

**Department of Political Science BA Assessment
Academic Year 2010-11**

Introduction

Our assessment program is based on data collected from the four required courses for our majors. Two of our required courses, American National Government and Politics and Fundamentals of Politics, introduce students to the major concepts of the discipline. A third course, Scope and Methods in Political Science helps students to develop their critical thinking skills through conducting a quantitative research project and writing their findings in a comprehensive research paper, a key student learning outcome for our program. In this process students also demonstrate three of our student learning outcomes: to apply principles and generalizations to evaluate political problems and situations; to synthesize and integrate information and ideas; to draw reasonable inferences and observations. This course is taken mid-way through the students' program and serves as a good measure of progress for all students, regardless of the subfield in which each specializes. Finally, our Capstone course helps students to develop policy positions by analyzing a public policy, including the history and fiscal components of the policy, and then recommending changes along with assessing the political risk involved should law makers or administrators adopt the suggested changes. Students must submit a written paper and publicly present their work. Through this process students are able to again demonstrate their progress with four of our learning outcomes, stated above.

Program's Mission:

The mission of the Department of Political Science is to communicate the knowledge of political science as a scholarly discipline through education of undergraduate and graduate students in the core principles and specialties of political science, to engage in critical research and scholastic inquiry and to apply the knowledge of Political science to serve the needs of the state of West Virginia and the nation.

The Political Science program fulfills the mission of the College of Liberal Arts through

- providing courses that form the core of the undergraduate curriculum for all Marshall students so that they may think critically and imaginatively, communicate effectively, and understanding the dimensions of human experience.
- providing specialized instruction for undergraduate and graduate students that enable them to develop intellectual and moral abilities so that they may live autonomous, sensitive, productive lives.

The Political Science program fulfills the mission of the University by

- providing opportunities for students to use their knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking skills to make their communities better places in which to live;
- providing opportunities for students to examine critically the many issues facing society and, through the process of civil discourse, prepare themselves to become socially responsible individuals who contribute to the betterment of society;
- enabling students to appreciate and to cultivate diversity, and to value differences;
- educating a citizenry capable of living and working effectively in a global

- environment; and
- furthering the intellectual, artistic and cultural life of the community and region.

I. Program's Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the BA in Political Science, students will develop higher-order thinking skills, academic success skills, discipline-specific knowledge and skills and liberal arts and academic values. To demonstrate this, students will:

1. Apply principles and generalizations to evaluate political problems and situations.
2. Synthesize and integrate information and ideas.
3. Draw reasonable inferences and observations.
4. Identify major concepts in Political Science.
5. Demonstrate critical thinking skills by comparing, contrasting, analyzing and evaluating major political science methods, concepts and theories.
6. Appropriately use technology to find and/or disseminate information central to Political Science.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

II. Assessment Activities

During this period we assessed learning outcomes 4, 5, and 6, listed above.

A. Assessment Measures (Tools)

Outcome 4: Identify major concepts in Political Science. To measure this outcome we will use grades from questions given on the final exam in sections of PSC 104, American National Government. The questions measure the students' knowledge of the following concepts: the appeals process of the Supreme Court; weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation; voting processes in the United States; federal government separations of power and duties; civil rights; civil liberties; civil disobedience; interest groups; the Bill of Rights and judicial review. The questions are given in objective form. We have measured the grand mean of correct answers from 11 questions across four sections of this course.

Outcome 5: Demonstrate critical thinking skills by comparing, contrasting and analyzing and evaluating major political science methods, concepts and theories. To measure this outcome we have considered the final examination scores of our capstone course, PSC 499. Students in this course read and analyze six classic works in Political Science. Throughout the course the students are given prompts on which they write to help them explore the treatment various concepts are given in these texts and to help them analyze the methods employed by the given authors to reach conclusions made in the texts. The final examination is a take home essay in which students are asked to draw on the semester's work to compare the texts on various levels.

Outcome 7: Demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. To measure the outcome we assessed the grades of PSC 104 students

B. Benchmarks

We set a benchmark to have 90% of our students earn an A or B on the assignment used as an assessment measure.

C. Results/Analysis

Our benchmarks were met or nearly met for two of the three Outcomes: 82.27% of the concept questions were answered correctly (Outcome 4); for Outcome 5, 89.20% of the students in the Capstone course earned an A or B on their final exam. We fell short of the Benchmark for Outcome 7: 87% of the students earned an A or B on the citizenship assignment.

D. Analysis/Planned Action

Our next step is to extend the analysis across all sections of PSC 104 and PSC 105. Beginning Spring 2012 our 105 course will have a CT designator. Our plans are to also have 104 designated as CT beginning Fall 2012; with this, we should be able to further standardize some of our measurements across all sections of the courses to be able to more accurately assess the extent to which our students are mastering key concepts in Political Science. Similarly, the changes should make it possible for us to develop a more systematic approach for measuring and improving student outcomes for demonstrating an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

III. Overview of changes implemented in your program this past year based on results and planned action specified in last year's report.

Last year PSC 211 students did not meet our benchmarks for Outcomes 1, 2, 3, or 6. In response, the course was revised to eliminate outside article analyses and to build in more workshop and lab time for the students. The midterm was divided into two parts and administered one-third and two-thirds of the way, respectively, in the semester, in the hopes that breaking down course content into smaller units for testing purposes might help the students to thoroughly learn the material. Finally, the course was moved from meeting once a week to twice a week in an effort to improve learning retention. Next year's assessment of these outcomes will have two years' of data collection for these outcomes to better assess the effectiveness of these changes.

IV. Specify any changes/modifications made to your program based specifically on data obtained during Assessment Day Activities.

Our Assessment Day surveys yielded the same criticism as the previous year: that our courses in each subfield are not offered regularly. Our response is to reiterate through advising that most of our courses are on a two-year rotation and that at least one course from each subfield is offered each semester. Past that, we are fighting stereotype and rumor rather than fact; the only way we know to counter this is to reiterate the fact.

Assistance Needed with Assessment: What assistance can the Office of Assessment give you to help improve your assessment program?

We assume that with the new Lumina Project, our assessment measures may change in the Spring. We are prepared to begin working to consider the Lumina outcomes and how they correspond to ours.

Marshall University
Assessment of Program's Student Learning Outcomes for the Department of Political Science Program
BA
[2010-11]

Not every student learning outcome must be assessed every year. However, it is expected that at least one-fourth of the outcomes will be assessed each year, allowing for assessment of all outcomes within a four-year cycle. It also is important to use more than one assessment measure for each outcome.

Program's Student Learning Outcomes	Year evaluated	Assessment Measures (Tools)	Benchmarks	Results	Analysis/ Planned Actions
1. Apply principles and generalizations to evaluate political problems and situations.	2009 /10				
2. Synthesize and integrate information and ideas.	2009 /10				
3. Draw reasonable inferences and observations.	2009 /10				
4. Identify major concepts in Political Science.	2010 /11	Objective questions of key concepts were taken from final exams of four sections of 104, American National Government.	90% should earn A or B	82.27% of the questions were answered correctly.	We want to expand this analysis across all sections of PSC 104.

Program's Student Learning Outcomes	Year evaluated	Assessment Measures (Tools)	Benchmarks	Results	Analysis/ Planned Actions
5. Demonstrate critical thinking skills by comparing, contrasting, analyzing and evaluating major political science methods, concepts and theories.	2010 /11	Final examination scores of our capstone course, PSC 499.	90% should earn A or B	89.20% of the students in the Capstone course earned an A or B on their final exam.	Additional course time will be given addressing the ways that texts present various methods, concepts and theories.
6. Appropriately use technology to find and/or disseminate information central to Political Science.	2009 /10				
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.	2010 /11	Concept maps of civic engagement and reflection papers evaluating the worth of the civic engagement project.	90% should earn A or B	87% of the students earned an A or B on the citizenship assignment.	We will expand the citizenship assignment through all sections of 104 and work collectively to help students assess duty based and engaged based citizenship.