

Political Science

Brooklyn College, CUNY

ASSESSMENT PLAN

Approved by Department 4/10/08

Our Mission

Our Department's mission is at one with Brooklyn College's. Our overarching goal is to provide our students with the knowledge and skills to live and serve in a globally-interdependent and rapidly-changing world. In this context, we strive to teach our students about the structure and operation of politics and power and to provide them with knowledge and skills that will help them succeed at their chosen careers. We seek to develop in them a sense of social responsibility by encouraging involvement in community and public service, both through our course work and through our internship program. Fostering a campus environment hospitable to multicultural interests and activities is a core value for our Political Science Department.

We build on the many resources of our urban environment to help Brooklyn College carry out the strategic goals of maintaining and enhancing academic excellence, creating a student-oriented campus, and becoming a model citizen of Brooklyn. The goals of the Political Science Department involve teaching, research and service to the college and in the broader community.

Based on our mission and on the college's strategic goals, our Department's priorities are:

1. To provide our students with knowledge, skills, and advice that will help them succeed at their chosen careers (law, education, international affairs, business, non-profit, government, public service, etc.).
2. To develop in our students a sense of social responsibility and good citizenship by encouraging involvement in community and public service, and thus to enable Brooklyn College to become a better citizen of the borough and the world.
3. To foster a Department and campus environment hospitable to multicultural interests and activities.

Goals and Objectives for Student Learning

We expect that students completing the political science major will demonstrate:

I) *A broad understanding of the theories and concepts that shape the discipline of political science;*

To assess this goal, we expect students completing the program will be able to:

- 1) explain political phenomena critically and logically
- 2) examine contemporary political issues through multiple theoretical lenses
- 3) formulate a research question in light of political science scholarship;
- 4) conduct a piece of research which combines interpretation and application of political sciences theories;
- 5) use foundational concepts or theory to interpret their own lived experience;

II) *Critical and creative thinking skills expressed in writing and orally*

We expect students completing the program will be able to:

- 6) identify and summarize the main arguments of scholarly sources
- 7) assess the credibility of competing arguments, including those that use basic statistics;
- 8) use quotations, paraphrases, and appropriate documentation.
- 9) advance a compelling argument
- 10) craft arguments using supportive evidence appropriate to social science

III) *Familiarity with a variety of methods used by political scientists to investigate politics;*

We expect students completing the program will be able to:

- 11) use at least one social science method informed by knowledge of the method's strengths and weaknesses in light of at least one policy issue
- 12) conduct a piece of empirical research which reflects knowledge of basic research methods;

Curriculum Map

See appendix for map of the undergraduate major as well as the names of the courses.

Courses in which students can achieve these objectives

Objectives	Intro to Am Gov 1.51	Intro to Global Pol 1.7	Analytic Approaches 12	Research Strategies 14	Ameri- can politics electives	Compar- ative politics electives	Interna- tional politics electives	Theory electives	Intern- ships 20.11- 12	Urban Field- work 75.5- 6	Indepen- dent Research 83.1-2
1	x	x	x	x					x	x	x
2			x	x							
3			x	x							x
4											x
5									x	x	
6	x	x	x								
7											
8			x	x							
9											
10											x
11				x							
12											

Note: For the electives in American & Urban Politics, International Politics, Comparative Politics, and Theory, the instructor will choose three of these learning objectives.

Assessment Data

- Qualitative: As many of the faculty are trained as qualitative researchers and as the department is committed to qualitative evaluation, much of our assessment will be qualitative, involving such research methods as focus groups with students, participant observation, and cohort studies.
- Quantitative: For some of these objectives that are more easily quantified, we will use outcomes on a three point rubric (surpasses expectations, meets expectations, does not meet expectations).
- Longitudinal analysis: We will track the trends over time, focusing especially on the required courses because these electives vary quite widely semester by semester. Assessing these introductory (1.51, 1.7), intermediate (12W, 14W) and concluding (95W) courses will also allow us to get a clear sense, rather quickly, about whether we are providing an environment in which students can gain the learning we think they need through the process of our undergraduate curriculum.

Assessment Cycle

As these learning objectives are aspirations for our future and the assessment process is new to us, we plan to take incremental steps. We will begin by focusing on the qualitative experiences and outcomes of our students in the program.

The curriculum committee will be responsible for choosing which objectives and goals will be evaluated each semester and preparing materials for discussion during the department meetings. Individual instructors of the courses using the learning objective under investigation will be responsible for collecting the outcomes data using a rubric designed in advance by the assessment committee. The department office will collect and assemble the data. Individual instructors will also use their own outcomes data for formative assessment of their courses. This formative assessment will be shared when possible at our periodic curriculum meetings.

Once a year we will collect some evidence from the students. Specifically, we plan to hold a luncheon for graduating majors which will serve as a focus group, asking them about what they have learned and which courses were most helpful in meeting the department's goals and objectives for student learning. Every three years, the department will assess the assessment plan and make alterations as needed.

The second stage will center on a department/program needs assessment. Although the data garnered from our student-centered assessment cycle is important to evaluating the effectiveness of our program, we believe this data alone is not sufficient in analyzing the overall impact of our program. We believe this process is distinct and warrants a thorough examination of our current departmental needs and resources in light of the precipitous growth in students majoring in political science in and the addition of research centered and writing intensive course offerings in recent years. A current need, for example, is a department computer lab to support the student population growth and to better facilitate our course offerings.

Therefore, once a year we will conduct interviews and distribute surveys to staff and faculty and inventory the current and needed resources in our program and department.

Analysis

The initial stage of our data analysis will entail reviewing the qualitative information garnered from students through the procedures highlighted above. We will allot time during the first department meeting each semester to discuss the assessment data collected the previous semester. Assessment data will be used to better understand students' experiences with the variety of program options we provide in the Political Science Department and to subsequently guide decision making in curriculum development and other relevant areas. It is our intention to "close the loop" in this way by ensuring that we discuss outcomes as a part of our strategic planning as well as our collegial deliberations on pedagogy.

The second stage of data analysis will review the data from our yearly department/program assessment highlighted above. We will allot time during our second department meeting in the fall of each year to discuss the assessment data collected from the previous year. The program/department assessment data will be analyzed in conjunction with our student assessment data to judge our program capacity and growth options in the coming years. Our departmental annual report will include a section on program evaluation.

The department's ability to conduct this outcomes assessment is dependent upon the administration providing the 3 credits in release time per year to oversee this process.