

**Western Carolina University
Program Assessment Plan
Political Science and Public Affairs
College of Arts and Sciences
Assessment Plan for 2009-2014**

Primary Contact Name/Info:

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Department Mission Statement

The Department of Political Science and Public Affairs is located in the College of Arts and Sciences at Western Carolina University. The Department seeks to create a teaching and learning community in which students develop the attitudes, knowledge, and aptitudes required for responsible and effective participation in society. The Department also provides the resources and encouragement for faculty to add to the existing knowledge within the discipline. Its primary purpose is to prepare students to function in a broad range of professional fields and activities by providing high quality instruction in political science, pre-law, and public affairs. The Department offers an undergraduate major in political science. It has minors in political science and international studies. It also offers the Master of Public Affairs (MPA) degree for full-time students as well as in-service students. We also seek to prepare students for further learning through liberal studies and to provide an atmosphere where students and faculty can pursue scholarly activity and service to the region, state, nation, and world.

Statement on Alignment of Program Mission with University and College Mission

Political science is theory, history, philosophy, mathematics, and current events rolled into one complex and intriguing package. It's about government and human nature, power and cultural tradition. I think the reason that the study of political science captures my interest is that it is so multifaceted.

- Courtney Swartwout, WCU Political Science undergraduate student, 2006

This quote by a recent graduate displays how the Department's curriculum parallels many of the central goals of Western Carolina University's Quality Enhancement Plan. Through our academic core courses and electives, we cover political issues that cross disciplines, requiring students to bring together information from multiple areas. The topics covered by a political science major range from ethical concerns over individual liberties, such as abortion rights, to policy issues concerning scientific research, like the use of stem cells, to models of presidential leadership. Aside from the cross-disciplinary nature of our field, the study of political science also crosses geographic boundaries. Our students are exposed to a rich combination of local issues, such as zoning laws, to global subjects, such as the war in Iraq.

The Department of Political Science and Public Affairs is uniquely positioned to fulfill the University's QEP goals. Not only does the Department's mission align with the overarching goals of the QEP, but the Department also can advance many objectives of the University of

North Carolina Tomorrow Initiative. The Department of Political Science and Public Affairs is committed to the development and implementation of the QEP as a means of better facilitating the relationships between students' classroom activities, their out-of-class experiences, and their life goals.

Program Goals/Objectives

Educational Goal #1: Integrate information from a variety of contexts

As the quote from the former student above articulates, political science is one field of study that has well defined subfields and crosses into many other disciplines. All of our majors will be exposed to the four main subfields of political science: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory. In addition, faculty are encouraged to utilize examples and theories from multiple disciplines, particularly the social sciences. For example, in examining the political reasons for the US involvement in Vietnam, one must also be aware of the historical context of the "Cold War." As a further example, to understand why Congress passes a certain bill, one may need to examine collective action issues and other group dynamics that are often discussed in psychology or sociology classes. Political science naturally lends itself to this cross-discipline approach, which fosters students' abilities to relate information from diverse areas.

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the interrelationships between subfields within political science.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the interrelationships between political science and other disciplines.

Assessment:

To achieve these learning outcomes, students will complete requirements within the political science core that cover the various subfields within the discipline. Within their individual classes, students are encouraged to discuss political science topics as interrelated with other academic areas and conduct research projects in-line with these relationships. For example, one section of PSC 190 – Freshman Seminar uses insights from a variety of disciplines including psychology, biology, geography, economics, and sociology to better understand American politics. Students are encouraged to be involved in the several political science-related student groups that receive support from the Department and faculty, including Model United Nations, the Political Science Club, the Pre-Law Club, College Republicans, College Democrats, and other extracurricular groups. Students will complete PSC 250 (Introduction to Political Science) and PSC 450 (Portfolio), both of which involve personal reflection on career goals and provide exposure to resources available within and outside the Department that will assist the students with these goals. In addition, a short essay reflecting on this learning outcome will be part of the student's final portfolio and Educational Briefcase in the PSC 450 course.

Educational Goal #2: Solve complex problems

The ability to identify, categorize, and develop solutions to difficult problems is one of the most important skills needed in today's world. For example, in examining the failure or success of an environmental policy, students must be able to recognize and evaluate the alternatives available to that policy while recognizing the external costs from the policies implementation (such as budgetary issues, public opinion concerns, ethical considerations, and the political process of policy formation). Students will also need the empirical skills necessary to assess the policy and properly evaluate alternatives. The Department fosters students' abilities to develop these skills through class projects and individual research.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop the skills necessary to recognize existing and emerging problems.
- Develop the skills necessary to recognize multiple problem-solving strategies, including empirical analysis.
- Apply a problem-solving strategy appropriate to the problem.
- Develop an intellectual framework from which one may select an appropriate solution based on practical, legal, theoretical, and ethical constraints.

Assessment:

Within their courses, students will complete original research projects, working closely with the instructor. All students are required to take PSC 250 (Introduction to Political Science) which introduces the students to research methods and strategies in political science. Students earning the BS degree are also required to complete PSC 348 (Political Analysis) in which students develop an advanced understanding of research methods and empirical approaches for describing, explaining, and solving domestic and foreign problems related to political science. Students also may elect to complete PSC 350 (Advanced Writing in Political Science). Here students work one-on-one with a professor to complete a research project and present that project at a conference or submit it for publication. A short essay reflecting on this learning outcome will be part of the student's final portfolio and Educational Briefcase in the PSC 450 course.

Educational Goal #3: Communicate Effectively and Responsibly

Effective communication is central to a good political science education. Our students must learn how to communicate orally and in written form. They must also learn to tailor their message to different audiences. For example, a political leader may propose an efficient and productive policy to decrease poverty. However, if that leader lacks the ability to communicate the policy's importance and structures to multiple audiences, that policy may never progress through the political process. Further, the leader must communicate her objectives differently for the general population than she will when speaking to legislators. The Department encourages the development of effective communication skills through class participation, formal research presentations at conferences, oral presentation in class, and written projects.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop oral communication skills.
- Develop written communication skills.

Assessment:

Political science classes foster active participation and effective communication in a number of ways. For example, students may take PSC 350 Advanced Writing in Political Science to develop both written and oral communication skills by documenting an independent research project through a research paper and by presenting that project at a research conference. The Department supports student involvement in many conferences, including prior student participation at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research, the Southern Political Science Association's Annual Conference, the North Carolina Political Science Association's Annual Conference, and Western Carolina University's Undergraduate Research Expo. The final portfolio and Educational Briefcase will contain a number of examples of how students can effectively communicate both in oral and written form. A short essay reflecting on this learning outcome will also be part of the student's final portfolio and Educational Briefcase in the PSC 450 course.

Educational Goal #4: Practice Civic Engagement

The study of political science naturally lends itself to issues of citizenship, community involvement, and recognition of the impact of public policies. The Department encourages students to be active citizens in their local, state, and national communities and fosters a commitment to these goals throughout the students' lives. The importance of civic engagement is reinforced in almost everything we do.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop an understanding of the importance of civic engagement in a democracy.
- Develop an understanding of the opportunities to participate to shape one's community.
- Participate in projects that involve community development, public policy, community service, or related activities that focus on existing issues and problems.

Assessment:

Students will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of civic engagement projects within their individual classes and outside activities. As described below, PSC 349 allows students to focus on one particular community issue, such as developing policy formation or policy implementation. This class is one of two options required for majors. In other classes, such as sections of PSC 190, Freshman Seminar, students also conduct civic engagement projects. A number of classes also include service learning activities as requirements for the class. Of course, service learning and civic engagement are not the same thing, but given the nature of political science, the vast majority of our service learning activities include a civic engagement component. A short essay reflecting on this learning outcome will be part of the student's final portfolio and Educational Briefcase in the PSC 450 course.

Educational Goal #5: Clarify and Act on Purpose and Values

A key goal of the Department is to create life-long learners who will develop a set of skills to use throughout their professional and private lives. One of these important skills is to understand one's own values and how to choose options that are consistent with these values. Students must also learn that these choices have consequences—both for themselves and for society at large.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the ethical and moral importance of life choices.
- Understand how to use informed judgments to guide their future plans.
- Clarify their own purposes and values.
- Develop the ability to see opposing viewpoints.
- Develop a plan to act on those values.

Assessment:

Within the major course requirements, all majors must complete PSC 250 – Introduction to Political Science and PSC 450 - Portfolio. As well as synthesizing students' experiences and opportunities as a political science major, these classes also require students to engage in personal reflection about their own professional and personal goals. Within the core requirements, majors must take at least one political philosophy course, either PSC 345 or PSC 346. Both of these courses provide an ethical and philosophical framework, based on theories and writings of political thinkers, from which students will improve their own abilities to make ethical decisions within their social and personal circumstances. Within other classes students are encouraged to examine the ethical implications of political decisions made by political leaders. From these examinations, students will understand the implications of each decision and improve on their own ability to critically examine the decisions within their own lives. A short essay reflecting on this learning outcome will be part of the student's final portfolio and Educational Briefcase in the PSC 450 course.

Introduction to Political Science: PS 250

Fall 2011

Chris Cooper, PhD

Stillwell 358

ccooper@email.wcu.edu

Class Time: Wednesday 12:20-1:10

Office Hours: M,W 10:30-11:30

Importance and Purpose

This course will introduce you to the study of Political Science at Western Carolina University. First, we will discuss what Political Science is, find out why it's a science, and explore the major subfields of political science. Next, this class will introduce you to the Political Science curriculum at WCU and the student groups and other extra-curricular activities associated with government and politics at WCU. Lastly, this course will introduce you to the possible careers available to Political Science majors.

Learning Goals

By the end of the semester, you should be able to explain to your parents and friends:

- what Political Science is
- what courses you'll need to take to graduate from WCU in four years with a Political Science Degree
- what extra-curricular activities you plan to engage in and how they will help you develop as a scholar, person, and citizen.
- what you plan to do with your Political Science Degree

Required Book

There is no required text for this course. However, there will be a number of readings. You will be responsible for using the library resources to locate most of these articles, although a few may be available on Blackboard.

Class Conduct

You are expected to behave in ways that do not distract me or other students. Don't read newspapers, listen to radios, listen to ipods, text message, surf the web, sleep in class, or do anything else that you know is inappropriate classroom behavior. We are in class to learn from one another and given that they are such a distraction to others, **cell phones, laptops, and tablet computers are not allowed in class.**

Every person should also conduct themselves with civility and politeness when communicating with the instructor or other members of class. While the goal of in-class discussions is to raise different viewpoints, these discussions should never turn into personal insults or attacks. You should be able to sway the other side with logic and evidence, not with offensive comments. Further, the person that shouts the loudest may silence a room, but that does not mean they "won" an argument.

Evaluation

160 points	Writing Assignments (8 out of 9 assignments; 20 points/assignment)
120 points	Attendance and Participation (8 points/day)
<u>50 points</u>	<u>Final Exam</u>
330 points	Total

Final grades: A+/A = 4.0 A- = 3.67 B+ = 3.33 B = 3.0 B- = 2.67 C+ = 2.33
C = 2.0 C- = 1.67 D+ = 1.33 D = 1.0 F = 0.0

An “A+” will rarely be achieved and would only be rewarded for extremely exceptional work in all written assignments and consistent and insightful participation.

Composition-Condition Marks: A student whose written work in any course fails to meet acceptable standards will be assigned a composition-condition (CC) mark by the instructor on the final grade report. All undergraduates who receive two CC grades are required to pass English 300 or English 401 before they will be eligible for graduation.

Attendance and Participation: (120 points) Class attendance and active participation are required for the course. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class and students should be in their seats and ready to begin promptly. Participation includes discussion of the assigned readings and other points raised in class. You will receive 8 points per day if you are in class, paying attention, have completed the readings, and participate in discussion. You receive 0 points if you are not in class. Other scores will vary based on participation.

Writing Assignments: (160 points) We will have 9 short writing assignments, 8 of these will count toward your final grade. These will usually be 2 to 3 page assignments that revolve around the topics we discuss in class. While these are short assignments, students should devote sufficient time to them in order to receive a good grade. Failure to turn in an assignment in class on the day it is due or emailed through Blackboard to me **before class begins** will result in a grade of F. I will drop your one lowest or one missed writing assignment score.

Final Exam: (50 points) We will have a final exam that covers the general topics discussed in class.

Late Work: Assignments not turned in by the time and day they are due will receive a zero (0).

Academic Honesty

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe, and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. Tests and quizzes are to be completed independently without books, notes, or other aids. Other assignments should be your work, not someone else's, unless a group project is assigned. Academic dishonesty will be reported and could result in severe penalties. All students are expected to know and abide by Western Carolina's Academic Honesty Policy and the procedures that will result for cases involving academic dishonesty or other violations of the Code of Student Conduct.

Academic dishonesty includes:

- a. **Cheating**—Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- b. **Fabrication**—Intentional falsification of information or citation in an academic exercise.
- c. **Plagiarism**—Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in an academic exercise.
- d. **Facilitation of Academic Dishonesty**—Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help someone else to commit an act of academic dishonesty, such as knowingly allowing another to copy information during an examination or other academic exercise.

Instructors have the right to determine the appropriate sanction or sanctions for academic dishonesty within their courses up to and including a final grade of “F” in the course. Within 5 calendar days of the event the instructor will inform his/her department head, and the Associate Dean of the Graduate School when the student is a graduate student, in writing of the academic dishonesty charge and sanction.

Equal Educational Opportunities

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Disability Services for more information at (828) 227-2716, lalexis@wcu.edu or 144 Killian Annex.

Tentative Schedule

NOTE: **The schedule is subject to change**, so make sure you check the calendar on Blackboard.

	Date	Topic	Other Readings or Assignments
1	Aug 24	Intro	
2	Aug 31	Basic Concepts & Questions	
3	Sept 7	Research in Political Science/Library Resources	Homework 1 Due: Reflect on Cooper, Knotts, and Haspel article. What is the major question? What evidence do they provide? What are their conclusions? What critiques do you have?
4	Sept 14	Subfields: Comparative Politics	Homework 2 Due: Read & summarize the Ross article.
5	Sept 21	Subfields: International Relations	Homework 3 Due: Read & summarize the Huntington article.
6	Sept 28	Subfields: American Politics	Homework 4 Due Read & summarize the Putnam article.
7	Oct 5	Subfields: Political Theory	Homework 5 Due: Read & summarize the Machiavelli article on Blackboard
8	Oct 12	Emerging Questions in Political Science	Homework 6 Due: Read and summarize your emerging questions article. Excerpts from “The Future of Political Science” (on reserve in Hunter Library)
9	Oct 19	The educational goals of the major & the curriculum	
10	Oct 26	Career Services at WCU and resumes	Homework 7 Due: Map out a personal 8-semester plan.
	Nov 2	Advising Day: Attend Dept Advising Day	
11	Nov 9	Careers with a Political Science Degree	Homework 8 Due: Complete a personal resume
12	Nov 16	Graduate schools and law schools	Homework 9 Due: What is your career goal and what will it take you to get there?
	Nov 23	Thanksgiving Break: No Class	
13	Nov. 30	Faculty Panel	
14	Dec 7	Wrap up & Review	
	Dec 13	3:00-5:00 FINAL EXAM	

Readings Key (Unless otherwise indicated, you must find these through the library resources):

Cooper, Christopher A., H. Gibbs Knotts, and Moshe Haspel. 2009. "The Content of Political Participation: Letters to the Editor and the People Who Write Them." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42: 131-137.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs* 72: 22-49.

Ross, Michael L. 2001. "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics*. 53: 325-61

Machiavelli. *The Prince* (excerpt) (Available on Blackboard).

Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone; America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy*.