

University of Utah
Department of Political Science
Expected Learning Outcomes and Assessment Guidelines

Program Purpose

To prepare students to be broadly knowledgeable about the world of politics and to possess the necessary research and communication skills to continue to learn about and be active participants in politics. Students should be prepared for a range of entry level positions in the public, private, or nonprofit sectors, or to undertake graduate study in an academic or professional program.

Learning Outcomes and Assessments

The department's plan seeks to gather and evaluate evidence related to the following expected learning outcomes for students earning the BA or BS degree with a major in political science:

- demonstrate an understanding of fundamental political ideas, institutions, policies, and behavior in the United States, other countries, and internationally;
- demonstrate an understanding of major concepts, theories, and approaches to research in the study of politics;
- be able to identify, analyze, and assess information from a variety of sources and perspectives;
- be able to formulate an argument and express that argument clearly and cogently both orally and in writing;
- possess the research and communication skills necessary to understand and participate in the world of politics.

All political science majors are required to complete at least 3 courses at the 5000 level. The department's plan to assess the learning outcomes listed above is to create an archive of student papers submitted as part of the writing assignments completed in these 5000 level political science courses. Instructors of the 5000 level courses for each fall and spring semesters will be asked to identify one writing assignment to be submitted through Canvas that can be used to assess the department's learning requirements. Students will submit these assignments through Canvas and these assignments will be graded by instructors and returned to students in accordance with the course requirements. An ungraded copy of these papers will be added to the department's assessment archive in Canvas.

At the end of the academic year (typically in May), the director of undergraduate studies will select a random sample of approximately 15-20% ($n \approx 100$) of the papers in this archive. The sample of papers will be divided among the four faculty members of the undergraduate committee (approximately 25 papers each) to be evaluated using a common rubric. After all the papers have been evaluated, the committee will draft a brief report of the assessment for that year to be submitted to the chair of the department. After three years, the undergraduate committee will examine the results from the yearly reports and provide recommendations to the chair and the faculty regarding changes in curriculum or instruction.

In spring semester 2016, the undergraduate committee will conduct a pilot test of the assessment process. This pilot test will use assignments from 5000 level courses to produce a paper archive of approximately 50 papers. These 50 papers will be divided into two groups of 25 and two

faculty members will evaluate each paper in each group using a common learning outcomes rubric. After each faculty member has evaluated their papers independently, the committee will meet to discuss the scoring process. The committee will compare the scores from each reviewer and will assess the rubric and scoring system. The committee will create a preliminary report on the department's learning outcomes and suggest improvements to the process.

Assessment Team

The Department's undergraduate committee will be primarily responsible for conducting the assessment of student learning outcomes. A sample of student papers will be evaluated on the success of the students in meeting the learning outcomes each year. After three years of annual assessments reports, the undergraduate committee will examine the yearly reports and determine what changes, if any, to recommend to the chair and department faculty based on this information.

Assessment Reporting Line

The committee will provide annual reports on the assessment results to the department chair. The multi-year report and recommendations on curriculum or instruction will be provided to the department chair and the faculty. After the faculty has considered the committee's recommendation, the chair of the department will report any departmental actions to the dean of CSBS.