

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Political Science Major

Department: Department of Political Science

Degree or Certificate Level: B.A.

College/School: Arts & Sciences

Date (Month/Year): August 2023

Assessment Contact: Dr. Steven Rogers

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2022 - 2023

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2019

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization or subject to state/licensure requirements?

If yes, please share how this affects the program's assessment process (e.g., number of learning outcomes assessed, mandated exams or other assessment methods, schedule or timing of assessment, etc.):

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please provide the complete list of the program's learning outcome statements and **bold** the SLOs assessed in this cycle.)

Outcome 2: Students will be able to distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

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

Instructors in six 3000 and 4000-level courses collected artifacts. These courses were POLS 3630: International Security and Conflict; POLS 3740: Capitalism, Racism, Patriarchy (Online); POLS 3810: Latin American-U.S. Relations; POLS 4300: Law, Politics, and Regulatory Policy; POLS 4590: Crisis of Leadership; and POLS 4840: Global Health Politics and Policy

Artifacts:

- POLS 3630: Theoretical and practical exams that examined case studies; participation on Canvas, presentations, group discussions
- POLS 3740: Midterm exam, reading questions
- POLS 3810: Latin-American-U.S. Relations: Exams
- POLS 4300: Case Briefs, class discussions, seminar papers
- POLS 4590: Questionnaire and presentations
- POLS 4840: Midterm examination, seminar presentations, literature review presentation

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** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

Two of six instructors completed a rubric for each student majoring in Political Science. Rubrics are attached to this report. Instructors shared a summary of those rubrics through a Qualtrics survey that answered the below questions:

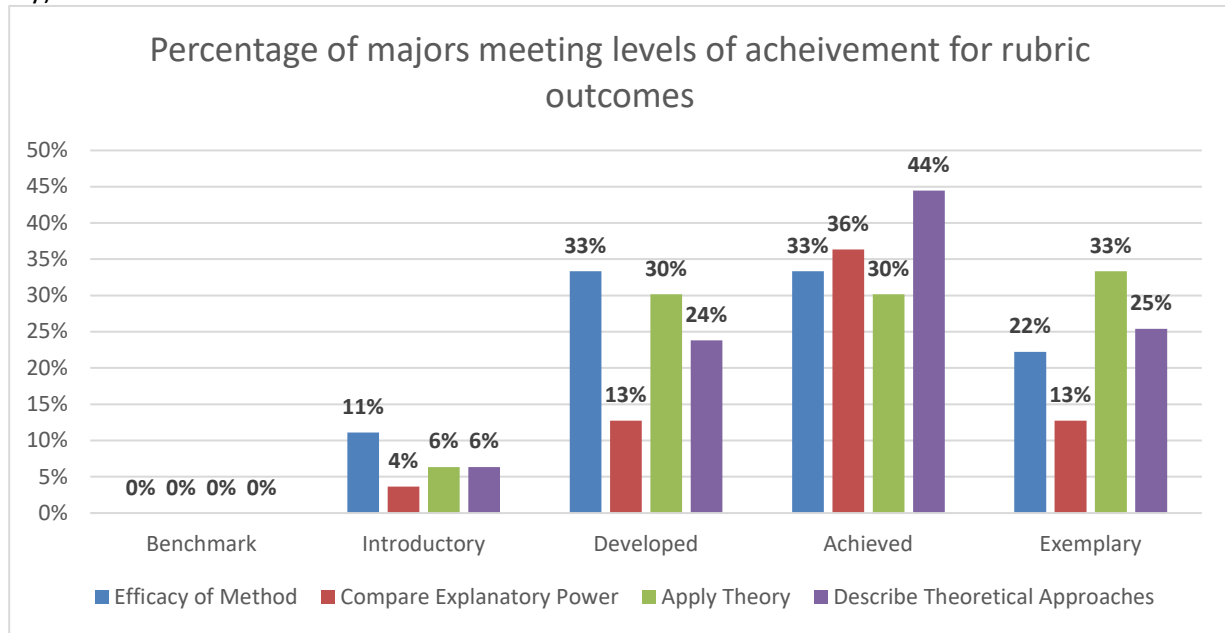
- 1) For which class are you providing information?
- 2) This year, we agreed to examine this learning outcome: Students will be able to distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena.

How did your class contribute to this goal?
- 3) Please describe in detail the instruments (assignments) that you used to measure student learning on this outcome and explain how the assignment measures whether students are able to distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena. When you are done with this survey, please provide copies of the assignment prompts to the assessment director.
- 4) Did you fill in a rubric for each Political Science major in the class?
- 5) 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.
 - Components:
 - Describe theoretical approaches relevant to the class
 - Apply theory to the analysis of political phenomena
 - Compare the explanatory power of various theoretical approaches
 - Evaluate the strength and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative approaches
 - Assess the efficacy of various methodological approaches to answer specific questions
- 6) Overall, what could majors do well in regard to distinguishing among various approaches to studying political phenomena?
- 7) Overall, where did majors have more difficulties in regard to distinguishing among various approaches to studying political phenomena?
- 8) How did Political Science majors compare to students from other departments in terms of being able to distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena?
- 9) What tactics were effective in enhancing students' ability to distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena?
- 10) What changes do you expect to make in this class the next time you teach it, if any, in order to ensure that students will be able to distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena?
- 11) 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 distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena?
- 12) Is there anything you want to add about your students' learning?
- 13) Do you have any comments to improve this reporting process, including comments on the new rubric?

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)?

The below chart summarizes the percentage of majors who met different levels of achievement (e.g., benchmark or exemplary) for the different rubric outcomes.



Instructors reported that students generally did well in terms of the following:

- Distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena in paper
- Recognize the existence of structures
- Adapting perspective to differing cultural contexts
- Identifying normative versus empirical perspectives
- Understand, critically analyze, and apply theories to real-world scenarios

Students faced more challenges in terms of the following:

- Demonstrating as much knowledge in discussion as they did in their papers, perhaps due to a lack of preparedness
- Synthesizing multiple theories to form a more holistic understanding of complex political phenomena
- Questioning assumptions of theories
- Understanding the consequences of different approaches

Three of six instructors stated that non-majors performed more or less the same as majors, two instructors stated majors performed better than non-majors, and one instructor said they did not have enough information to answer this question.

Instructors identified a variety of tactics that enhanced students' abilities:

- Practical application (e.g., use of real court cases or other real-world political scenarios)
 - *Three courses independently identified this*
- Repetition
- Small writing assignments
- Regular feedback
- Canvas discussions

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you? Address both a) learning gaps and possible curricular or pedagogical remedies, and b) strengths of curriculum and pedagogy.

Quantitative responses indicate that most majors can distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena to at least an “achieved” level. Written responses similarly generally indicate that faculty are generally satisfied with majors’ ability to achieve this outcome.

4/6 faculty recommended no suggestions of changes to the BA curriculum for this outcome. When addressing what changes faculty would make to their own courses, there was most consensus around using more examples or practical applications to have students better understand theory. More specifically, add non-European examples or “ask more questions forcing them to explicitly cite examples of non-structural approaches, and compare these examples with structural approaches.” Some suggestions provided by individual faculty members include inviting more guest speakers, addressing the concepts of methodological individualism and ontological individualism in other courses, and fostering more interdisciplinary approaches.

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

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

In August 2023, at our annual faculty retreat, the full faculty received information about the 2023 Assessment and discussed these results.

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.

In general, Department members were satisfied with how courses were helping students achieve this outcome. There was a general recommendation to the Department to include more examples or real-world cases. In the next two years, the Department will be making at least three tenure track and one non-tenure track hires. The Department agreed that it would be important to convey to these hires how our existing pedagogy strategies have been successful in achieving this outcome.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

No notable changes will be made to the program due to the current high success rate of students achieving this outcome.

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 previous assessment data?

In our 2022 assessment, we identified that we should aim to make sections of the same introductory course more uniform. To achieve this, the four different instructors of POLS 1600 communicated and adjusted the learning outcomes of this course to be more in sync. Specific content used between the instructors to achieve the learning outcome may differ (e.g., different examples to convey certain points), but the learning outcomes are made more similar.

B. How has the change/have these changes identified in 7A been assessed?

Changes have only been implemented for the 2023 – 2024 year and have not been assessed.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

Changes have only been implemented for the 2023 – 2024 year and have not been assessed.

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

Changes have only been implemented for the 2023 – 2024 year and have not been assessed.

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