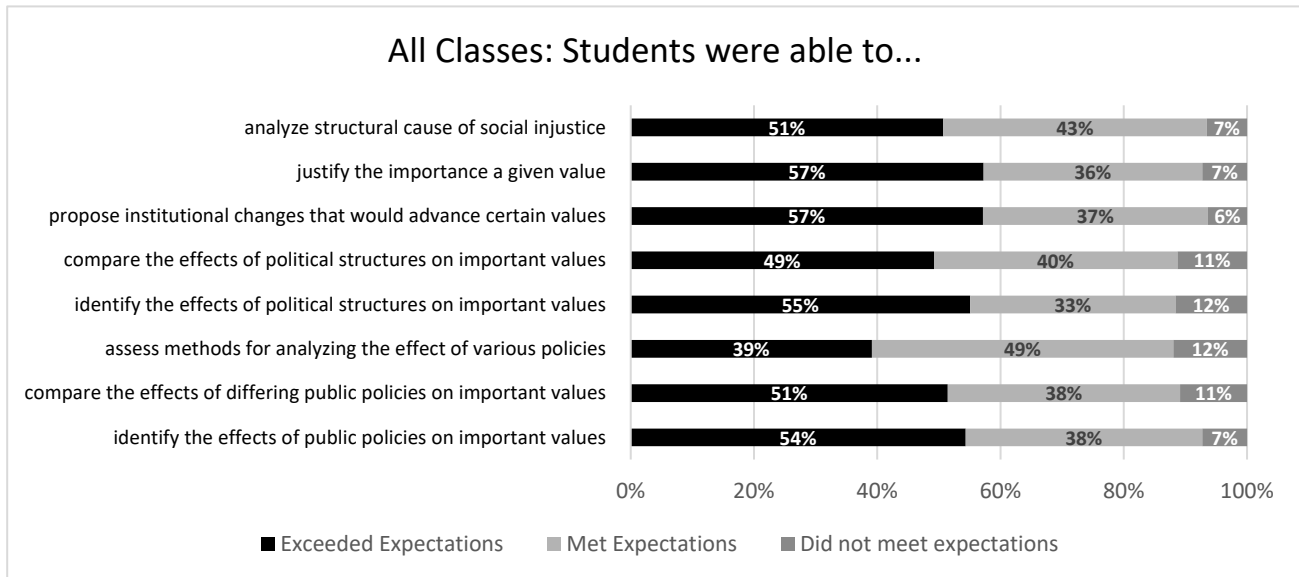
Instructors took a Qualtrics survey that asked them to identify the instruments they used to evaluate their students, results from rubrics, and their evaluations of overall student performance. Steven Rogers analyzed survey responses for this report.

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

Meeting Expectations set on Rubrics

Across all courses, there were 138 majors. The below graphs reflect the percentages of students who exceeded expectations, met expectations, or did not meet expectations for different rubric criteria.



Summary Comparisons of Majors and Non-Majors

When comparing majors to non-majors' ability to complete the objective, faculty indicated majors performed better than non-majors in 4 of 9 classes, about the same as non-majors in 4 of 9 classes, and worse than non-majors in 1 class. A faculty member who led the 10th class indicated they did not have enough information to answer this question. For the one class where majors did worse than non-majors, the instructor indicated that many of the students who did not meet expectations had excessive absences or took the online version of the class.

Summary of Faculty's Comments

When identifying what majors did well, faculty indicated students could:

- Identify the historical roots and causes of nondemocratic regimes or discriminatory policies and the shortcomings of existing policies
- Identify legal doctrine in political systems that lead to different results relating to values
- Understood the role values played in the construction of theories

When identifying what majors did less well, faculty indicated students were less able to :

- Recognize the complexity involved in solving societal problems (e.g., students thought there was a “single big fix” or what works in one country will necessarily work in another)
- Make high-level connections or link structures/policies to values
- Apply concepts to real-world examples

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

Potential Strength: Identification

Rubric findings indicate that at least 54 percent of majors exceeded expectations for “identify” related items, which are two of the four highest percentages. Consistent with this, faculty’s written comments from half of the considered courses indicated that majors appear able to assess and identify the shortcomings of policies or political systems, often identifying their historical roots. However, one faculty member stated that “students are not always clear on the historical issues that have structured given policy positions or ideas.”

Potential Shortcoming: Making Comparisons or Connections

The two “compare” rubric items had 2 of the 3 lowest percentages of students who “exceeded expectations.” This inability to make connections comport with faculty’s written comments that “Majors struggled to make high-level connections across legal doctrines in terms of shared policies and structural aspects” or “Students were less able to identify or compare the effects of political structures on important values. In this class, that meant they were less able to compare the effects of democratic versus authoritarian regimes.”

Unclear Findings: Recognizing Complexity & Assessing Methods

Faculties’ written comments repeatedly indicate majors struggled to recognize the complexity of issues. For instance, two separate faculty members indicated that students tended to simplify solutions to policy problems. Such qualitative findings conflict with the rubric finding that 94% of majors met expectations that they could “propose institutional changes that would advance certain values.” Despite lower rubric percentages for students’ ability to “assess methods for analyzing the effect of various policies,” no faculty explicitly mentioned this in their written feedback.

Conclusions

Most majors meet expectations for this objective. Eighty-eight percent of majors at least met expectations in all categories. Rubric results suggest a majority of majors exceeded expectations for 6/8 of the sub-objectives. Faculty members’ comments further indicate that students can identify problems and their potential institutional roots (e.g., policy). However, students are less able to propose solutions to these problems or identify how differences in values lead to these identified problems. Otherwise stated in terms of the learning objective: students can “assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies” but are less able “to determine which [structures/policies] are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them.”

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

The department meets annually in the fall to discuss assessment results and determine whether curricular changes are necessary. We will address the issues raised in this report in August 2021.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites

- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process

- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

The department has yet to decide what actions it will take. Suggestions to improve students achievement of this outcome already suggested by faculty are:

- Add an assignment to POLS 1150 to provide a framework for students and give the department a baseline for student growth.
- Add theoretical commentaries (e.g., on race, class, gender, etc.) to more empirical courses
- Add assignments that have students compare the political system they live in to other political systems, perhaps focusing on democratic institutions.
- Ask students to focus on concrete instances where structural forces and public politics interact to produce particular outcomes

Tactics that multiple faculty found effective were:

- Use of modern examples
- YouTube Videos, Documentaries, and Films
- Repetition of concepts through multiple assignments (essays, peer review, small group discussions)

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

Changes are to be determined at the August 2021 Faculty Retreat.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

In 2018 – 2019, the department assessed the extent to which students could read carefully and evaluate analytical arguments in clear and logical prose. Assessment of this outcome led to a review of syllabi, which has led to instructors doing a better job including everything that is supposed to be on the syllabus, including learning outcomes. Syllabi and courses are additionally being reviewed as they are submitted to CORE committees for their approval for CORE attributes. Such review is leading to proposed changes in the course catalog.

Our 2019 – 2020 review prompted the department to change our assessment process to require faculty to fill out rubrics. We first implemented this new procedure in 2020 – 2021 (see results above).

B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

We have yet to conduct a reassessment.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

We have yet to conduct a reassessment.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

Future plans will be discussed at the August faculty retreat. One issue to raise is to how better identify problems areas. For instance, it is challenging to find areas where we can improve when 88% of students meet expectations across every category. We then may need to reconsider what it means to “meet expectations.”

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document.

Political Science BA assessment Rubric

Outcome 6: Students will be able to assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them.

Please fill in at least one rubric for each student in your class. You may use one or multiple assignments. Expectations should reflect the level of the course.

For purposes of departmental assessment, you will be asked to report the number of students who do not meet, meet, or exceed expectations for each of the qualities listed below. You will also have a chance to report other comments.

| <i>Student is able to:</i> | Does not meet expectations | Meets (but does not exceed) expectations | Exceeds expectations | Outcome does not apply to this course |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Policies | | | | |
| Identify the effects of public policies on important values | | | | |
| Compare the effects of differing policies on important values | | | | |
| Assess methods for analyzing the effect of various policies | | | | |
| Structures | | | | |
| Identify the effects of political structures on important values | | | | |
| Compare the effects of different political structures on important values | | | | |
| Propose institutional changes that would advance certain values | | | | |
| Values | | | | |
| Justify the importance of a given value | | | | |
| Analyze structural causes of social injustice | | | | |

Comments, in particular anything related to this outcome that students can or cannot do well that is not covered by the rubric: