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| **Department of Political Science**  **College of Social Science**  **Undergraduate Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science**  **(Updated in January 2021)** |
| **Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (SOAP)** |
| 1. **Mission Statement**   **The Department of Political Science at California State University, Fresno, is dedicated to teaching its undergraduate students the skills they need to confront the challenges of public governance and policy making in the 21st Century. The Department’s students will be the new leaders of the Central Valley, California, and the United States. Courses and programs offered by the Department help students achieve these goals by teaching them how to critically analyze political and ideological debates regarding important issues, understand the proper role political representation plays in a democratic society, comprehend the meaning of and distribution of political power, design and enact public policy in the public interest, and effectively assess the consequences of those policies as they become political leaders, public managers, private sector attorneys, for- profit/nonprofit managers, and even professional scholars. The Department also helps students develop the inter-personal skills and experiences necessary for professional success in the public and private sectors. In sum, the mission of the Department is to provide the highest quality education and training to our students.** |
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| 1. **Goals and Student Learning Outcomes** |
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* 1. **Concepts: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of, and think critically about, the main concepts and theories of the academic discipline of political science, as well as major issues in American government and international affairs.**
     1. Students will learn, explain, and analyze the primary concepts, analytical techniques, and theoretical and empirical literatures in the major subfields of the academic discipline of political science.
     2. Students will be able to think critically about, and discuss their critiques of, the primary issues in American government and world affairs with these theories and techniques.
  2. **Tools: Students will acquire analytical, presentational, and critical thinking skills in regards to political issues.**

3.Students will be able to demonstrate a mastery of critical political and policy evaluation skills, as well as the methods necessary to effectively present analyses of issues and policies, and the arguments the information supports, in a professional fashion, which includes both oral and written communication.

4. Students will show their ability to use professional statistical analysis tools to empirically analyze, and provide written conclusions about, issues in modern politics.

**C. Professional Development: Students will learn about the many career options and professional development opportunities available to them in a variety of professional fields and academic disciplines for which they may seek employment with political science bachelor degrees.**

5.Students will learn the knowledge and skills necessary for preparing to enter careers in government, public sector management, running for elected office, managing campaigns, as well as for being accepted into highly acclaimed graduate programs and law schools.

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| 1. **Curriculum Map (Matrix of Courses X Learning Outcomes) I = Introduced, R = Reinforced, E = Enhanced, M = Mastered** |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Courses | Outcome 1  Concepts and knowledge | Outcome 2  Concepts and knowledge | Outcome 3  Tools | Outcome 4  Tools | Outcome 5  Professional Development | | PLSI 001  Modern Politics | I | I | I | I | I | | PLSI 002  American Government Institutions | I | I | I | I | I | | PLSI 071  Introduction to Environmental Politics | I | R | I | I | R | | PLSI 090  Methods of Analysis | I | R | I | R,E | R | | PLSI 102  California Government and Institutions | R | E | R | R | R | | PLSI 103  California Politics | R | E | R | R | R | | PLSI 110  History of Political Thought I | R | E | E |  | E | | PLSI 111  History of Political Thought II | R | E | E |  | E | | PLSI 120  International Politics | R | R | R | R | E | | PLSI 121  American Foreign Affairs | E | E | E | R | E | | PLSI 126  International Law and Organization | E | E | E | R | E | | PLSI 140  Approaches to Comparative Politics | R | R | R | R | R | | PLSI 141  Russian Politics | E | M | E | R | E | | PLSI 144  Area Studies in African and the Middle East | E | M | E | R | E | | PLSI 147  East Asian Politics | E | M | E | R | E | | PLSI 148  Latin America Politics | E | M | E | R | E | | PLSI 150  Public Policy Making | M | E | M | M | E | | PLSI 151  Political Participation and Parties | E | E | E | E | E | | PLSI 152  Public Opinion | E | E | E | E | E | | PLSI 153  Presidential Politics | E | E | E | E | E | | PLSI 154  Congressional Politics | E | E | E | E | E | | PLSI 157  Environmental Politics | M | M | E | E | M | | PLSI 160  State and Local Government | E | E | E | E | E | | PLSI 163  Municipal Government | E | E | E | E | E | | PLSI 170  Constitutional Law I | M | M | M |  | M | | PLSI 171  Constitutional Law II | M | M | M |  | M | | PLSI 174  Politics and the Court | E | E | E | E | E | | PLSI 175  Water Politics and Policy | M | M | E | E | E | |

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| 1. **Assessment Methods** |
| * 1. **Direct Measures** |
| * + 1. Pre and Post tests- The Political Science Department faculty have created a set of questions capturing crucial concepts students should learn in political science courses, reflecting the goals and objectives laid out above. This is knowledge all political science majors ought to have when they graduate from our program and is therefore a direct measure of outcomes 1, 3, and 4. Unlike the paper portfolios (see below), which are designed to assess thinking ability and skill, this measure assesses the acquiring of knowledge.   The pre-test version of the test will be administered by emailing the test to all freshmen majors take in political science. Each semester the Department receives a list of all students applying to graduate with a political science major. These students will be contacted and asked to take the same test once again (this is done by e-mailing the test to students, having them indicate their answers and e-mailing it back). Thus they take the same test twice, at the beginning and end of the major. If learning occurred, the average student score in the post-test will be greater than in the pre-test. The faculty will then be presented summary data from these tests on an annual basis for assessing whether any changes need to be made to the curriculum.  The pre-tests and post-tests will be done every year, and every year summary data will be presented to the department. While we certainly want each graduating student to get all of the questions on the post-test correct, if significant numbers of students get less than 70% of answers correct we will have a problem and will need to take corrective action. Otherwise we will use these results to make only marginal adjustments to our curriculum.   * + 1. Student Paper Portfolios- All students write papers in our upper level undergraduate courses, and these provide faculty an opportunity to assess their progress in learning how to think analytically, express abstract concepts, and conduct research from one core course to another across their time in the major. In other words, it assesses how well students have learned concepts that are the foundation of each student’s development. It therefore provides a direct measure of outcomes 2 and 3. The ability to write well to convey ideas and arguments is also one of the most important tools students can develop as they prepare for careers or graduate school. These papers are major components of student grades in these courses, and often they must get a C or better on the paper to pass the class. For purposes of assessment, we have created a rubric to analyze the papers and assess whether students are making progress in terms of developing their analytical thinking and writing skills.   Students majoring in political science in every upper division core course are required to make available a copy of their paper. A small, random sample of these papers is selected by the assessment coordinator and assessed using a rubric developed by the Department to see if students are improving their writing skills over time as they take the upper-level courses. Results are discussed by faculty in a Department meeting where changes will be considered to further improve student abilities.   * + 1. Policy argument memos- All students must learn how to write short but effective arguments on what public issues are currently most important in local, state, national, or international politics, as well as take positions on what policies would best address those issues. To demonstrate how well they understand these concepts and can make effective arguments, they must learn how to develop and use the tool of the policy argument memo. It is therefore a direct measure of outcomes 2 and 5.   All political science majors are required to take the course Public Policy Analysis (PLSI 150). A major component of this course is learning how to write a policy argument memorandum, done as an exercise in learning how to comprehend an important issue in contemporary politics, formulate a position, and communicate that position to public sector officials. This is something political science graduates frequently have to do in their professions.  The Department has developed a rubric for assessing these memos that reflects how well each student understands the issue at hand, how well they lay out their position on the issue, and how clearly and concisely they communicate this understanding and position to public officials in the memorandum. The memorandum is added to each student’s portfolio and a random sample are annually assessed using the rubric. The results are discussed at the end of every spring semester. |
| * 1. **Indirect Measure** |
| * + 1. Alumni Survey- This will be administered once every four or five years using the e-mail addresses of alumni provided to us by the Alumni Office. The on-line survey assesses student success in finding employment, the careers paths taken by older alums, and alumni feedback as to whether they felt they received the necessary training in our undergraduate program. It is therefore an indirect measure of outcome 5.   Data received from the survey will be statistically analyzed by department faculty with the name of alumni respondents kept confidential. Results will then be presented to the full department faculty and changes in the program discussed if weaknesses become apparent as a result of the survey data. |

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| 1. **Student Learning Outcomes X Assessment Methods Matrix** |
| Enter Assessment Methods Matrix/Table   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Direct Measures: | Outcome 1  Concepts and Knowledge | Outcome 2  Concepts and Knowledge | Outcome 3  Tools | Outcome 4  Tools | Outcome 5  Development | | Pre & Post Tests: Lower & Upper Division | X |  | X | X |  | | Student Paper Portfolios |  | X | X |  |  | | Policy Argument Memorandum |  | X |  |  | X | | Indirect Measures: |  |  |  |  |  | | Alumni Survey |  |  |  |  | X | |

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| 1. **Timeline for Implementation of Assessment Methods and Summary Evaluations** |
| 2014-2015 Academic Year  Program review year  2015-2016 Academic Year  Paper Portfolio Analysis  Pre-Test / Post-Test   * Pre-tests will begin in PLSI 1 courses in the fall semester of 2015   Analysis and discussion of graduation and retention data in the spring semester of 2016  2016-2017 Academic Year  Alumni Survey   * Names and addresses will be collected in the fall semester of 2016 * Survey will be sent at the beginning of the spring semester of 2017 * Data will be analyzed over the summer of 2017 * Department assessment and discussion of program change will take place in the fall semester of 2017   Pre-Test / Post-Test   * Pre-tests will be given in all PLSI 1 classes * Post-tests will be administered in the spring semester of 2017 * Data will be presented to the department for discussion in the fall semester of 2017   Paper portfolio analysis  Analysis and discussion of graduation and retention data in the spring semester of 2017  Current student survey  2017-2018 Academic Year  Pre-Test / Post-Test   * Pre-tests will be given in all PLSI 1 classes * Post-tests will be administered in the spring semester of 2018 * Data will be presented to the department for discussion in the fall semester of 2017   Paper portfolio analysis  Analysis and discussion of graduation and retention data in the spring semester of 2018  2018-2019 Academic Year  Pre-Test / Post-Test   * Pre-tests will be given in all PLSI 1 classes * Post-tests will be administered in the spring semester of 2019 * Data will be presented to the department for discussion at the end of the spring semester of 2019   Paper portfolio analysis  Policy argumentation memo analysis  Analysis and discussion of graduation and retention data in the spring semester of 2019  2019-2020 Academic Year (no report required due to COVID)  Pre-Test / Post-Test   * Pre-tests will be given in all PLSI 1 classes * Post-tests will be administered in the spring semester of 2020 * Data will be presented to the department for discussion in the fall semester of 2019   Paper portfolio analysis  Policy argumentation memo analysis  Analysis and discussion of graduation and retention data in the spring semester of 2020  2020-2021 Academic Year (program review begins)  Pre-Test / Post-Test   * Pre-tests will be given in all PLSI 1 classes * Post-tests will be administered in the spring semester of 2021 * Data will be presented to the department for discussion in the spring semester of 2021   Paper portfolio analysis  Policy argumentation memo analysis  Analysis and discussion of graduation and retention data in the spring semester of 2021  2021-2022 Academic Year (program review concludes)  Pre-Test / Post-Test   * Pre-tests will be given in of all students via email * Post-tests will be administered in the spring semester * Data will be presented to the department for discussion   Paper portfolio analysis  Policy argumentation memo analysis  Analysis and discussion of graduation and retention data in the spring semester  Alumni Survey |
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| 1. **Closing the Loop - Summary Evaluation, Curriculum Adjustment, and Reporting** |
| The Political Science Department has made adjustments to its SOAP based on the results of previous assessments and, consequently, has simplified some of the outcome measures in order to be able to assess students more effectively and in a more timely fashion. For instance, the Department in 2012-2013 eliminated an older direct assessment measure using embedded questions in exams because of serious logistical issues and because it was redundant with the pre / post-tests. In its place the Department added the assessment of the policy argumentation memos majors write in the required course Public Policy Analysis (PLSI 150). This is a very different form of writing from the research papers and one conducive to developing specialized skills majors will need in their professions, so we decided to add it. We did this because the Department has come to the conclusion that we have not done enough to sharpen the skills students will need to succeed in their professions after graduation. The analysis of these memos using the rubric began in the fall semester of 2014.  Once a year the Department faculty are provided all of the data from the year’s assessments and we discuss what to do about revealed weaknesses. For instance, during the 2013-2014 academic year, the Department collected papers from students which the faculty assessed with its rubric. The results of this analysis showed us that there has been some improvement in student writing, though many still have trouble writing analytical papers because they have a hard time going beyond just repeating information they learned in class.  The Political Science Department will continue to assess students and plans to review the new data from the policy argumentation memos along with the paper portfolios and pre / post-test data in 2013-2014 AY to see if the changes we are making are starting to show results. This is part of a re-assessment the Department is doing of all of its course offerings and degree requirements because we are becoming a little concerned about students having all of the tools they need, in addition to conceptual knowledge, to gain employment soon after graduation.  As a consequence of this work, the Department did a comprehensive review of its curriculum in 2017 and, based on that assessment, created four recommended tracks to help students better organize their elective courses. We also created a capstone for the major, which can be met by either completing a study abroad experience, completing a professional internship, or by writing a significant research paper. This has now been implemented in the curriculum.  Overall, the faculty in the Political Science department will continue improving the program student learning outcome assessment activities and initiate assessment of core competencies in areas of oral and written communication, critical thinking, information literary and quantitative reasoning. This core competency assessment of core competencies can be infused with the existing SOAP as it evolves and develops, or as part of a university-wide evaluation process. |
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