

**Revised Assessment Plan
2013-2014
B.A. in Political Science
School of Social Sciences
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Kean University**

Mission:

The Political Science Program seeks to provide a quality education to prepare students for graduate school, for employment in the public or private sector, and for the demands of enlightened citizenship. Students in the program will be able to discern the nature of political relationships based on an understanding of political structures, organizations, and constitutions, and to understand the relationship between underlying theoretical principles and their practical political ramifications. They also will be able to comprehend both traditional and contemporary approaches to the discipline. Students will be able to distinguish the importance of political leadership and the obligations assumed by a politically informed citizenry within a democratic society. They also will be exposed to the workings of the American political system and the underlying philosophical commitments that provide for its foundations.

Assessment Process:

Political Science students must take 5 core courses, including the capstone, as part of the requirements for the major. These five core courses provide a solid foundation within the discipline and its various sub-fields. As such, these 5 core courses are the primary vehicle for assessing the knowledge of our students. Beyond the 5 core courses, students take 6 additional Political Science courses selected from a list of electives, and it is likely that few majors take exactly the same grouping of 6 elective courses. Therefore, the assessment process will focus primarily on the core requirements within Political Science.

In Spring 2014, the PS program will expand its use of assessment tools in five major core courses at the 1000, 2000, and 4000 levels (i.e. three sections of PS 1010, two sections of PS 2100, and PS 4130). These assessment tools will include pre-test and post-test assessment mechanisms in the lower level courses, and research, analytical and critical writing assignments, group work etc. in PS 4130, all as part of the evaluation process. The Political Science faculty will use the results of assessment for making improvements to program practices aimed at increasing student learning.

1. Our assessment efforts in PS 1010, Intro to Politics, will employ pre-test and post-test assessment responses to short answer questions measuring breadth of understanding in at least three Political Science SLOs. A post-test assessment essay will measure depth of understanding and critical ability in one specific SLO.

The pre-test and post-test assessment short answer responses will focus on the following three SLOs: SLO 1 (“Students will be able to compare/contrast the nature of political relationships based on an understanding of political structures, organizations, and constitutions”), SLO 2 (“Students will examine

and evaluate relationship between underlying theoretical principles and their practical political ramifications”), and SLO 5 (“Students will identify and evaluate the important role that political leadership plays and the obligations assumed by a politically informed citizenry within a democratic society”). The post-test assessment essay will focus on SLO 2. The question will be:

Compare and contrast three of the following five political ideologies’ competing views of the “proper” role of the state: conservatism, liberalism, socialism, fascism, religious fundamentalism.

(The assessment data gathered in these three sections of PS 1010 will also be used to assess our contribution to the following General Education SLOs: K2 and S4.)

2. Our assessment efforts in PS 2100—American Government and Politics provide evidence of our continuing modification of both SLOs and assessment mechanisms. SLO 6 originally stated that students will “explain and assess the workings of the American political system and describe the underlying philosophical commitments that provide for its foundations.” In Spring 2012, the PS program focused on the latter part of SLO 6 (i.e. “Describe the underlying philosophical commitments that provide for its foundations”).

In our meeting in the summer of 2013, the faculty teaching PS 2100 found that there was a need to refine SLO 6 to reflect the more practical orientation of PS 2100; a refinement of direct measurement tools (i.e. essay questions) across PS 2100 sections to reflect commonalities among those sections of the course, as well as a refinement of a rubric specific to PS 2100 to measure student learning in that course.

SLO 6 was modified to read: “Explain and assess the theory and practice of the American constitution and how contemporary American politics reflects continuing debate on these theories and practices”. The measurement tools and course rubric were modified from Summer 2012 to Spring 2013. The assessment questions themselves will be modified and expanded in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014, to all sections of PS 2100 in order to reflect our efforts to ensure that our introductory American Government course addresses a proper balance between theory and practice.

The following post-test assessment essay will be asked in two sections of PS 2100 in Spring 2014:

Bessette and Pitney argue that “Americans still define the purposes of government in light of the goals articulated in the Declaration [of Independence]” (pp. 10-11). Discuss in detail the goals of government articulated in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence and the Declaration’s contemporary significance. Provide at least one example of the way in which the Declaration informs contemporary debate on an important public issue.

In addition to the post-test assessment essay, which focuses on SLO6 (“The student will be able to explain and evaluate the theories and practices of the American Constitution and how contemporary American politics reflects continuing debate over these same theories and practices”), there will be a pre-test and post-test assessment short answer mechanism administered in the same two sections of PS 2100.

Another Core course, PS 2400, Introduction to International Relations, was also assessed looking at student learning outcomes and how they align with GE Student Learning Outcomes. For example, SLO 3 states that students will be asked to explain and access the extent to which political positions might be influenced by various factors. The first examination given in every section of PS 2400 requires students to compare the assumptions, realists, liberals, Marxists, and constructivists make about the principal sources of conflict in world politics. In asking this question, the relevant instructors are attempting to measure student abilities in relation to Political Science Program SLO 3 and GE SLOs GE K2, GE K3, GEV 1,2,3,4 and 5.

Beginning in the of Fall 2012 and extending through Spring 2013, the culminating assignment done in the Capstone Course, was identified as a direct measure for assessing attainment of our program Student Learning Outcomes. In this course, assessment data is collected from an assignment that requires students to provide the evidence of meeting program goals. Each semester, composite data from scored student assignments is being collected and analyzed to address areas of program strengths and weaknesses as well as to inform our decisions, ultimately resulting in program improvements. In addition, a systematic process for gathering data utilizing an indirect measure, the Graduating Student Survey, was established. Data from the student survey will also help inform our decisions regarding program improvements to increase student learning. These methods will be used for assessing other core courses. The survey will be administered to the entire class in order to obtain more precise information about meeting students' needs.

Members of the Political Science program will be meeting regularly over the course of the 2013/2014 Academic Year in order to continuously refine the assessment instruments, particularly in the introductory courses (i.e. PS 1010, PS 2100, PS 2300 and PS 2400). They will also be analyzing the raw data collected from the aforementioned courses.

Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) – as aligned with KU SLOs derived from the Institutional Mission* and GE SLOs. ** (Data from Direct and Indirect Measures collected each semester in the Capstone Course or a designated, end-of-program course.)

Students who graduate with a B.A in Political Science should be able to:

SLO1: Students will be able to compare/contrast the nature of political relationships based on an understanding of political structures, organizations, and constitutions.
(KU 2, 3) (GE K2, S1, S3, S4, S5)

Direct Measure: PS4130: Research paper scored with rubric to demonstrate achievement of program goals. **Indirect Measure:** Graduating Student Survey

SLO2: Examine and evaluate the relationship between underlying theoretical principles and their practical political ramifications.

(KU 1, 4) (GE K2, S1, S3, S4)

Direct Measure: PS4130: Research paper scored with rubric to demonstrate achievement of program goals. **Indirect Measure:** Graduating Student Survey

SLO3: Identify and assess the extent to which political positions might be influenced by factors such as world view, cultural differences, race, class, ideologies, and gender.

(KU 1, 3) (GE K2, S2, S1, S3, S4, S5)

Direct Measure: PS4130: Research paper scored with rubric to demonstrate achievement of program goals. **Indirect Measure:** Graduating Student Survey

SLO4: Analyze and appraise the nature of international and comparative political relationships.

(KU 1, 4) (GE K3, S1, S2, S5)

Direct Measure: PS4130: Research paper scored with rubric to demonstrate achievement of program goals. **Indirect Measure:** Graduating Student Survey

SLO5: Identify and evaluate the important role that political leadership plays and the obligations assumed by a politically informed citizenry within a democratic society.

Direct Measure: PS4130: Research paper scored with rubric to demonstrate achievement of program goals. **Indirect Measure:** Graduating Student Survey

SLO 6: Explain and assess the theories and practices of the American constitution and how contemporary American politics reflects continuing debate over these same theories and practices.

Direct Measure: PS4130: Research paper scored with rubric to demonstrate achievement of program goals. **Indirect Measure:** Graduating Student Survey

*** KU Student Outcomes: *Kean University graduates should be able to:***

1. Think critically, creatively and globally;
2. Adapt to changing social, economic, and technological environments;
3. Serve as active and contributing members of their communities; and
4. Advance their knowledge in the traditional disciplines (GE) and enhance their skills in professional areas (Prof. pgms)

****General Education Student Learning Outcomes**

Student Learning Outcomes – Knowledge: Students will demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and content by:

(K1) applying the scientific method to understand natural concepts and processes;

(K2) evaluating major theories and concepts in social sciences;

(K3) relating historical references to literature; and

(K4) evaluating major theories and concepts in the fine arts.

Student Learning Outcomes – Skills: Students will demonstrate the skills necessary to:

(S1) write to communicate and clarify learning ;

(S2) communicate effectively through speech;

(S3) solve problems using quantitative reasoning;

(S4) think critically about concepts in multiple disciplines; and

(S5) show information literacy.