Program: B.A. in Political Science

Department: Political Science

College: McMicken

Year: 2013-14

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I. Program Overview and Program Outcomes

Political Science is the study of politics and government, both in the United States and around the world. The B.A. curriculum in Political Science at the University of Cincinnati (UC) is designed to equip students with basic and advanced information about political life in this country and abroad; conceptual, communication and methodological skills; and analytical theories with which to study contemporary and emerging public issues.

Students in the B.A. program in Political Science have a distinguished record of receiving top academic awards, scholarships, and recognitions not only in UC’s McMicken College of Arts and Sciences but also across the entire University. Moreover, Political Science majors have fared well in receiving nationally and locally competitive awards and scholarships outside of the University. One indicator that students from the University of Cincinnati are highly competitive upon completing the Political Science program is their acceptance into top-ranked law and graduate schools. (Approximately 35-40 percent of B.A. graduates continue their education within three years of graduation: two-thirds enter law school while one-third enter graduate or professional programs. A sizable additional percentage of students continue their education four to ten years after graduation.)

Examples of entry-level jobs taken by B.A. graduates from the Political Science program in recent years include employment at the U.S. State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, General Electric (management training), Teach for America, The U.S. Institute of Peace, Macy’s (management training), U.S. National Air and Space Intelligence Center, Alliance for Immigrant Women at YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, The Institute for Study Abroad, and in each branch of the U.S. military.

Original Program Outcomes submitted with the P-1 in 2011:

1. Students will show familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in the study of political science
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of governmental institutions and political processes at local, national, and international levels
3. Students will be able to recognize and discuss the diversity of political actors and political systems that exists internationally, across regions and cultures, both historically and in contemporary terms
4. Students will be able to distinguish between political theory, American politics, comparative politics, and international relations as subfields within the discipline of political science and analyze their contributions to our understanding of politics and governance
5. Students will understand and be able apply basic research methods used in political science
6. Students will be able to examine political issues and questions from multiple normative and analytical perspectives, in a way that demonstrates the ability to engage in social and ethical reasoning
7. Students will be able to communicate effectively in written and other formats, in a way that demonstrates the ability to construct and critically assess arguments
8. Students will demonstrate effective and critical use of information-gathering and research media in examining political issues
9. Students will emerge with insight about how the knowledge and skills they have acquired as political science majors can enhance their personal and professional lives

Revised Program Outcomes developed at CET&L Assessment Institute, approved by department faculty, and entered into modified P-1 on e-curriculum:

Students will be able to:
1. Analyze the institutions, processes, and values that shape politics in the United States.
2. Compare the institutions, processes, and values that shape politics in countries other than the United States.
3. Analyze the structures, processes, and norms that shape international, transnational, and global politics.
4. Analyze major approaches and methods used in the discipline of political science.
5. Construct, defend, and critically assess analytical arguments in both oral and written formats.
6. Identify, collect, and use evidence appropriate to political science research.
7. Develop, produce, and defend an independent political science research project.

II. Curriculum/Program Map

See next page
### Curriculum Mapping Matrix: Linking Program Outcomes to Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Required Courses Identified in P-1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POL 1010</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OUTCOMES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Students will be able to analyze the institutions, processes, and values that shape politics in the United States</td>
<td>E, D, A, E</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Students will be able to compare the institutions, processes, and values that shape politics in countries other than the United States</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
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<td>3. Students will be able to analyze the structures, processes, and norms that shape international, transnational, and global politics</td>
<td>E, D, A</td>
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<td>5. Students will be able to construct, defend, and critically assess analytical arguments in both oral and written formats</td>
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<td>6. Students will be able to identify, collect, and use evidence appropriate to political science research</td>
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<td>7. Students will be able to develop, produce, and defend a political science research project</td>
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III. Methods and Measures

As indicated on the matrix following this introduction, the Department of Political Science has included the following tools in its assessment plan for the B.A. program in Political Science:

- Capstone project assessment
- Content analysis (e.g., reflective/critical essays, policy argument memos, student research papers)
- Course-enabled assessment of assignments (e.g., quizzes, exams, homework exercises, blog entries)
- Oral presentation assessment
- Student surveys
- Syllabus analysis

Explanatory note to accompany the following matrix:

In any given year, there are typically 170-190 majors enrolled in the B.A. program in Political Science. The required courses are often offered multiple times a year and enroll large numbers of students. Thus, our program assessment will have to rely upon a sample of students in selected courses in selected semesters. Our plan is to randomly select a subset of majors in each required course prior to the beginning of a given semester. (This would only be done when the course in question is being used for assessment purposes.) In most cases, all students in a given course (including non-majors in the 1000-level courses) will participate in the course-enabled assignments and other exercises used for assessment, but only the subset of majors selected for program assessment purposes will actually have their learning included in our data gathering.

In several places in the matrix below, reference is made to standardized rubrics that will be used for assessment purposes. Upon approval of this plan, department faculty will develop the necessary rubrics. Until these rubrics are developed, we cannot project what an acceptable level of achievement might be for particular program outcomes because we do not yet know the structure or scale of the rubrics. The Department will need to generate 1-2 years of data before it can set appropriate “expected levels of achievement” for various program outcomes. Even once these levels are set, they will be subject to reconsideration by the Undergraduate Committee as it reviews assessment data over time.

Given the fact that our department is small in terms of faculty (8.5 tenure track and no educators) but large in terms of programs and students (two B.A. programs, an M.A. program, and a Ph.D. program, totaling nearly 400 students across the four programs), we
must rely on course instructors (and, where applicable, their teaching assistants) to conduct the assessment work. We simply do not have the instructional or administrative resources to rely on department-scored documents that require committee review of student work by multiple faculty. As part of our regular departmental review of assessment work, we may engage in spot-checking of instructor assessments in order to evaluate the degree of inter-rater reliability that exists among department instructors, but our ability to do this will depend on our resources.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Outcome</th>
<th>Assessment Tools</th>
<th>Course(s) where data is collected and level (E, D, A)</th>
<th>Time Line</th>
<th>Person Responsible for assessing and storing data</th>
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</table>
| 1. Students will be able to analyze the institutions, processes, and values that shape politics in the United States | For assessment at the "E" and "D" stages in POL 1010, two standardized assignments (e.g., quizzes, exams, blog entries, responses to Bb discussion board prompts, reflective/critical essays, policy argument memos) with material unique to that course will be given by the instructor at two different junctures of the semester. These assignments will be assessed using a standardized rubric.  
For assessment at the "E" stage in POL 1040, a standardized assignment (e.g., quiz, exam, blog entry, reflective/critical essay, policy argument memo) with material unique to that course will be given by the course instructor once during the semester. This assignment will be assessed using a standardized rubric.  
For assessment at the "A" stage in POL 1010, a standardized set of questions unique to that course will be included on the final exam by the course instructor. (Student grades on these questions will be used for assessment purposes.) | 1010 (E,D,A), 1040 (E) | Data on student performance will be gathered once a year in POL 1010 or 1040; a summary will be compiled and reviewed at the end of each year. A syllabus analysis will be conducted every 2-3 years by the relevant course instructors for POL 1010 and POL 1040 to evaluate issues such as the following: how well course-specific learning objectives and instructional materials are aligned with this program outcome. Major changes will be considered every 4-5 years | members of the departmental undergraduate committee (typically, the Director of Undergraduate Studies and three additional faculty), departmental program coordinator |
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<td>2. Students will be able to compare the institutions, processes, and values that shape politics in countries other than the United States</td>
<td>For assessment at the &quot;E&quot; and &quot;D&quot; stages in POL 1060, two standardized assignments (e.g., quizzes, exams, blog entries, responses to Bb discussion board prompts, reflective/critical essays, policy argument memos) with material unique to that course will be given by the course instructor at different junctures of the semester. These assignments will be assessed using a standardized rubric. For assessment at the &quot;E&quot; stage in POL 1040, a standardized assignment (e.g., quiz, exam, blog entry, reflective/critical essay, policy argument memo) with material unique to that course will be given by the course instructor once during the semester. This assignment will be assessed using a standardized rubric. For assessment at the &quot;A&quot; stage in POL 1060, a standardized set of questions unique to that course will be included in the final exam by the course instructor. (Student grades on these questions will be used for assessment purposes.)</td>
<td>1040 (E), 1060 (E,D,A)</td>
<td>Data on student performance will be gathered once a year in POL 1040 or POL 1060; a summary will be compiled and reviewed annually. A syllabus analysis will be conducted every 2-3 years by the relevant course instructors for POL 1040 and POL 1060 to evaluate issues such as the following: how well course-specific learning objectives and instructional materials are aligned with this program outcome. Major changes will be considered every 4-5 years</td>
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<td>3. Students will be able to analyze the structures, processes, and norms that shape international, transnational, and global politics</td>
<td>For assessment at the &quot;E&quot; and &quot;D&quot; stages in POL 1080, two standardized assignments (e.g., quizzes, exams, blog entries, responses to Bb discussion board prompts, reflective/critical essays, policy argument memos) with material unique to that course will be given by the course instructor at different junctures of the semester. These assignments will be assessed using a standardized rubric. For assessment at the &quot;A&quot; stage in POL 1080, a standardized set of questions unique to that course will be included in the final exam by the course instructor. (Student grades on these questions will be used for assessment purposes.)</td>
<td>1080 (E,D,A)</td>
<td>Data on student performance will be gathered once a year in POL 1080; a summary will be compiled and reviewed annually. A syllabus analysis will be conducted every 2-3 years by the relevant course instructors for POL 1080 to evaluate issues such as the following: how well course-specific learning objectives and instructional materials are aligned with this program outcome. Major changes will be considered every 4-5 years</td>
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<td>4. Students will be able to analyze major approaches and methods used in the discipline of political science</td>
<td>For assessment at the &quot;E&quot; and &quot;D&quot; stages in POL 3000, a standardized set of questions with material unique to that course will be included on a mid-term exam and final exam administered by the instructor. (Student grades on these questions will be used for assessment purposes.) For assessment at the &quot;A&quot; stage, student performance on the capstone research project in a POL 6000 course will be graded by the course instructor according to a standardized rubric.</td>
<td>3000 (E, D), 6000 (A)</td>
<td>Data on student performance will be gathered once a year in a section of POL 3000 and 6000; a summary will be compiled and reviewed annually. A syllabus analysis will be conducted every 2-3 years by the relevant course instructors for POL 3000 and 6000 to evaluate issues such as the following: how well course-specific learning objectives and instructional materials are aligned with this program outcome. Major changes will be considered every 4-5 years</td>
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<td>5. Students will be able to construct, defend, and critically assess analytical arguments in both oral and written formats</td>
<td>For assessment of oral communication at the &quot;E&quot; stage, a survey will be administered in POL 1010, 1040, 1060, and 1080 in which students will be asked at the end of the semester a series of standardized questions or statements concerning their performance in class discussion activities. For assessment of oral communication at the &quot;D&quot; and &quot;A&quot; stages, student performance in two oral presentations made at different times during the semester in POL 6000 will be graded by the instructor according to a standardized rubric. For assessment of written communication at the &quot;E&quot; stage, a standardized assignment (e.g., essay exam, blog entry, responses to Bb discussion board prompts, reflective essay, policy argument memo) will be given by the course instructor in POL 1010, 1040, 1060, and 1080. This assignment will be graded by the course instructor according to a standardized rubric used across all four courses. For assessment of written communication at the &quot;D&quot; and &quot;A&quot; stages, student performance on two different writing assignments in POL 6000 will be graded by the course instructor according to a standardized rubric used across all such courses.</td>
<td>1010, 1040, 1060, 1080 (E); 6000 (D, A)</td>
<td>Data on student performance will be gathered once a year in POL 1010, 1040, 1060, or 1080 and in 6000; a summary will be compiled and reviewed annually. A syllabus analysis will be conducted every 2-3 years by the relevant course instructors for POL 1010, 1040, 1060, 1080 and 6000 to evaluate issues such as the following: how well course-specific learning objectives and instructional materials are aligned with this program outcome. Major changes will be considered every 4-5 years</td>
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<td>6. Students will be able to identify, collect, and use evidence appropriate to political science research</td>
<td>For assessment at the &quot;E&quot; stage, student grades on a selection of homework exercises in POL 3000 chosen by the instructor (exercises involving the use of data with some standardized material) will be used. For assessment at the &quot;D&quot; stage, final student proposals for their independent capstone research project in POL 6000 will be graded by the instructor according to a standardized rubric. For assessment at the &quot;A&quot; stage, student performance on the completed capstone research project in POL 6000 will be graded by the instructor according to a standardized rubric.</td>
<td>3000 (E), 6000 (D, A)</td>
<td>Data on student performance will be gathered once a year in POL 3000 and 6000; a summary will be compiled and reviewed annually. A syllabus analysis will be conducted every 2-3 years by the relevant instructors for POL 3000 and 6000 to evaluate issues such as the following: how well course-specific learning objectives and instructional materials are aligned with this program outcome. Major changes will be considered every 4-5 years</td>
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<td>7. Students will be able to develop, produce, and defend a political science research project</td>
<td>Student performance on two iterations of the proposal for the independent capstone research project required as part of POL 6000 will be used for assessment at the &quot;E&quot; and &quot;D&quot; stages, respectively. In each case the proposal will be graded by the course instructor according to a standardized rubric. For assessment at the &quot;A&quot; stage, the grades assigned by the POL 6000 instructor for the completed independent capstone research project (note: this is not the final course grade) will be used.</td>
<td>6000 (E, D, A)</td>
<td>Data on student performance will be gathered once a year in POL 6000; a summary will be compiled and reviewed annually. A syllabus analysis will be conducted every 2-3 years by the relevant instructors for POL 6000 to evaluate issues such as the following: how well course-specific learning objectives and instructional materials are aligned with this program outcome. Major changes will be considered every 4-5 years</td>
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**IV. Assessment Infrastructure**

**Assessment Personnel:**
The primary assessment personnel will be the instructors who teach courses used in generating assessment data; the department’s Program Coordinator and Graduate Assistants who assist with data collection, organization, and storage; and the faculty members of the Department’s Undergraduate Committee who will analyze the data. Depending on the number of faculty members available for service in a given year, the committee typically consists of four faculty members including the Director of Undergraduate Studies, who is chair of the committee.

The Undergraduate Committee, in consultation with the Head, will identify courses to be used in generating assessment data in a given academic year. The Program Coordinator and/or Graduate Assistants will oversee the Bb site or other collection process by which instructors upload or otherwise deliver the assessment data gathered in their courses. The Undergraduate Committee will review the year’s worth of data at the conclusion of spring semester (or over the summer), produce an annual report, and disseminate that report to the entire department faculty at the beginning of the following academic year.

The Undergraduate Committee will develop the rubrics used in the assessment process; it will also consult, as necessary, with course instructors in creating the assignments that are used to generate assessment data. The Undergraduate Committee will also work, again as needed, with instructors in reviewing syllabi, modifying course-specific student learning outcomes and refining the use of assessment methods. The Undergraduate Committee will also consider additional changes such as revisions to program learning outcomes and curriculum.

**Assessment Schedule**
Before the start of each semester, the Director of Undergraduate Studies will contact all instructors who are teaching courses that will generate assessment data. Instructors will identify a random sample of students to be assessed during the semester and gather data accordingly. At the conclusion of the semester, instructors will submit the relevant data to the Program Coordinator (e.g., upload to a Bb site). The Program Coordinator and/or Graduate Assistants will organize and (if possible) summarize this data, then providing it to the Undergraduate Committee for review. The Undergraduate Committee will meet annually after the conclusion of spring semester (or over the summer) to review the data and evaluate whether the actual level of achievement for each Program Learning Outcome matched the expected level. (As discussed earlier, the Department will need to generate 1-2 years of data before it can set an appropriate “expected level of achievement.”) By the beginning of fall semester, the Undergraduate Committee will produce a report summarizing its findings and present the report to the entire Department. The Program Coordinator will store and maintain assessment reports and associated data.
Every 2-3 years, instructors for courses used in program assessment will conduct a syllabus analysis. As necessary, the Undergraduate Committee will meet with instructors to discuss their syllabi analysis, the operation of the assessment tool in their courses, whether students have met the expected level of achievement for the relevant program learning outcome(s) associated with their courses, and whether modifications to the assessment tool, syllabus and/or course-specific student learning outcomes may be necessary.

Every 4-5 years the Undergraduate Committee will conduct a comprehensive analysis to consider whether changes to program learning outcomes or the program curriculum may be needed. Any such recommendation would then be made to the entire Department for discussion and possible adoption.

V. Findings

Not applicable

VI. Use of Findings

See Section IV above