Millikin University
Student Learning in the Political Science Major

By Bobbi Gentry
July 1, 2014

Executive Summary

The 2013-2014 year has been a transition year for Political Science. The number of Political Science majors has increased for the past three years due to ongoing efforts of both students and faculty. The current number of majors includes 27 majors, up from 7 four years ago. The new interdepartmental minor in Criminal Justice has opened up several new opportunities including collaboration across campus, internships and new relationships with the Decatur departments of criminal justice, such as Adult Redeploy Illinois and Teen Court.

The Department of Political Science supports the mission of the University in preparing students for professional success, democratic citizenship in a global environment, and a personal life of meaning and value. The mission of the department is to produce graduates who achieve the following seven learning outcome goals:

1. Identify key questions, fundamental concepts, and theoretical frameworks critical to an understanding of the political world;
2. Identify the fundamental concepts, characteristics, and theories central to American politics;
3. Identify the fundamental concepts, characteristics, and theories central to comparative politics;
4. Identify the fundamental concepts, characteristics, and theories central to the area of international relations;
5. Solve complex problems by demonstrating a mastery of substantive knowledge in subfields;
6. Follow scientific and humanistic methods to design and carry out politically-oriented research projects by utilizing sufficiently advanced social research methods;
7. Communicate effectively political knowledge to general audiences as well as colleagues in the field.

In addition to regular assessment in the classroom, we assess student learning at two posttests in introductory

Science provides many opportunities for students and continues to provide a vital contribution to the University studies program.

Political Science continues to fulfill the university's mission of democratic citizenship in a global environment. Our faculty, not only live as global citizens but, also encourage our students to think and actively become democratic citizens. Most of the courses in Political Science taught during the 2013-2014 were either cross-listed as a Global Studies course fulfilling the IN 350 requirements, or as United States Structures course fulfilling the IN251 requirements. Our courses encompass and continue to help Millikin students see the value and responsibility of being involved in their political, civic and social world.

Students within Political Science courses vary from majors or minors to students taking our courses to fulfill their general education requirements. Among the students we serve are also Social Science Education majors who need both American Political Systems and State and Local Politics to prepare for their content area exam. In this vein, Political Science fulfills several roles to students across the university. As well as succeeding in the service it provides to the institution as a whole.

Political Science professors continue to contribute to a variety of initiatives across

students, while also creating a course of study that offers content, skills, and individualized attention.

In the first year of the major curriculum, students set about the task of acquiring basic knowledge in the various subfields of the discipline. Two major courses taken during the first y

In the department of Political Science, assessment of goals 1   4 involves the

Learning Goal 2: Identify the fundamental concepts, characteristics, and theories central to American politics

Rating for Goal 2: **Not Assessed in 2013-2014**

Learning Goal 3: Identify the fundamental concepts, characteristics, and theories central to comparative politics.

Rating for Goal 3: The department needs to find a way to assess student learning of this

Creativity	4.24
Knowledgeable	4.81
Ability to Answer Questions	4.94
Engaging	4.55
Easy to Understand	4.67

Rating for Goal 7: **GREEN**

Senior Exit Interviews:

The summary results for the senior exit interviews include several critiques of the department. Perhaps most importantly, students have articulated that Millikin does not see the importance of Political Science as a discipline because of the small size and few faculty. **Seniors want at least one more full time faculty to teach international courses**. Other comments include wanting more career planning and graduate school planning, developing connection with alumni for internships, and more online courses. In sum, seniors in Political Science want more resources in Political Science and want the university to invest in their discipline.

Improvement Plans

Despite the nature of these results, the department will not make major changes to its courses or assessment plan in 2013-2014. There are two reasons for this. One, this assessment plan has only been comprehensively implemented for three years, so it does not provide enough evidence to stimulate drastic changes.

Still, certain things are planned that might improve the **YELLOW** ratings on the three learning goals:

Learning Goal 2: A better assessment of the pre/post text is needed to assess student learning for both the Spring and Fall semesters. This implementation is acknowledged by Dr. Gentry and will be improved in the next assessment report.

Learning Goal 4: An introduction to International Relations Course will be taught in the Fall 2015 semester and will be assessed then.

Learning Goals 5 and 6: New implementation of a proposal due the semester before the senior thesis has improved feedback and engagement with the faculty member and students. As one on one projects develop, the focus on evaluation of scholarly research has taken a more central role in the discussion of results. As stated from the previous assessment report, this new proposal method seems to have encouraged students to consider what it means to pose a research question in Political Science and to investigate

This assessment exercise has stimulated other questions that will be pursued in the next year:

Is there a need for some sort of

within the community since the Herald and Review, WAND and a Springfield news station covered the event. A student worker with expertise in website design changed developed the webpage for the Criminal Justice minor, which included detail and variety.

Goal 2 included an evaluation of internships in Political Science and the beginning of interuniversity research on Political Science internships. The portfolio model has really allowed students and faculty to see the progress through the program and allowed students to connect past, present, and future work within the discipline with the previous coursework, current issue,

and Political Science, and 34 are social science, only 1 is Philosophy and Political Science. Other elements include the fact that Dan Monroe has long worked with Political Science to enhance the major pr

4. Michelle Sanders   Has a law degree and currently works full time as a clerk for a federal district judge   Teaches Constitutional Law, but is available to teach other courses in law such as Civil Liberties and the Constitution, and Supreme Court in American Politics.

Elements of the Major to be changed

1. Research Methods   PO 280 can currently be fulfilled by the course taught in the Social Science Department (PS/SO 201)
2. If there is a combined department with History, there can be a requirement within the major as an American history course and an advanced course in global history
3. A variety of electives can be provided by our adjunct faculty and two full time faculty members.

Course Rotation Suggestions   Fulfilling Requirements of the Current majors and rotation suggestions

Concerns over the Philosophy proposal
   1.

Appendix I:

6) The United States Congress has two functions: lawmaking and representation. Representation may be measured along different dimensions. Which of the following terms refers to Congress's ability to represent constituents' <u>interests</u> and <u>values</u>?

   a) Politico
   b) Descriptive representation
   c) Geographic representation
   d) Substantive representation
   e) Trustee

7)

   a) refers to the tailoring of the presentation of information about an issue in hopes of shaping opinion about that issue in one direction or another
   b) refers to the practice of nesting an unpopular bill within a larger, more popular bill in hopes of getting it passed by Congress
   c) refers to the creation of salience concerning an issue as a result of news coverage, regardless of whether the coverage is positive or negative
   d) refers to the repackaging of an unpopular policy by a presidential administration in an attempt to garner public support
   e)

Appendix III: Evaluation Rubrics for Senior Thesis

Thesis Proposal: Assessed by Department Faculty.

	Excellent	Adequate	Nominal
Knowledge Sources (Goals 1 4)	[**6 points**] Reflects a high level of integration of multiple sources of information and knowledge acquired in political science courses.	[**4 points**] Demonstrates only occasional integration of information from multiple sources and political science coursework.	[**2 points**] Demonstrates little or no integration of information from multiple sources.
Method (Goal 5)	[**5 points**] Presents a clear research design, including discussion of hypotheses to be tested, pertinent data, as well as methods skills acquired in the program and execution.	[**3 points**] Research design and hypotheses present, but proposal falls short in tying in pertinent data and relevant methods.	[**1 point**] No clear design or hypotheses, few if any connections to relevant data and methods. Proposal suggests methods incorrect for research question.
Clarity (Goal 7)	[**3 points**] Very few grammatical errors, if any. Sentences clearly express ideas, and paragraphs are coherent wholes. Overall structure is logical and coherent and contributes to overall		

Senior Presentation Assessment

Presentation Assessment

Your Initials _____

When using a five point scale, 1=poor and 5=excellent and where 3 is average. Where would you rate the presenter in each of these categories?

Presentation Style   1   2   3   4   5

E. Student-

PO 300   Media and Politics
PO 301

PO 322	Topics in Comparative Politics
PO 323	Topics in World Politics
PO 324	Politics of the Developing World
PO 330	Constitutional Law
PO 334	Civil Liberties and the Constitutions
PO 340	The American Conl Li

17.   What undergraduate experiences, courses or opportunities would have added to your college experiences? Why?

18.   What skills did you acquire as a Political Science major that you think are valuable?

19.   What skills did you want to have in your courses that were not present?

20.   Do you have any recommendations for the Political Science Department website?

29.   What advice would you give to current Political Science majors?

Appendix IV: Plagiarism Policy

Political Science Plagiarism Policy

The goal of this policy is for students to correctly cite, paraphrase, and write in their own voice.   -plagiarism is
ot been approved by
faculty. Consequences of plagiarizing are a zero on the assignment, redoing the assignment for no credit, and a letter is sent to the registrar, dean, and to the student explaining that the student has plagiarized in the course. When the plagiarism is severe