

# **Assessment Plan**

## **ISU Department of Politics and Government**

### **Undergraduate Program**

#### **1. Goals**

The Department of Politics and Government at Illinois State University offers a BA and BS in political science in order to promote human knowledge about and skills in the political dimensions of social life.

#### **2. Student Learning Outcomes**

The Department has five learning outcomes for its undergraduate program:

1. Apply critical thinking to understand and evaluate political ideas, institutions and processes at the local, national, and global levels, and express that analysis both in writing and orally, using a diversity of research methodologies.
2. Articulate their views on a variety of political concerns in a context of respect for academic principles and tolerance for dissenting views.
3. Identify normative issues and make informed and well-reasoned judgments in complex environments.
4. Recognize and explain the dimensions of the significant events, ideas, individuals, social movements, and institutions that have shaped our world.
5. Formulate a critically informed position on participation and citizenship in local, national, and global communities.

The Department periodically drafts a curriculum map to assess how these learning outcomes align with its courses (see Appendix A).

#### **3. Direct evidence of student learning**

The current assessment plan for the undergraduate political science program of the Department of Politics and Government includes:

- A. Occasional within-course pretests and posttests, intended to measure student knowledge at the start of a course and student learning within a course. See Appendix B for a sample pretest, from POL 327.

- B. A political science knowledge pretest for students in the entry-level POL 100 course and a political science knowledge posttest for students in the upper-level POL 296 course. The tests are intended to measure student knowledge in an early course required for the major and measure student learning from POL 100 to POL 296. See Appendix C for an example political science knowledge test.
- C. Data on retention and graduation from the undergraduate program.

#### **4. Indirect evidence of student learning**

The current assessment plan for the undergraduate political science program of the Department of Politics and Government includes:

- A. An annual survey of undergraduate students across selected courses measuring phenomena such as student perceptions of the Department and student perceptions of how well Politics and Government courses improved the student's ability in certain domains. See Appendix D for a sample undergraduate survey.
- B. An annual focus group, typically of 10 to 20 undergraduate students, to provide richer data on student perceptions of the Department. For the focus group, a graduate student reads planned prompts with the potential for the graduate student to ask off-the-cuff follow-ups. Student responses from the focus group are then transcribed. See Appendix E for sample focus group prompts.
- C. Ad hoc or intermittent data collection and/or analysis that has included [1] review of syllabi to document assessment strategies used in Department courses and [2] review of data from surveys of alumni.

#### **5. Use of the results**

Each academic year at or after the Spring semester, the Department's Director of Assessment presents to the Department Chair a report that includes at least some the data mentioned above. Decisions are made intermittently and on an on-going basis regarding changes based on results from the assessment practices.

One major recent revision to the undergraduate program based on student feedback has involved piloting or adding new courses to the curriculum. For example, the Spring 2020 undergraduate survey included an item asking whether students would be interested in taking a course that builds on the Department's course on quantitative reasoning in political science that would focus on how to conduct original research and how to use software to analyze data and draw graphs. Results indicated that 11 of 33 surveyed political science majors and 17 of 56 overall respondents indicated "yes", with another 11 and 21 respectively indicating "maybe". Such as course has been added to the Department's curriculum (POL 309: Data Analysis and Data Visualization in Political Science).

**APPENDIX A**  
**Selected results from the 2019 Department curriculum map**

Numbers indicate the percentage of the 54 undergraduate courses included in the curriculum mapping exercise. "LO" indicates a learning outcome.

	L01	L02	L03	L04	L05
Undergrad					
Fully met	70%	76%	78%	69%	52%
Partially met	28%	20%	20%	22%	30%
Not met	2%	4%	2%	9%	19%

- L01 Apply critical thinking to understand and evaluate political ideas, institutions and processes at the local, national, and global levels, and express that analysis both in writing and orally, using a diversity of research methodologies.
- L02 Articulate their views on a variety of political concerns in a context of respect for academic principles and tolerance for dissenting views.
- L03 Identify normative issues and make informed and well-reasoned judgments in complex environments.
- L04 Recognize and explain the dimensions of the significant events, ideas, individuals, social movements, and institutions that have shaped our world.
- L05 Formulate a critically informed position on participation and citizenship in local, national, and global communities.

Course		LO 1	LO 2	LO 3	LO 4	LO 5
100	Introduction to politics	F	F	F	F	F
101	Citizens and governance	P	P	P	P	P
106	U.S. government and civic practices	P	P	P	P	F
138	Quantitative reasoning in political science (instructor a)	P	F	F	P	P
138	Quantitative reasoning in political science (instructor b)	F	N	F	N	N
140	Introduction to the politics of Africa, Asia, and Latin America	P	P	P	P	P
150	Introduction to U.S. foreign policy	F	F	F	F	F
151	Introduction to international relations	F	F	F	F	F
161	Introduction to political theory	F	F	F	P	F
212	The politics of legal decision making	P	P	P	N	N
213	U.S. congressional politics	F	F	F	F	P

214	U.S. political parties	F	F	F	F	F
215	U.S. judicial process	F	F	F	F	N
217	U.S. presidency	P	P	P	F	N
218	Political leadership	F	F	F	F	F
220	Campaign politics	F	F	F	F	F
221	U.S. state and local governments	--	--	--	--	--
222	Urban politics and problems	--	--	--	--	--
225	Women in politics	F	F	F	F	F
231	Public administration	F	F	F	P	F
232	Politics and public policy	F	F	F	F	F
236	Environmental politics and policy	--	--	--	--	--
240	Latin American politics	--	--	--	--	--
241	European politics	F	F	F	F	F
245	Asian politics	F	F	F	F	F
246	African politics	P	P	P	P	P
247	Middle Eastern politics	P	F	F	F	P
251	Theories and concepts of international relations	--	--	--	--	--
252	International organizations	P	P	P	P	P
254	Global issues	P	F	F	F	P
255	International conflict and security	F	F	F	F	F
261	Classical political theory	F	F	F	F	P
262	Modern political theory	F	F	F	F	F
265	American political theory	F	F	F	F	F
266	American legal theories	F	F	F	F	P
283	Trial advocacy	--	--	--	--	--
291	Undergrad teaching experience	--	--	--	--	--
293A 01	Workshop model United Nations	P	P	P	P	P
293A 03	Trial advocacy II	--	--	--	--	--
296	Political science professional development	N	N	N	P	P
300	Senior seminar	F	F	F	F	F
302	Honors seminar	F	F	F	F	F
305	Topics in American government	F	F	F	F	F
310	Voting and elections	F	P	P	N	F
312	Public opinion	P	P	P	N	N
317	U.S. politics and culture after Vietnam	F	F	F	F	P
324	Topics in public law	F	F	F	N	N
325	Constitutional law: Functions and powers	F	F	F	F	N
326	Constitutional law: Due process rights	F	F	F	F	N
327	Constitutional law: Equality and free expression	F	F	F	F	N
328	Constitutional law: Supreme Court	P	F	F	F	N

	decisions in the 21st century					
330	Problems of public administration	F	F	F	P	F
331	Human resource management	--	--	--	--	--
333	Politics, budgets, and taxes	F	F	F	F	P
334	The politics of race, ethnicity and inequality	--	--	--	--	--
337	Gay and lesbian politics and theory	F	F	F	F	F
338	Gender and political theory	F	F	F	F	F
339	Youth politics	F	F	F	F	F
340	Topics in Latin American politics	--	--	--	--	--
344	Topics in global studies	--	--	--	--	--
345	Topics in Asian politics	F	F	F	F	F
349	Topics in Middle East politics	P	F	F	F	P
351	International law	F	F	F	F	F
352	Human rights	P	P	P	P	P
357	The politics of microfinance	--	--	--	--	--
358	International political economy	--	--	--	--	--
361	Topics in political theory	F	F	F	F	F
363	Political theories of nonviolence	--	--	--	--	--
398A 01	Professional practice: Public service internship	F	F	F	F	F

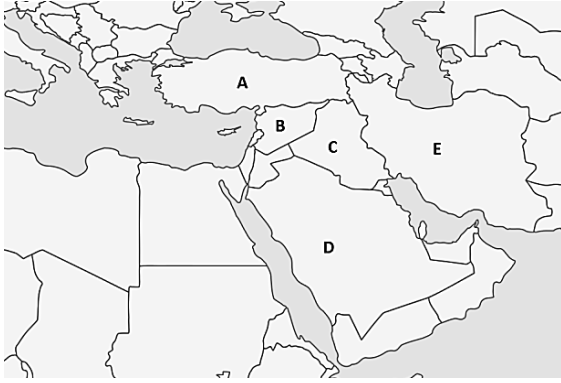
**APPENDIX B**  
**POL 327 Pretest**

1. True or false? All racial discrimination by the federal government is unconstitutional.  
 True  
 False
2. Age discrimination by the federal government is reviewed with \_\_\_\_.  
 constitutional scrutiny  
 intermediate scrutiny  
 rational basis scrutiny  
 strict scrutiny
3. Sex discrimination by the federal government is reviewed with \_\_\_\_.  
 constitutional scrutiny  
 intermediate scrutiny  
 rational basis scrutiny  
 strict scrutiny
4. You are a judge and need to determine whether a particular movie is obscene. You should use \_\_\_\_.  
 the Central Hudson test  
 the Lemon test  
 the Miller test  
 the O'Brien test
5. Bob thinks that his constitutional rights were violated by a state legislator. Bob can sue the state legislator in civil court and recover damages due to \_\_\_\_.  
 Section 1983  
 the 28th Amendment  
 the Equal Protection Clause  
 Title VII  
 Title VIII
6. Suppose that a public school teacher punished a student for leading a prayer at lunch. A court ruled that the teacher violated the student's First Amendment rights. The case law was clear that the student had the right to pray at lunch, but the teacher erroneously thought that all prayer in public school was illegal. The teacher had been acting in good faith. In this case, will the teacher receive qualified immunity?  
 Yes  
 No
7. Consider a law that is not clear about what is illegal and about what the punishment for violating the law is. This law violates \_\_\_\_.  
 procedural due process  
 Section 1983  
 substantive due process  
 the 28th Amendment  
 the Equal Protection Clause
8. True or false? A law passed for non-discriminatory reasons can be struck down under the Equal Protection Clause because that law produces a disparate impact on different racial groups.  
 True  
 False
9. List three government interests that the U.S. Supreme Court has considered "compelling" enough to justify government discrimination on the basis of race.

**APPENDIX C**  
**Political Science Knowledge Test 2019-2020**

*Please select the correct response to each test item. Each item has one correct response.*

1. Terms of office are 2 years for members of \_\_\_\_.  
A. the U.S. House of Representatives  
B. the U.S. Senate
2. Which of these U.S. political parties is the more conservative party?  
A. the Democratic Party  
B. the Republican Party
3. The U.S. Secretary of Education is an official in the \_\_\_\_.  
A. executive branch  
B. judicial branch  
C. legislative branch
4. If representation in the U.S. Senate were changed to reflect state population size, Illinois' representation in the U.S. Senate \_\_\_\_.  
A. would decrease  
B. would increase  
C. would remain the same
5. The Federalist Papers were written mainly \_\_\_\_.  
A. to oppose slavery  
B. to argue for the ratification of the Bill of Rights  
C. to argue against the ratification of the Bill of Rights  
D. to support ratification of the U.S. Constitution  
E. to oppose ratification of the U.S. Constitution
6. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in \_\_\_\_ that it was unconstitutional for states to racially segregate public schools.  
A. Brown v. Board of Education  
B. Keyishian v. Board of Regents  
C. Plessy v. Ferguson  
D. Roe v. Wade
7. Is hate speech protected by the U.S. Constitution?  
A. Yes  
B. No
8. Suppose that the owner of a private business in Illinois has an official policy to not hire persons of a certain racial group. This racial discrimination in hiring would \_\_\_\_.  
A. violate Article I Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution  
B. violate the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution  
C. violate the 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution  
D. violate the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution  
E. not violate the U.S. Constitution
9. One of the ways for a gerrymander to occur is for \_\_\_\_.  
A. a bill to be stalled in committee  
B. a conference committee to remove a provision in a bill  
C. congressional districts to be drawn to favor one political party  
D. a president to strike a specific provision from a bill before signing the bill  
E. the presidential candidate with the most total votes to not win the presidency
10. The Gini index measures levels of \_\_\_\_.  
A. corruption  
B. democracy  
C. ethnic diversity  
D. Gross Domestic Product  
E. income inequality



11. The country labeled A on the map above is \_\_\_\_.
- Iran
  - Iraq
  - Saudi Arabia
  - Syria
  - none of the above
12. The country labeled E on the map above is \_\_\_\_.
- Iran
  - Iraq
  - Saudi Arabia
  - Syria
  - none of the above
13. Some political scientists use scores from \_\_\_\_, which use 1-to-7 scales to rate countries and territories on civil liberties and political rights.
- Amnesty International
  - Freedom House
  - the Human Fund
  - the World Bank
  - USAID
14. Of the following, one country maintaining control over another country would best be described as \_\_\_\_.
- colonialism
  - communism
  - corporatism
  - fascism
  - mercantilism

15. Which one of the following is NOT a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council?
- China
  - France
  - Germany
  - Russian Federation
  - United Kingdom
16. The term "statistically significant evidence" refers to sufficient evidence that a particular association \_\_\_\_.
- exists
  - has a lasting effect
  - is important
  - is large
17. Which one of the following is the most common p-value threshold used for assessing statistical significance in political science?
- $p=0.00$
  - $p=0.05$
  - $p=0.50$
  - $p=0.95$
  - $p=1.00$
18. Which of these is the best description of what control variables are used for?
- to eliminate alternate explanations
  - to improve reliability
  - to increase sample size
  - to increase the variance
  - to provide something to compare the treatment group to
19. Suppose that an experiment testing for an effect has a p-value of  $p=0.99$ . Using the conventional level of statistical significance in political science, the experiment \_\_\_\_.
- found evidence of an effect
  - did not find evidence of an effect
  - found evidence that there is no effect



20. Which one of the following best describes a hegemon, as the term is used in international relations?
- a bilateral agreement
  - a coalition of states
  - a dominant power
  - a military government
  - a theocratic government
21. Of the persons in the list below, the preamble phrase in the U.S. Constitution that "We the People of the United States...do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America" best reflects the thought of \_\_\_\_.
- Thomas Hobbes
  - Baron de Montesquieu
  - Jean Jacques Rousseau
  - Adam Smith
  - Voltaire
22. In Plato's Republic, Socrates discussed how a society might transition from one type of government to another. According to Socrates, which one of the following types of government would a society be expected to have after a democracy?
- anarchy
  - aristocracy
  - oligarchy
  - timocracy
  - tyranny
23. In Plato's allegory of the cave, which one of the following best symbolizes information received from others?
- the fire
  - the Moon
  - the prisoners' chains
  - the puppet masters
  - the shadows

**Some final items about you:**

24. I am a \_\_\_\_.
- freshman
  - sophomore
  - junior
  - senior
25. I am \_\_\_\_.
- a major in only political science
  - a major in political science and at least one other field
  - a political science minor
  - none of the above
26. I am \_\_\_\_.
- a transfer student to ISU
  - not a transfer student to ISU
27. I am \_\_\_\_.
- female
  - male
  - other / choose not to report
28. Please mark ALL that describe you:
- Asian
  - Black
  - Latinx
  - White
  - Other / Choose not to report
29. I am \_\_\_\_.
- younger than 18 years old
  - 18 years old to 24 years old
  - 25 years old to 30 years old
  - older than 30 years old
30. The course that you are taking this test in is \_\_\_\_.
- POL 100
  - POL 296
  - a course other than POL 100 and POL 296

## APPENDIX D

### Sample undergraduate survey

This survey is part of the Department of Politics and Government's annual learning outcomes assessment. The results will be used to determine how well the Department's undergraduate program is achieving its learning outcomes goals and to propose steps for improvement.

Participation in this survey is voluntary, and all information that you provide will be kept anonymous. You do not need to answer any or all questions. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please direct them to Dr. T.Y. Wang, Department Chair, at 309-438-8638, or Dr. L.J Zigerell, Director of Assessment, at 724-561-8280.

Instructions: Do not include your name or any other identifying information. If you have already taken this survey in another class this semester, please do not take it again.

Please use a #2 pencil to record responses on the accompanying opscan form for items 1 to 25.

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#### Let's start with some information about you:

1. I am a \_\_\_\_.
  - A. freshman
  - B. sophomore
  - C. junior
  - D. senior
  
2. I am a \_\_\_\_.
  - A. major in only political science
  - B. major in political science and at least one other field
  - C. political science minor
  - D. none of the above
  
3. I am \_\_\_\_.
  - A. female
  - B. male
  - C. other
  - D. Choose not to report
  
4. Mark ALL that describe you:
  - A. Asian
  - B. Black
  - C. Latino/a
  - D. White
  - E. Other / Choose to not report

**Next, we would like your opinion about how well the Department of Politics and Government is achieving its learning outcomes goals:**

		Yes, very well	Yes, acceptably well	Yes, but not well enough	Not at all
<b>Did your Politics and Government courses improve your ability to ___?</b>					
5	...communicate through writing	A	B	C	D
6	...communicate through speaking	A	B	C	D
7	...give presentations	A	B	C	D
8	...work with others	A	B	C	D
9	...understand research methods	A	B	C	D
10	...use a variety of research methods	A	B	C	D
11	...explain and defend your views	A	B	C	D
12	...better understand and tolerate political views you disagree with	A	B	C	D
13	...understand and explore complex social and political issues	A	B	C	D
14	...apply critical thinking to understand and evaluate political ideas, institutions, and processes at the local, national, and global level	A	B	C	D
15	...understand and assess the values embedded in political issues	A	B	C	D
16	...recognize and explain the dimensions of the significant events, ideas, individuals, social movements, and institutions that have shaped our world	A	B	C	D
17	...formulate a critically informed position on participation and citizenship in local, national, and global communities	A	B	C	D

**Some other items:**

18. In Politics and Government courses in which you were offered an opportunity to express your political views, in how many did you feel comfortable expressing your political views?  
 A. All of these courses  
 B. Most of these courses  
 C. Some but not most of these courses  
 D. None of these courses

19. How would you rate the Department of Politics and Government overall?  
 A. Excellent  
 B. Good  
 C. Neutral  
 D. Fair  
 E. Poor
20. Were you aware of the Department of Politics and Government learning outcomes goals before taking this survey?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No

**Next, some items about advising in the Department of Politics and Government:**

		Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Not applicable
<b>How satisfied are you with the advising that you have received regarding ___?</b>							
21	...scheduling your political science courses	A	B	C	D	E	Leave Blank
22	...your political science major or minor	A	B	C	D	E	Leave Blank
23	...your progress toward your degree	A	B	C	D	E	Leave Blank
24	...graduation requirements and processes	A	B	C	D	E	Leave Blank
25	...your post-graduation plans	A	B	C	D	E	Leave Blank



**APPENDIX E**  
**Sample undergraduate focus group prompts**

Read: "This focus group is part of the Department of Politics and Government's annual self-assessment. The focus group discussion will be recorded, transcribed into text, and reviewed to assess how well the Department is doing and how the Department can better serve our students. Student names will not be included in the transcription. Please direct any questions to Dr. T.Y. Wang, Department Chair, at 309-438-8638, or Dr. L.J Zigerell, Director of Assessment, at 724-561-8280".

1. What attracted you to the political science major?
2. The Department of Politics and Government wants its students to learn about politics and to develop important skills. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **teaching writing skills**?
3. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **teaching presentation skills**?
4. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **teaching teamwork skills**?
5. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **teaching about American politics and American government**?
6. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **teaching about politics and government in countries other than the United States**?
7. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **teaching how to think critically about politics**?
8. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **teaching about research and research methods**?
9. What is the Department doing well or how could the Department do better in **helping students better understand and tolerate diverse political opinions and political ideas**?
10. Would you say that, because of the political science courses you have taken at ISU, you are more likely to think of yourself as **being part of a global community**? If so, why?
11. In Politics and Government courses in which you were offered an opportunity to express your political views, did you often or always **feel comfortable expressing your political views**?
12. Besides what was already mentioned, what are some other things that you think the ISU undergraduate program in Politics and Government is **doing well**?
13. Besides what was already mentioned, what are some other things that you think the ISU undergraduate program in Politics and Government **could improve on**?
14. Besides any courses that were already mentioned, what are some **courses** that the Department does not offer but that you would like the Department to offer?