

Assessment Plan: POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Program Coordinator: Joel W. Johnson
Submitted: May 2019

Contents

1. Introduction.....	p. 1
2. Mission, goals, and SLOs.....	2-3
3. Assessment plan.....	3-5
4. Curriculum map and updates.....	6-7

1. Introduction

The Political Science program is housed within the Department of History, Political Science, Philosophy, and Geography. At present, the political science program has four full-time faculty members. The members of the program embrace the University's mission of providing a quality education that supports improved graduation rates, increased numbers of students attending graduate school, and the development of research skills and the ability to become a critical thinker.

The Political Science program offers both a major and minor. Political science is a fundamental element in the general education requirements of the University and is essential to any liberal arts education. It is also a component for secondary education teachers. Although students interested in law school need not be political science majors, the majority of pre-law students throughout the nation and at CSU-Pueblo are political science majors.

In addition to the more narrow objectives contained in specific emphasis areas of the political science major, such as American politics and international relations, the program faculty is committed to the broader goals of increasing the student's understanding, awareness, and involvement in a wide variety of political issues and processes at the University and in the local community.

The Political Science program also established in 2010 the Center for the Study of Homeland Security. The Center provides the Southern Colorado region with University opportunities to study the growing field of homeland security and also prepares students to succeed in related careers that include government, military and high technology industries.

The faculty is dedicated to the development of its students, whether they are political science majors, minors, or others, in and out of the classroom. Untold hours are spent in counseling and advising political science majors and minors and other students in political science courses. In addition, the political science faculty is committed to providing diagnostic and remedial help with writing assignments. All our lower and upper division courses require short papers, essays or longer research papers.

2. Mission, goals, and SLOs

The mission statements of CSU-Pueblo and its College of Humanities and Social Sciences are:

- CSU-Pueblo “will be measured by the resilience, agility, and problem-solving abilities of our diverse student population and the ways in which our graduates are able to navigate work in a rapidly changing world.”
- “The mission of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is to help students develop critical thinking skills, aesthetic awareness, and ethical perspectives, to provide them with the tools and expertise necessary to function as responsible citizens and professionals and to engage in intellectual and artistic pursuits.”

The Political Science program’s curriculum focuses heavily on the development of analytical and communication skills – along with a comprehensive knowledge of public policy, politics, current events, and history – and as such prepares undergraduates for a wide range of in the private, public, and non-profit sectors. Courses in political science also serve to complement the liberal arts core at CSU-Pueblo and to prepare students for acceptance into graduate and professional programs.

The major in political science leads to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS).

Program Goals

To prepare students majoring in the discipline to:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of historical, philosophical and empirical foundations of political science;
- Demonstrate a general command of knowledge about the American political system, global studies, the history of political thought, and standard political science research approaches; and
- Demonstrate an ability to continue personal study and learning on an independent basis about specific subjects in the discipline.

To prepare graduates with a minor in the discipline to be able to:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the nature of the discipline; and,
- Demonstrate general knowledge and understanding of the American political system and comparative and world politics.

Student Learning Outcomes (updated March 2019)

Knowledge Outcomes:

(KO1) Students should have factual knowledge of many aspects of politics and government that are central objects of study in each of the subfields in political science (American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory).

(KO2) Students should be able to explain core debates (or scholarly theories and perspectives) in the subfields of political science.

Writing Outcome:

(WO1) Students should be able to write papers on topics in political science that (a) exhibit clear prose and correct grammar and (b) present a central argument in a clear and coherent structure or fashion.

Critical Thinking Outcomes:

(CTO1) Students should be able to identify and critique the assumptions, logic, and evidence in both scholarly and lay political arguments.

(CTO2) Students should be able to use empirical observations and analytical reasoning to articulate and defend compelling, non-fallacious arguments.

Assessment plan (updated March 2019)

To assess its program of instruction, the Political Science Program uses both direct and indirect assessment measures.

1. The program indirectly measures its SLOs via:
 - a. A survey to seniors enrolled in POLSC 493 about their experiences in the program. The survey will be constructed to solicit feedback on all five SLOs.
 - b. Students' anonymous course evaluations. In particular, two questions from the university's course evaluations will be used for the SLOs that are listed in parentheses:
 - i. Q11: Encouraged critical thinking and analysis (CTO1 & CTO2)
 - ii. Q18: Learned from the course (KO1 & K02)
 - iii. For both questions, we expect that at least 50% of enrolled students (or respondents) respond "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," and we expect that at least 75% of students respond "Strongly Agree," "Agree," or "Neutral." The response "Neutral" may indicate to a student that a course is on par with other courses.
2. Starting in AY2019-2020, one or more ranked faculty member(s) will directly measure both KO1 and KO2 in one (or more) course per academic year. The assessment will compare a pre-test and a post-test that are offered to the same students.
3. The Writing and Critical Thinking SLOs (WO1, CTO1, CTO2) are directly measured in POLSC 493 (Senior seminar) via rubrics for course assignments that facilitate assessment of the SLOs. The two SLO categories will be assessed on a rotating cycle, with one SLO category per year. The schedule of these assessments appears below.

These points are reiterated in the assessment plan summary chart on the following two pages.

Political Science Program Assessment Plan Summary

SLO	Measure description (e.g., direct or indirect)	Expected level of student proficiency (definition, %)	Main timeline or cycle
<p>Knowledge Outcome 1: Students should have factual knowledge of many aspects of politics and government that are central objects of study in each of the subfields in political science (American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory).</p> <p>Knowledge Outcome 2: Students should be able to explain core debates (or scholarly theories and perspectives) in the subfields of political science.</p>	<p>Direct measure 1: one or more ranked faculty member(s) will assess both SLOs in one (or more) course per academic year via a comparison of a pre-test and a post-test that are offered to the same students.</p> <p>Indirect measure 1: From students' anonymous course evaluations of at least one core course per year. In particular, aggregate responses to Q18: "Learned from the course" will be reported.</p> <p>Indirect measure 2: in a survey of seniors, students report on whether they learned in the program.</p>	<p>Direct measure 1: the average post-test score will exceed the average pre-test score.</p> <p>Indirect measure 1: the program expects that at least 50% of enrolled students (or respondents) respond "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," and we expect that at least 75% of students respond "Strongly Agree," "Agree," or "Neutral." (The response "Neutral" may indicate to a student that a course is on par with other courses.)</p> <p>Indirect measure 2: the program expects at least 80% of students to report that they were satisfied with how much they learned in the program.</p>	<p>Annually, beginning AY2019- 2020</p>
<p>Writing Outcome: Students should be able to write papers on topics in political science that (a) exhibit clear prose and correct grammar and (b) present a central argument in a clear and coherent structure or fashion.</p>	<p>Direct measure 1: students' papers in the POLSC 493 capstone are assessed according to the writing assessment rubric.</p> <p>Indirect measure 1: in a survey of seniors, students report on their perceived writing improvement.</p>	<p>Direct measure 1: At least 80% of students will receive an average score of 2.5 or above, signifying that they are proficient across the four categories in the rubric.</p> <p>Indirect measure 1: the program expects at least 80% of students to report improvement in writing.</p>	<p>Biennially, beginning AY2018- 2019</p>

<p>Critical Thinking Outcome 1: Students should be able to identify and critique the assumptions, logic, and evidence in both scholarly and lay political arguments.</p>	<p>Direct measure 1: students' papers in the POLSC 493 capstone are assessed according to the critical thinking assessment rubric.</p>	<p>Direct measure 1: At least 80% of students will receive an average score of 2.5 or above, signifying that they are proficient across the various categories in the rubric.</p>	<p>Biennially, beginning AY2019-2020</p>
<p>Critical Thinking Outcome 2: Students should be able to use empirical observations and analytical reasoning to articulate and defend compelling, non-fallacious arguments.</p>	<p>Indirect measure 1: From students' anonymous course evaluations of at least one core course per year. In particular, aggregate responses to Q11: "Encouraged critical thinking and analysis" will be reported.</p>	<p>Indirect measure 1: the program expects that at least 50% of enrolled students (or respondents) respond "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," and we expect that at least 75% of students respond "Strongly Agree," "Agree," or "Neutral." (The response "Neutral" may indicate to a student that a course is on par with other courses.)</p>	
	<p>Indirect measure 2: in a survey of seniors, students report whether the program improved their critical thinking abilities as they relate to the SLOs.</p>	<p>Indirect measure 2: the program expects at least 80% of students to report improvement in critical thinking abilities as they relate to the SLOs</p>	

Curriculum map and updates

The political science faculty routinely discuss how to improve its curriculum, methods, and assessment. Some of the more substantive changes that have been made in recent years include the following:

- 2019-2020: Two new courses are being added to the PS Program to reflect the expertise of Prof. Strickler: Media & Politics and Political Attitudes & Behavior.
- 2019 (Spring): The PS Program updated all of its program SLOs. Assessment rubrics and the assessment plan were updated accordingly, and to be modeled after the “best practices” that were discussed in an early-Spring 2019 seminar on campus.
- 2018-2019: POLSC 250 now includes a module on professional development and career and graduate school preparation. Students have responded very positively to this addition to the curriculum.
- 2017-2018: The PS Program was modified to (a) require an internship or a research project and (b) require some sub-field diversity among political science electives (specifically, students are required to at least one of their electives in each of the four main subfields).

A curriculum map for the political science core courses appears on the following page.

Political Science Program – Curriculum Map

Program: BA/BS Degree Core Courses (internship requirement excluded)	Knowledge Outcomes	Writing Outcomes	Critical Thinking Outcomes
POLSC 101	I-Classroom lectures & course readings I-Exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay and short-answer exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay exams R-Classroom discussions
POLSC 201	I-Classroom lectures & course readings I-Exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay and short-answer exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay exams R-Classroom discussions
POLSC 202	I-Classroom lectures & course readings I-Exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay and short-answer exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay exams R-Classroom discussions
POLSC 250	I- Classroom lectures, exercises & course readings I-Assignments I-Exams	R- Cover letter and personal statements (assignments in career preparation module)	R- All course lectures and exercises
POLSC 370	R-Short Essays I-Essay Exams R-Small group discussions I-Research Paper	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay Exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers R-Essay exams R-Classroom discussions
POLSC 493	R/M-Classroom lectures & course readings R/M-Exams	R-Discussion papers, position papers, research paper(s) R-Essay Exams	M -All course material and assignments