SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY.

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Political Science and Public Affairs	Department: Political Science
Degree or Certificate Level: Master of Arts	College/School: College of Arts and Sciences
Date (Month/Year): August 24, 2021	Assessment Contact: Ellen Carnaghan
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 1: Students will be able to explain how political systems operate within the context of their MA concentrations.

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.

The department's assessment of the MA learning outcome above included 12 graduate seminars taught by POLS faculty in 2020-2021, MA field exams that students take at the beginning of their final semester in the program, and MA theses (for students who choose that option). Most courses assessed were offered in a hybrid in-person/online synchronous format; three (indicated below) were offered in an online synchronous format.

POLS 5020 Advanced Topics in Research Methods (Nanes)
POLS 5171 Law, Policy, Society (Hazelton, online synchronous)
POLS 5530 Authoritarianism (Nanes)
POLS 5610 International Relations: Theory & Practice (Rentea)
POLS 5650 War, Peace, and Politics (Katagiri)
POLS 5662 International Contemporary Challenges (Mikail)
POLS 5663 Key Contemporary Crises (Rentea)
POLS 5750 American Political Thought (Moskop)
POLS 5630 The European Union (Blanch)
POLS 5930 Race, Class, and Punishment (Cate, online synchronous)
POLS 5930 Politics of International Trade and Finance (Fisunoglu)
POLS 6310 Policy Process (Gilsinan, online synchronous)

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).

Department Assessment Coordinator Ellen Carnaghan organized the assessment process—devising the Qualtrics survey, reminding faculty throughout the year of the learning outcome being assessed, and generating the Qualtrics report. Instructors for selected graduate seminars responded to the questions listed below. Each course instructor decided how to measure whether or not a student had met the learning outcome expectations. Graduate Coordinator Wynne Moskop summarized faculty responses to each question and wrote the assessment report.

Instructors responded to the questions below on a Qualtrics survey:

Q2. We agreed to examine this learning outcomes: Students will be able to explain how political systems operate within the context of their MA concentrations. You can determine whether or not students achieved this outcome according to the goals of your class. (We agreed to ignore the part of the outcome that reads "within the context of their MA concentrations" when you are either unaware of the student's MA concentration or when your class is not part of the concentration.) **How did your class contribute to this goal?**

Q3. Which of these instruments did you use to assess student learning for this report? Check all that apply. (Options are: one or more essays; one or more test or exam questions; a final project/ describe; and other/describe.)

Q24. Did you fill in a rubric for each Political Science MA student in the class?

Q25. Please try to answer the remaining questions to the best of your ability. If you cannot answer, please leave the question blank. Why didn't you fill in a rubric for each student?

Q34. In the matrix below, please summarize what you found from the rubrics. For each of the five outcomes on the rubric, please provide the number of Political Science M.A. students who did not meet, met but did not exceed, or exceeded expectations.

34_1_1 Students were able to identify the components of a political system. - Number of students who did not meet expectations

Q34_1_2 - Students were able to identify the components of a political system. - Number of students who met but did not exceed expectations

Q34_1_3 - Students were able to identify the components of a political system. - Number of students who exceeded expectations

Q34_1_4 - Students were able to identify the components of a political system. - This outcome does not apply to this course

Q34_2_1 - Students were able to compare the operation of differing political systems - Number of students who did not meet expectations

Q34_2_2 - Students were able to compare the operation of differing political systems - Number of students who met but did not exceed expectations

Q34_2_3 - Students were able to compare the operation of differing political systems - Number of students who exceeded expectations

Q34_2_4 - Students were able to compare the operation of differing political systems - This outcome does not apply to this course

Q34_3_1 - Students were able to assess how institutions express values or cultural pr... - Number of students who did not meet expectations

Q34_3_2 - Students were able to assess how institutions express values or cultural pr... - Number of students who met but did not exceed expectations

Q34_3_3 - Students were able to assess how institutions express values or cultural pr... - Number of students who exceeded expectations

Q34_3_4 - Students were able to assess how institutions express values or cultural pr... - This outcome does not apply to this course

Q34_4_1 - Students were able to explain how political systems affect who wins and who... - Number of students who did not meet expectations

Q34_4_2 - Students were able to explain how political systems affect who wins and who... - Number of students who met but did not exceed expectations

Q34_4_3 - Students were able to explain how political systems affect who wins and who... - Number of students who exceeded expectations

Q34_4_4 - Students were able to explain how political systems affect who wins and who... - This outcome does not apply to this course

Q34_5_1 - Students were able to propose institutional changes that would advance cert... - Number of students who did not meet expectations

Q34_5_2 - Students were able to propose institutional changes that would advance cert... - Number of students who met but did not exceed expectations

Q34_5_3 - Students were able to propose institutional changes that would advance cert... - Number of students who exceeded expectations

Q34_5_4 - Students were able to propose institutional changes that would advance cert... - This outcome does not apply to this course

Q4 - Overall, what could students do well in regard to explaining how political systems operate?

Q21 - Overall, what could students do less well in regard to explaining how political systems operate?

Q23 - How did Political Science graduate students compare to graduate students from other departments in terms of being able to explain how political systems operate?

Q11 - What tactics were effective in enhancing students' ability to explain how political systems operate?

Q12 - Do you have suggestions for changing the MA curriculum or approaches in individual courses in order to make sure that students will be able to explain how political systems operate?

Q38 - Is there anything you want to add about your students' learning?

Q39 - Do you have any comments to improve this reporting process?

In addition to the Qualtrics survey, the Department assessed MA field exam results for two St. Louis students, and three Madrid students who wrote an MA thesis. The three faculty on each exam and thesis committee assessed the results. The Graduate Coordinator summarized the results 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)?

Findings based on the Qualtrics survey:

Q2. This year, we agreed to examine this learning outcome: Students will be able to explain how political systems operate within the context of their MA concentrations. You can determine whether or not students achieved this outcome according to the goals of your class. (We agreed to ignore the part of the outcome that reads "within the context of their MA concentrations" when you are either unaware of the student's MA concentration or when your class is not part of the concentration.) How did your class contribute to this goal?

The aim of the course is threefold. Firstly, it introduces students to fundamental texts and thinkers in political realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism, and postcolonialism in International Relations. Particular attention will be paid to the assumptions, claims, and modes of reasoning that distinguish these theories from one another. Second, it compares and contrasts their different interpretations of the "international" in relation to key methodological and epistemological areas of disagreement. Third, it uses them as basis for staging debates on key historical and contemporary events, such as the Peace of Westphalia, the emergence of capitalism and colonialism, the war in Vietnam, the decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003, the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, the transformation of the role of NATO after the end of the Cold War, the role of women in the military, and discusses key aspects of contemporary international practice, such as human rights, the changing practice of war and struggles for equality and emancipation. Given that the course constructs the history of the discipline and contrasts the analysis of the different theoretical traditions in the field in relation to specific historical and contemporary events and practices, the analysis of the relationship between specific political systems and foreign policy decisions is analysed through specific case studies during class discussions. Through specific class discussion questions, guest speaker presentations and in their final research papers, students were also able to explore the relationship between specific normative and ideological frameworks and institutional practices and decisions.

The principal goals of this course are to offer students a broad overview of the necessary theoretical and methodological tools for analysing and diagnosing international contemporary challenges and crises as well as an in-depth exploration of a selection of distinct contemporary crises, with a focus on the political, institutional and social environments that shape possibilities for fracture and transformation today. The aim is to improve students' understanding of the difficulties in resolving key contemporary crises but also looking at existing opportunities for advancing scenarios for their potential resolution, among others, through fostering institutional change. In this context, students are asked to explore the emergence and evolution of crises within specific domestic and international institutional settings, understand the connection between the features of and values expressed by a political system and the emergence of specific areas of vulnerability as well as compare and contrast the manifestation of crises across different regions and political systems.

Seminar participants are required to select a policy domain to use as their case materials throughout the semester. A policy domain is a policy arena where there are coherent policy networks and ongoing debates. Students map the various congressional committees that have jurisdiction over their policy domain, noting how they frame issues based on party affiliation and, as part of their mapping exercise, show the various groups that try to influence the legislative process. Students have weekly assignments requiring them to report in both written form and class discussion their analyses.

Readings and essay assignments are organized to achieve these goals: To understand how citizenship looks through from the perspective of particular thinkers and different marginalized groups. For each perspective, we ask: • Who are citizens? • What entitles them to citizenship? • What persons are not considered citizens? Why not? • How do laws, policies, and social practices differentiate noncitizens from citizens? 2. To draw on primary sources in American political thought to construct coherent, well-supported oral and written arguments. 3. To produce research papers that persuasively investigate some aspect of how different meanings of U.S. citizenship work to the advantage and disadvantage of different groups of people.

There was intense analysis in my class of the issue of how the European political system works, and what are the extraneous factors that also influence the possible issues faced by the European Union. The process of decision-making was examined extensively in several sessions, and was modelled in order to simulate how the MA students would move forward an agenda, such as the Green Plan, through a political system that is still not entirely defined in Europe, or that may vary depending on the issue addressed. This was also contrasted with other political systems, such as China's, and how the outcomes there are less democratic.

Politics of International Trade and Finance covers in depth two of the major structures of International Political Economy: The Production and Trade Structure and the International Monetary and Finance Structure. These structures consist of a set of relationships and distinct rules between political, economic, and social actors and institutions. The class describes how these structures work, what sources of power were used to create them, and what benefits they provide to those who manage them today, investigating how domestic and international institutions affect each other. Furthermore, the class delves into how the structures connect people and condition the behavior of states, markets, and society, examining who benefits and who loses from the structures. Through the readings, assignments, assessments, and discussions about these structures using major theories and historical and current events, this class helps explain how political systems operate.
My class contributed to a number of the components of this goal throughout the term in response papers and literature review essays, but especially in the final take home exam. In the take-home exam students were tasked with analyzing the impact of moral panics and neoliberalism on the development of carceral policy in the US (specifically addressing the "how institutions express values and cultural practices"). The "who wins and who loses" component was a central analytic point of discussion throughout the term in a course that is particularly attendant to the historical development of economic, social and political inequalities. In the final section of the course (3 class sessions) and in the take-home exam students had to grapple with proposals to address mass incarceration ("propose institutional changes") through in-class discussion, group activities, and essay writing.
The level of students was uneven this semester. That said, overall, I would say that: - 66% were really able to explain how political systems operate without effort; - 22% had to think things through first but despite taking more time, they also ended up explaining well; - The remaining 22% struggled way more without achieving the expected result at the end of the semester.
Students learned how governments formulate and execute policy about national and international security and how, if at all, different political regimes make different political decisions, national security strategies, military operations, and tactics to be used in battles. They also learned what kind of policies states and non-state actors adopt to increase the chance of war and peace.
This class addressed the underlying mechanisms which differentiate authoritarian systems from democratic systems, and various subtypes of authoritarian systems from one another.
POLS 5020 contributes to this goal primarily by equipping students with the tools to *explain* social phenomena, both in terms of making useful descriptive inferences about broad populations from a sample, and in terms of evaluating and analyzing relationships between two or more phenomena.
The seminar focuses on the relationships among law, policy, and society.

Q3. Which of these instruments did you use to assess student learning for this report? Check all that apply. (Options are: one or more essays; one or more test or exam questions; a final project/ describe; and other/describe.)

- 8 reported one or more essays
- 7 reported one or more exam or test questions
- 2 reported a research design
- 7 reported a research paper
- 6 reported other instruments
  - 2 reported research proposals
  - 5 reported class discussion/participation
  - 2 reported guest speakers
  - 1 reported simulations

- 1 reported online Blackboard discussions
- 1 reported policy presentation arguing for legislative adoption of policy

Q24. Did you fill in a rubric for each Political Science MA student in the class?

- 10 reported *Yes*
- 2 reported *No*

Q25. Please try to answer the remaining questions to the best of your ability. If you cannot answer, please leave the question blank.

Why didn't you fill in a rubric for each student?

Instructors provided these reasons:

- This course was hybrid, with discussion groups in break out rooms that I did not always control fully via zoom. The students did simulations and discussions but I could only be present in one at a time via zoom.
- Only three MA students in the class which is a required doctoral seminar. Weekly papers, discussion board entries, and class participation were sufficient to track student progress.

Q34. By the end of class, students in my class could design original research and seminar projects that investigate political processes with appropriate methodologies. (Options are: All students met or exceeded the objective; 75-99 percent of students met or exceeded the objective; 50-74 percent of students met or exceeded the objective Some, but less than 50 percent of students met the objective; No students met the objective.)

Student is able to:	**Does not meet expectations**	**Meets (but does not exceed) expectations**	**Exceeds expectations**	**Outcome does not apply to this course**
Identify the components of a political system	2	13	22	7
Compare the operation of differing political systems	2	19	17	2
Assess how institutions express values or cultural practices	4	20	24	0
Explain how political systems affect who wins and who loses	4	15	25	0
Propose institutional changes that would advance certain values	4	21	22	0

Q4 - Overall, what could students do well in regard to explaining how political systems operate?

Overview

- Analyze decision-making processes in relation to different political systems
- Connect debates and popular resistance movements to policy decisions
- Compare manifestion of contemporary crises across different institutional and political settings
- Analyze how values inform institutions and behaviors
- Explain how inner workings of institutions are affected by external influences
- Identify how influences on policy makers affecting framing of issues in ways that work to the advantage or disadvantage of particular groups.
- Explain the kinds of policies that democratic countries like the United States are likely to adopt on matters associated with war and peace.
- Develop hypotheses about the way political systems should have one or more consequential outcomes

All responses:

Analyse the decision-making process in foreign policy in relation to the key features of different political systems through a series of case studies, the Cuban missile crisis, the Vietnam war, NATO's expansion eastwards and Russian Federation's response to it, the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, China's mask diplomacy. Connect key theoretical and ethical debates in IR to the rise of popular resistance movements and protest to foreign policy decisions, such as the anti-war movements in relation to Vietnam and Iraq, the anti-nuclear and pacifist, anti-capitalist and feminist movements.

Students were well equipped to compare the manifestation of contemporary crises (such as the crisis of representative democracy, economic crises, the impact of Covid-19 on governance structures and performance) across different institutional and political settings, reflecting on the main features of different political systems. They could analyse how values inform institutions and behaviours, through the specific case studies they researched for their final papers (including a paper proposal and project presentation to class), dealing with the crisis of democracy, climate emergency and the rise of eco-anxiety, and the impact of Covid-19 on gender equality programs and women's rights. Students could also aptly reflect on the complex layering and intersection of crises in specific institutional settings, such as the intersection of political, economic, humanitarian and health crises in the case of Venezuela. Through guest speakers' events and class discussions, they could also competently analyse differing levels of institutional capacity to respond to crises, depending on the wider context of cultural practices and ideological structures.

The two students who did well in the class were able to articulate the influences affecting policy makers and how framing an issue worked either to their advantage or disadvantage. The student who did not do well, stopped coming to class and handing in assignments.

Three of the four graduate students in this 4xxx/5xxxx class achieved all three outcomes relevant to the course at a high level, finishing with an "A" or "A- " grade. The remaining student performed consistently at a B level, the minimum satisfactory level of a graduate student.

They could explain the inner workings of political systems and the forces that affect them, both internal and external, and how they vary over time. They were most able to do this in regards to systems that they understand, such as the European Union, though the complexity of its system requires some thought. The Commission, the Council and the Parliament all vie for influence in various areas, and this is what students examined by selecting specific issue areas to understand.

I think the majority of the students comfortably achieved this outcome. Most students in the class were good at describing the main properties and components of the major structures of international trade, finance, and monetary politics. Moreover, they were particularly successful at identifying how different policies systematically benefit (or harm) different groups and how political institutions influence these patterns. They were able to portray the determinants and consequences of different shocks (such as financial crises or trade wars) for different groups at the domestic and international levels and examine/propose alternative policy responses.

The students were able to use specific examples of how values are expressed in institutions and effect policy and people's lives. They became very adept at analyzing and articulating the effects political systems have on different groups of people -- particularly a nuanced analysis of the relationship between race and class in American politics. A number of the students were also exceptional in their ability to propose clear and concrete institutional changes and how these would effect policy outcomes.

Students who succeeded were able to: - Explain well what systems were made of; - Give concrete examples related to these; - Analyze prospects and use relevant arguments; - Build on their conclusions by adding further elements when asked for that.

Students did well in regard to what kind of policies democratic countries like the United States are likely to adopt on matters associated with war and peace. This is in part because many of them have taken political science courses in the past to get familiar with general principles about democratic behavior in international politics.

Students were especially impressive at understanding existing research on authoritarian politics and applying it to countries they had special knowledge of to better understand and explain the political outcomes we observe in those countries.

All students showed a strong aptitude for developing hypotheses about the way political systems should intuitive affect one or more consequential outcome. For example, one student intuitively understood that a legacy of Soviet influence might reasonably affect a country's level of political stability years after the fall of the USSR. Two other students linked various restrictions on gun ownership with gun deaths and crime.

The student was good at identifying systemic issues within political systems.

Q21 - Overall, what could students do less well in regard to explaining how political systems operate?

Overview

Overall: Responses below point to need for 1) more experience in comparative analysis and 2) more attention to evaluating existing research, as well as students' own research (including hypotheses, underlying assumptions, and logical consistency]

- Analyze and propose institutional changes that advance certain values and imagine scenarios for resolution in relation to different crisis events
- Would benefit from more attention to differences between the rule making process and the legislative process
- Difficulty with this outcome in counties with a fair amount of non-democratic procedures or procedures that appear democratic but in fact do not operate transparently; it was more difficult to explain.
- Students without a good comparative background struggled more in understanding how different electoral systems and party structures create different incentives/priorities for trade and monetary policy decisions
- Didn't go beyond expectations in articulating a clear comparative analysis. This is probably more due to a lack of emphasis on the course on this than the students' deficiencies here. They were quite good at comparing shifts in the makeup of the US political system over time which is a version of this, but not sure it is quite there on the goal
- Understand how different political systems may come up with different national and international security policies; tended to assume that one country's policy would automatically apply to all others.
- Critically evaluate existing research or identify logical inconsistencies in it
- Explain the underlying logic behind their hypotheses, and at identifying and engaging with alternative hypotheses that ran counter to their intuitive expectations
- Describe how individual policies related to systemic issues

All responses:

Students could have done better to analyse and propose institutional changes that advance certain values and imagine scenarios for resolution in relation to different crisis events manifested within specific political systems.

Students could do better to analyse and propose institutional changes that would advance scenarios for crisis resolution within different political systems and in relation to specific areas of vulnerability. This class being offered early in the program, the students' crisis diagnosis skills are more developed than their crisis resolution abilities, which are further enhanced in their second semester classes.

Although the two students did ok on the section of the course dealing with the rule making process as compared to the legislative process, more time could have been spent on this complex issue.

Even the single B-level graduate student showed no difficulty analyzing how institutes express values and cultural practices, how political systems influence who wins and who loses, or what institutional changes would advance particular values. That student simply didn't provide all of the evidence needed to support her insight and good arguments.

They were less able to do this regarding the case of Russia, even though we heard several excellent speakers on Russia during the semester. Maybe the fact that the Russian system has a fair amount of non-democratic procedures or procedures that appear democratic but in fact do not operate transparently, meant that it was more difficult to explain. The same may be said for China. We understood how China influences Europe, but have more difficulty discerning how Europe can influence the Chinese political system.

Since the class mainly focused on the international level, the students without good a good comparative background struggled more in understanding how different electoral systems and party structures create different incentives/priorities for trade and monetary policy decisions.

"Comparing the operation of different political systems" -- While the course had a certain amount of cross country comparisons and within US state-level comparisons, for the most part the students didn't go beyond expectations in articulating a clear comparative analysis. This is probably more due to a lack of emphasis on the course on this than the students' deficiencies here. They were quite good at comparing shifts in the make up of the US political system over time which is a version of this, but not sure it is quite there on the goal

One of the students gave the impression that (s)he was struggling at the beginning, and this struggle extended to the case of other topics and exercices that were suggested during the semester. But this happened to be part of his/her process, and got overcome. One other student had a hard time understanding situations, explaining them better, and sorting out militancy (his/her own engaged point of view) from academic approach and analysis.

Students did less in terms of understanding how different political systems may come up with different national and international security policies because they assumed that one country's policy would automatically apply to all others

Students struggled to critically evaluate existing research or identify logical inconsistencies in it.

Most students were less effective at explaining the underlying logic behind their hypotheses, and at identifying and engaging with alternative hypotheses that ran counter to their intuitive expectations

The students struggled at first to describe how individual policies related to systemic issues

Q23 - How did Political Science graduate students compare to graduate students from other departments in terms of being able to explain how political systems operate?

- 1 responded that, on average, Political science graduate students performed better than graduate students in other departments
- 2 responded that, on average all graduate students performed more or less the same
- 0 responded that Political Science students performed worse than students from other departments
- 4 responded "all the graduate students in my class were Political Science students, as far as I know"
- 1 responded "I do not have enough information to answer this question"

Q11 - What tactics were effective in enhancing students' ability to explain how political systems operate?

Overview

- Setting out reading questions and seminar questions can help focus conversation more in the direction of normative and ideological aspects
- Breaking down the final project into several key stages
- Guest speakers, experts and practitioners can be useful for analyzing strengths and weakness of different political systems and institutional settings, and for connecting theory and methodology.
- Discussion Boards in Blackboard and small group
- Essays that call for analyses and comparisons; research designs and papers, peer reviews
- Moving quickly from theory to practice, from the design of the European Union to its actual actions in areas such as environment, immigration, human rights, and even the issue of sanctions on Russia.
- Compare and contrast with other parts of the world.
- Using various methods(lecture, discussion, group work, short quizzes, essay of different length and complexity, etc.) and sources (including videos, documentaries, and podcasts) for teaching, reinforcing the information, and assessment ensures students with different needs can reach the learning outcomes
- Starting every class by talking about the important events of the previous week enables students to concretize theoretical information information and concretize theoretical information.
- Student led classes
- Regular debates
- Constant practice through assigning specific topics before a class and coming back to important points regularly

All responses

Setting out reading questions and seminar questions helped focus the conversation more in the direction of normative and ideological aspects as well as connect the theory part of the course with the case studies. Breaking down the final project into several key stages -literature review, research design, project presentation to class and final paper submission- worked well. Guest speakers' events with international experts and practitioners were useful in analysing the strengths and weaknesses of different political systems and institutional settings.

Breaking down the final project into several key stages -literature review, research design, project presentation to class and final paper submission- worked well. This allowed students to consistently reflect on the comparative aspects of crises and dig deeper into exploring the institutional, ideological and normative frameworks within which the actors they analysed are operating. Guest speakers' events, with both international experts and practitioners, were useful in analysing the strengths and weaknesses of different political systems and institutional settings. Setting out guiding questions for the reading helped frame the class conversation and focus it more in the direction of normative and ideological aspects as well as connect the theory and methodology part of the course with the case studies.

Discussion Boards in Blackboard and small group sessions in Zoom really seemed to work well and allow for clarification of various concepts.

Essays that call for analyses and comparisons; research designs and papers, peer reviews

One tactic was to go quickly from theory to practice, from the design of the European Union to its actual actions in areas such as environment, immigration, human rights, and even the issue of sanctions on Russia. Another tactic was to compare/contrast with other parts of the world, such as the MENA countries, Russia, China and the USA. Finally, students deepened in these these aspects by doing research on a specific theme they chose.

Using various methods for teaching, reinforcing the information, and assessment ensures students with different needs can reach the learning outcomes. The relatively smaller size of the class helps to spend individual time with each student, understanding their level of comprehension, and tailoring the class to meet everyone's needs. For the reading and lecturing, the class consisted of readings that introduced the topics and theories of international political economy to the students as well as research papers that go beyond the general theories and expose the students to

actual research and policy debates. These readings are supported by videos, documentaries, and podcasts. The classes also included a variety of methods, including some lecturing, some debates, student presentations, and discussion leadership. Furthermore, the class discussions took place in various ways. Most classes included some lecturing by me, then an organized discussion by students, and a student that presents a topic/paper related to the week's material and leads the class discussion. The class also included assignments that differ in length and complexity. There were short online quizzes every other week that included multiple-choice and short-essay questions. There was also a take-home final exam. In addition to the quizzes and tests, the students had to prepare critical review papers for several topics. Finally, the final paper included a research proposal as well as a literature review, rough draft, final presentation, and peer-review assignments. Dissecting this major assignment into smaller pieces compelled students to start working on the assignment earlier and enabled me to follow how they are doing (and provide frequent and detailed feedback). Lastly, we started every class by talking about the important events of the previous week. As the semester proceeded, this enabled students to concretize the theoretical information. This activity also helps them interested and engaged.

Students had to lead classes which required in-depth preparation on the material as well as honing their ability to explain to peers how political systems operate. A number of writing assignments throughout the course also facilitated students practicing and demonstrating their ability to articulate the ins and outs of how political systems operate -- grounding this in specific examples and analyses.

- Regular debates - Asking them to answer by written specific questions beforehand (Blackboard really helped a lot in this sense) - Asking them to think through some specific examples - Having regular sessions where they had to speak about their research topics and to discuss them with their classmates - Encouraging them to refer to examples that were not necessarily mentioned by the teacher or the readings they had (i.e. examples of their own).

Giving them assignments on that precise topic before class helped them prepare to explain it. Another tactic that worked was to remind them repeatedly of how political systems operate throughout the semester using different texts but coming back to the point to emphasize what they discussed earlier in the course. In other words, constant practice.

Short papers that required students to apply research we read and discussed in class to external examples seemed particularly effective.

Activities (homework, but especially ongoing assignments culminating in an original research paper) which required students to apply the tools we learned in class to a topic and context in which they were interested were far and away the most effective tactics for learning. For example, although we spent parts of several classes reading and interpreting output from multivariate regressions, it was only after students ran their own regressions with data they had collected that they began to consistently interpret results correctly.

The student was responsive to modern examples.

Q12 - Do you have suggestions for changing the MA curriculum or approaches in individual courses in order to make sure that students will be able to explain how political systems operate?

Overview

- From Madrid: Reflect more systematically across the MA curriculum the manner in which we teach scenario building and crisis resolution
- Develop an explicit structure for allowing students to build on a project in multiple courses as they progress through the curriculum.
- Offer a stand-alone course on the philosophy of science and the scientific method; this would teach students to use logic and systematic thinking to learn about the world around them

All responses

Reflect more systematically across the MA curriculum the manner in which we teach scenario building and crisis resolution. Revisiting our scaffolding in relation to specific sets of knowledge and skills within and between MA classes would improve students' ability to propose institutional changes that advance certain values.

I think that a lot lies in the method as well as the motivation of students. I don't see any external input needed here, the thing is to keep working out things all through the semester, putting the accent on interaction.

Several of my students this semester (in both 5530 and 5020) has regional or substantive interests which carried across assignments in multiple courses. For example, one student wrote about prison administration in both 5020 and another instructor's course, one wrote about authoritarian tactics in Putin's Russia in my course and another, and one wrote about comparative political economy of Africa in both of my courses. **Perhaps we could develop an explicit structure for allowing students to build on a project in multiple courses as they progress through the curriculum**.

Obviously the thesis provides some opportunity, but to the extent that we can predict in advance our course offerings for the next two years **we could help individual students develop a road map for the specific segments of their project that they will work on in each participating course. This may require some minor coordination on assignments between instructors of participating courses**.

Students could benefit from a stand-alone course on the philosophy of science and the scientific method. This course would be applicable to (and agnostic about) both qualitative and quantitative methods, but would teach students to use logic and systematic thinking to learn about the world around them.

Q38 - Is there anything you want to add about your students' learning?

I think now my MA students are more motivated by specific issues than theoretical discussions alone, so it is important to offer specific ways of showing how political systems work on certain issues that MA students now care about, after having explained the theoretical and political structures.

I believe the hybrid structure of the class decreased the quality of discussion and interaction between students at times, relatively disadvantaging the students that join the class via Zoom. Thus, the next iteration of this course (and all courses) will likely go better.

Q39 - Do you have any comments to improve this reporting process?

No faculty made comments.

Findings based on MA field exams:

Two St. Louis students took the MA field exam in February 2021. Both exams required the candidates to distinguished among components of a political system, compare operation of different political systems, and

assess how institutions express values and affects who wins and who loses. One public policy student passed with high distinction. One international affairs student passed after rewriting one question.

Three Madrid students completed and defended their MA thesis for the Madrid concentration in International Relations and Crisis. One student earned an "A" equivalent rating, one earned a "B+" equivalent, and one earned a "B" equivalent.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

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

- Assessing more courses and applying the rubric to each individual student seems to provide a more complete picture of what our students can do well and not so well.
- Overall, we have very good MA students who perform well on most things the program and courses require them to do.
- Most faculty use multiple different techniques to help students acquire and practice the skills they need, and most emphasize steps in research design.
- Responses regarding what students do less well suggest the need for 1) more experience with comparative study and analysis and 2) more attention to evaluation of existing research as well as students' own research.
- It seems desirable to identify ways to build continuity for students across courses—for example, continuing one project in multiple courses, developing a roadmap tailored to help individual students to develop particular interests or skills, or other ideas.

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?

Discussion at the August 2021 retreat for St. Louis faculty focused on

1) suggestions for curricular change that emerged in the current assessment:

- Develop an explicit structure for allowing students to build on a project across multiple courses
- Add a stand-alone course on philosophy of science and scientific method
- Incorporate more experience with comparative study and analysis
- Pay more attention to evaluation of existing research as well as students' own research.

- Madrid faculty had suggested and will be working on this: Reflect on curriculum building and crisis resolution to improve students' ability to propose institutional changes that advance certain values

2) A draft rubric for our 2022 assessment, now under development by Assessment Director Carnaghan.

MA outcomes and results of assessment will be discussed at the fall orientation for St. Louis MA students.

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.

Faculty will have additional discussions about:

- Allowing students to develop projects across multiple courses
- Incorporating more comparative analysis in our courses
- Continuing our efforts to improve students' ability to evaluate research and integrate components of their research projects (logic of research design, literature review, etc.). Adding a stand-alone course on philosophy of science and scientific method may be difficult for a variety of reasons.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

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?

1) The POLS assessment director responded to feedback from University assessment director Marissa Cope on our previous assessment by developing rubric for faculty to fill out for every student. Faculty agreed to use the rubric for one year and discuss what did or did not make sense for their classes. For the 2021 assessment, 10 instructors used the rubric. Faculty agreed to use a rubric for the 2022 assessment. Assessment Director Ellen Carnaghan is developing that.
2) Based on earlier assessments showing students needed more help with oral presentations, in Spring 2021, the POLS MA coordinator arranged an instructional workshop for faculty, presented by SLU Communications professor Tim Huffman. Some faculty have begun to employ what we learned.
3) Based on earlier findings that students have difficulty with literature review, faculty pay particular attention to components of research projects, including literature review. This year's assessment suggest that students' ability to execute separate components of research design has improved. It seems that next year we should focus particularly on students' ability to *integrate* the separate components in a coherent project.

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

1) Discussion in our August retreat confirms that faculty approve of the rubrics used to evaluate each student.
2) Improvement in students' oral presentation will be assessed in future years after faculty implement techniques learned in our workshop on oral presentations.

3) 2020-21 assessment suggests that faculty are making headway teaching students how to execute individual components of research design.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

[compare to last year]

- For the 2020 assessment report, four of the six instructors reported that all POLS graduate students in their course met or exceeded expectation for both components of the learning outcome (designing research projects with appropriate methodologies and contributing to scholarly debates). Two instructors reported that 75-99 percent met expectations. No instructors reported any students who did not meet expectations.
- The outcome assessed for the 2021 assessment report included 5 components. In the 12 courses assess this year, instructors reported that at least 90% of students met or exceeded expectations for each component. Of this group, 50% or more exceeded expectations for each component. 2 students, or about 5%, did not meet expectations for two components. Four students, or about 10% did not meet expectations for three components.

  This suggests that assessing more courses and using a rubric to evaluate individual students produces more granular and potentially more useful data. It also suggests that our students' facility with research design may have improved since the 2020 assessment and that we need to continue our efforts, with emphasis on integrating component of research in a coherent project.

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

Faculty will be encouraged to use Professor Huffman's presentation advice and rubrics to help students practice oral presentations.

Faculty will discuss ways that a student might start a project in one class and finish in another.

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.