Department of Political Science: Annual Assess & Improve, 2014-15

Department: Political Science

Assessment Coordinator: Amir Abedi and Shirin Deylami

Departmental Mission:

In support of the mission of Western Washington University and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences the Department of Political Science is committed to providing a high quality educational experience for undergraduate students. The department contributes to the overall mission of the University through research, scholarship, and community service. The Political Science Department provides a solid grounding in four fields of Political Science: American politics and policy, international relations, comparative politics, and political theory. The mission of the Department is to train students to think critically and independently about politics and public life. Courses provide an understanding of political concepts and the organization and functioning of political systems. Given this mission the Department is committed to achieving eight specific goals that promote a deep understanding of the practice of politics.

Degree: Political Science BA

Departmental Student Learning Outcomes: Upon graduation, political science majors will be able to:

1. possess substantive knowledge in the discipline
2. exhibit analytical skills in interpreting data
3. demonstrate writing competence
4. engage in independent research
5. demonstrate critical, independent thinking about politics and public life

Degree: Political Science/Economics BA

Student Learning Outcome (in addition to 1-5):

6. assess the relationship between public policy choices and economic outcomes and the relationship between economic policies and their political consequences

Degree: Political Science Politics/Philosophy/Economics BA

Student Learning Outcome (in addition to 1-5 and 6):

7. describe and apply the arguments of moral, ethical, and political philosophy and the philosophy of knowledge

Degree: Political Science/Social Studies BA

Student Learning Outcome (in addition to 1-5):

8. convey substantive knowledge using reading and written and oral communication
GUR Student Learning Outcomes:

6. Recognize the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of participating in, and contributing as a citizen in, a diverse society.

7. Understand and evaluate assumptions, values, and beliefs in context of diverse local, national, and global communities.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessed This Year:

1. possess substantive knowledge in the discipline

3. demonstrate writing competence

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<th>Assessment Measures</th>
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<th>Results</th>
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<td>Exams, papers, presentations and projects in 100-400 level courses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Political Science B.A. PLSC/Economics B.A. PLSC/Phil/Econ B.A. PLSC/History B.A.</td>
<td>We found that students generally did well in group work, which allowed them to acquire and present substantive knowledge effectively. However, we also concluded that while students had little trouble improving their factual knowledge and understanding key terms they often had difficulty identifying, understanding, and applying abstract concepts in both introductory and upper-division courses. A particular problem we noted is that many students had a difficult time taking concepts they learned in one class and applying it to material in another class in the same subfield, in other words, conceptual knowledge seemed limited and it did not &quot;travel&quot; well.</td>
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<td>Senior exit survey given by department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Political Science B.A. PLSC/Economics B.A. PLSC/Phil/Econ B.A. PLSC/History B.A.</td>
<td>Students were asked to assess their knowledge of the discipline and sub-disciplines of political science. While the sample size was small, all student respondents to the survey agreed that they had a strong understanding of the discipline and particularly strong understandings of American politics, International Relations, and Comparative Politics. Their knowledge base for Political Theory was slightly lower but still comparatively high, that is, on average a score of 7.5 out of 10.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams, papers, presentations and projects in 100-400 level courses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political Science B.A. PLSC/Economics B.A. PLSC/Phil/Econ B.A. PLSC/History B.A.</td>
<td>Throughout the course of the major students significantly improved their writing skills and responded well to regular writing exercises, feedback from professors, and peer review. However, we noted that a significant number of students still have difficulty developing clear arguments and structure for their writing assignments. In addition, we found that, when writing research papers, a number of students have difficulty distinguishing between different types of sources, in terms of their quality and reliability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior exit survey given by department</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political Science B.A. PLSC/Economics B.A. PLSC/Phil/Econ B.A. PLSC/History B.A</td>
<td>In their self assessment students uniformly agreed that by completion of the degree their writing skills had greatly improved. On average students scored writing improvement at 9 on a scale of 1-10.</td>
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