

Assessment Plan: Political Science Program
Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Chair: Dr. Matt Harris
Program Coordinator: Gayle K. Berardi

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 global studies, 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. To this end, faculty members have made a substantial commitment to community service in its broadest definition and accomplishment. This includes establishing the Center for Leadership and Community Development which offers leadership workshops and internships for community members, serving as consultants to local citizens groups and placing students in local and state internships. The 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 prepare students to succeed in related careers that include government, military and high technology industries.

Finally, 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.

INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM MISSION

The University mission calls for "baccalaureate programs with a strong professional focus and a firm grounding in the liberal arts and sciences." The political science major offers students a firm grounding in the liberal arts by providing students with concepts and knowledge of national and international political systems and institutions as well as basic political theory; students develop skills in reading, discussion, writing, research, and critical thinking. The political science program prepares its students to engage in wide range of career activities and to function as productive citizens in the global world.

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN AND PROGRAM MISSION

The political science program contributes significantly to the goals set forth in the University's current strategic plan. The program provides courses in political science for the knowledge component of the general education curriculum as well as providing courses for majors and minors in political science. At all levels, the program strives to enhance student knowledge and to enhance communication and critical thinking skills. Technology is used appropriately at all levels of instruction, students are encouraged to work in community organizations as interns, and an integration of learning is required of all majors as is basic research.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the political science program are:

To prepare graduates with a major in the discipline to be able 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, standard political science research approaches; and
- Demonstrate 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

Knowledge Outcome: Students should have factual knowledge about the various subfields in political science. This includes knowledge about the major theories, issues and methods of inquiry for each subfield.

Writing Outcome: Students should be able to write complex prose, with correct grammar. They should be able to present a coherent and persuasive argument on a political science topic in a research format following the American Political Science format.

Critical Thinking Outcome: Students should be able to:

- Define problems, examine evidence, and analyze the assumptions leading to a conclusion;
- Question arguments, causal theories, evidence, broad generalizations, and simple correlation;

- Are open to both sides of an argument; and
 - Are prepared to examine and expose holes in all arguments (including their own).
- Communication Outcome:** Students should be able to clearly and concisely present their ideas as participants in classroom discussions and in presenting their research.

Outcome Assessment Activities for the Political Science Program

The faculty of the Political Science program use a variety of methods for evaluating the student learning outcomes. These include a portfolio which contains transcripts, major papers written for courses in the discipline, co-curricular data and other pertinent information. The portfolios are evaluated by faculty members at the end of the student's senior year. Exams, internships, research projects with faculty members, exit surveys are also used as part of the systematic assessment plan for the program. Finally, students take a senior capstone course that includes a major research project, class presentations and critical thinking essays.

Direct Assessment

In political science 493, the senior seminar, (and in other lower and upper division political science classes), students are required to write a major paper that depends on independent research and utilizes political science theory and methods taught in earlier classes. Papers are assessed based on mechanics of writing, organization, clarity of ideas, depth of critical analysis and ability to integrate an understanding of the historical, philosophical and empirical foundations of political science in written work.

The political science program is studying the use of pre and post tests for entering and exiting students. The program's decision will be made by the end of the 2011 academic year.

Use of Information

The program members review the papers as part of their student portfolio review which takes place at the end of the academic year. In addition, at that time, faculty discuss their reviews and deliberate as to what actions to take, if any, to improve curriculum, instruction, and learning. Also, the results are shared with the Department chair.

Indirect Assessment

Students are required as part of the senior seminar to complete a survey about their experiences in the political science program. In addition, they are required as part of

their portfolio to write an assessment of their experience in the major. The results are analyzed by the program coordinator and shared with the faculty. At that time the faculty determines if any action are needed to improve the program.

Five Year Review

Every five years the political science program conducts a review of its program. This includes an evaluation of its assessment plan and recommendations for changes. As part of the process an outside evaluator from another university reviews the program and its assessment plan. The recommendations are reported to the faculty, the department chair and college dean. In addition, an alumni survey is conducted to determine if the program has provided its students with the tools necessary for their professional and individual development on a long-term basis.

In summary, the program has instituted four assessment tools beyond the normal review of syllabi, student critiques, etc.

1. All students upon entering the program must begin a student portfolio that is kept current throughout their time here (see Appendix A for Portfolio requirements). At the end of the Senior Seminar which is normally completed in the spring of the student's graduating year, each student must turn in this portfolio. Before the Summer break, the Political Science Faculty review all of these portfolios and make comments about them to be kept in each portfolio. During the 5-year review and during accreditation these portfolios are reviewed by external evaluators. These have been extremely useful in tracking improvement and quality of our graduates from the time they arrive until they graduate.
2. The program requires all majors to meet with faculty in a group each fall and spring semester. As part of this meeting, we solicit inputs about the program and views to its improvement, as well as provide guidance and advice about succeeding.
3. All graduates must take a survey about the Political Science program they just completed. The survey solicits in-depth comments about the students' tenure at CSU-Pueblo, specifically about the curriculum, faculty, etc. An important part of this is the request for views to improve the program.
4. Periodically, the Political Science Program sends out surveys to graduates about their perceptions of the CSU-P experience and its influence on their lives now—especially in preparing them for their current careers.
5. Throughout the year, the political science faculty members meet to review the curriculum and other aspects of the program. At that time specific plans with time-lines are made if changes are needed in course offerings or any other aspect of the program.
6. Community intern directors are asked to determine if the program is providing students with the skills needed for on-site professional development.

Curriculum

Routine, periodic faculty discussions are undertaken to determine if students are gaining substantive knowledge in the sub-fields of political science. We have linked our courses with both redundancy and a building-block approach to ensure that all students learn basic, fundamental knowledge in their chosen focus areas. One way we determine success in this is during our Senior Seminar for all political science majors, where the students pursue more depth in these areas as part of both the course and their final seminar thesis, while allowing them choice in their focus areas for the discipline.

Future Considerations

The political science faculty is currently reviewing its assessment plan. The program is exploring the possibility of utilizing an entrance and exit essay exam and/or objective style exam. The exam would assess a student's knowledge of political theory, methods and subfields in political science. This assessment tool would augment the student portfolio and other assessment tools currently in use. This program review should be finished by the end of the 2011 academic year.

Curriculum Map

A curriculum map for the political science core courses has been completed and follows on the next page.

CSU-Pueblo Political Science Program
Curriculum Map

Program: BA/BS Degree

	Content Knowledge	Writing Ability	Critical Thinking Ability	Communication Skills
Core Course				
POLSCI 101	I-Classroom lectures I-Classroom discussions I-Exams	R-Essay exams R-Discussion papers	R-Essay exams R-Classroom discussions	R-Classroom discussions R-Written assignments
POLSCI 201	I-Exams, I-Essays, I-Quizzes, I-Classroom discussion	R-Position papers, R-Essay Exams	R-Position papers, R-Essays, R-Exams, R-Quizzes, R-Classroom discussion	R-Classroom discussion, R-Written assignments
POLSCI 202	R-Exams I-Classroom discussion	R-Research Paper R-Essay exams	I -Research design R-Research paper R-Essay exams	I-Classroom discussion I-Research Design R-Research paper
POLSCI 240	I-Lectures I-Classroom discussions	I-Classroom instruction R-Short essays R-Essay exams	I-Classroom discussions R-Research paper R-Policy paper	R-Project analysis papers R-Essay exams
POLSCI 370	R-Short Essays I-Essay Exams R-Small group discussions I-Research Paper	R-Short Essays R-Essay Exams R-Research Paper	R-Essays R-Essay Exams R-Research Paper R-Oral assignments	R-Small group discussions R Individual Presentation to the class

POLSCI 493	R/M-Short Essays R/M-Essays R/M-Research Paper R/M-Group R/M- Discussions Individual presentation	R/M-Essays R/M-Research Paper	M -All written and oral assignments	M-Small group presentations M-Formal research presentation