

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

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**PROGRAM: Politics**

**SUBMITTED BY: Dr. Margaret Tseng**

**DATE: 9/12/15**

**BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED: THE DATA AND DOCUMENTS ARE STORED IN HARD COPY IN THE FILES IN THE OFFICE OF THE CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT.**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Program description from the Course Catalog:** Please copy and paste the current year's catalog description of this program. This is generally a one-two paragraph description immediately following the name of the program. Please be sure to include the listing of program outcomes as printed.

Resources for the study of politics in the Washington area are extraordinary, and students have the opportunity to participate frequently in many history-making events that occur in this capital city. The program presents a structured curriculum of courses in political theory, international relations, and the politics and governmental institutions of the United States and foreign countries. Students majoring in politics are encouraged to consider a minor in communication, economics, English, history, information technology, or philosophy. Seniors are required to complete an internship in a government agency, congressional office, corporate government affairs department, or other site approved by the academic internship mentor for politics. Seniors must also complete the senior seminar and a comprehensive examination. Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to

- students will demonstrate evidence of satisfactory oral and written communication skills as well as competency in critical analysis and/or problem solving;
- students will demonstrate an understanding of principles in politics;
- students will demonstrate a comprehensive and analytical understanding of principles and functions of politics; and
- students will demonstrate satisfactory skills in the development of a research question and/or thesis, gather appropriate evidence from primary and/or secondary sources, and analyze the evidence in a well written and well organized research paper that affirms or refutes the research question and/or thesis.

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Year of Next Planned Assessment
1)Students will complete a politics internship where they will show evidence of satisfactory oral and written communication skills as well as competency in critical analysis and/or problem solving.*	2012-2013	2014-2015
2)Students will take a four hour comprehensive exam before graduation to demonstrate understanding of principles in politics.*	2012-2013	2014-2015
3)Students will use short papers and in class discussions to demonstrate a comprehensive and analytical understanding of principles and functions of politics.*	2012-2013	2015-2016
4)Students will conduct a research project whereby they will demonstrate satisfactory skills in the development of a research question, and/or thesis, gathering appropriate evidence from primary and/ or secondary sources, analysis of that evidence in a well written and well organized research paper that affirms or refutes the research question and thesis.*	2012-2013	2014-2015

We have reworded the learning outcomes for 2014-2015:

- 1) Students will demonstrate evidence of satisfactory oral and written communication skills as well as competency in critical analysis and/or problem solving through the completion of a politics internship.
- 2) Students will demonstrate an understanding of principles in politics through a four hour comprehensive exam taken during the last semester before graduation.
- 3) Students will demonstrate satisfactory skills in the development of a research question, and/or thesis, gathering appropriate evidence from primary and/ or secondary sources, analysis of that evidence in a well written and well organized research paper that affirms or refutes the research question and thesis through a senior thesis research project.

**Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:**

Marymount’s mission as well as the strategic plan emphasizes the need to encourage our students to achieve academic excellence and intellectual growth through the liberal arts tradition. The Politics Program promotes the former and latter through the elevation of critical thinking and analytical writing. The program’s courses offer breadth and depth to each student’s intellectual pursuit.

**Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment:**

The assessment process focused on performance on the four hour comprehensive exam taken by graduating seniors, Senior Seminar course and the required internship. The strength of the assessment process in politics is its focus on “Inquiry Research”

that demands critical thinking skills and knowledge integral to the disciplines. We have given the comprehensive exam for the last ten years. This is the second time we have used it as part of the assessment document. This year, in order to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment, the department reviewed the data and documents together before submission.

**Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:**

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
<p><i>The Learning Outcomes (LO's) should be re-written to emphasize the outcome and not the measure or standard to be used. For example, each LO begins with the project to be assessed, i.e. an internship, a 4hr. exam, a research project or paper. Focus on the outcomes, i.e. communication skills, understanding principles, research skills and an understanding of int'l relations principles or comparative politics.</i></p> <p><i>The LO all use a fairly low level of Bloom's taxonomy, i.e. to "demonstrate." The program may want to consider if higher levels might provide more rigor to the program and better express their intent.</i></p> <p><i>The last LO on comparative politics with 3 sub-objectives can be simplified. The PIE staff will be happy to assist in re-designing outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>The goals of the program do link to strategic priorities. The Executive Summary states that the two key objectives to be examined in this report are demonstrate... understanding of the principles...of international relations (LO6) and demonstrate...understanding of... comparative politics (LO7). The report, however, focuses in on sub-outcomes for LO7. A truly mature assessment process might want to delve into sub-outcomes. This program might be better served if it focused, program-wide LO 6 and 7.</i></p>	<p>We revamped the learning outcomes and decided to return to the practice of using senior seminar, internships, and the program's comprehensive exam for data. We no longer use a single semester of student work from a single course as a source of data.</p>	<p>We met with Ann Boudinot and reworded the learning outcomes for 2014-2015:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Students will demonstrate evidence of satisfactory oral and written communication skills as well as competency in critical analysis and/or problem solving through the completion of a politics internship.</li> <li>2) Students will demonstrate an understanding of principles in politics through a four hour comprehensive exam taken during the last semester before graduation.</li> <li>3) Students will demonstrate satisfactory skills in the development of a research question, and/or thesis, gathering appropriate evidence from primary and/ or secondary sources, analysis of that evidence in a well written and well organized research paper that affirms or refutes the research question and thesis through a senior thesis research project.</li> </ol>

<p><i>There is not identification of which LO or sub-outcomes the course objectives relate to because the Program "Learning Outcomes line on the report is blank for each of the 3 sub-outcomes discussed. It appears that L06 of the program outcomes is not covered in this report.</i></p>		

**Provide a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report:**

UAC’s response from last year:

“It is clear from prior reports that the program is committed to improving the quality of student learning. The UAC encourages creative and alternate thinking about assessment within the parameters of good assessment practice. The effort to extrapolate program analysis and improvements from the data of a single semester’s student work from a single course was a creative idea. Unfortunately, it does not rise to the expectations of a “program” review. The faculty are encouraged to engage with PIE in planning a more systematic and comprehensive review process for next year. Please note, that the comments do contain recommendations and the faculty should not focus solely on the summary recommendations section below. The expectation is at all comments will be addressed in follow-up reports.”

After we received UAC’s response, we met with Ann Boudinot to discuss ways we could improve our assessment practices. We revamped the learning outcomes and decided to return to the practice of using senior seminar, internships, and the program’s comprehensive exam for data. We no longer use a single semester of student work from a single course as a source of data.

**Outcomes and Past Assessment**

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**Learning Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate evidence of satisfactory oral and written communication skills as well as competency in critical analysis and/or problem solving through the completion of a politics internship.**

Is this outcome being reexamined?  Yes  No

*If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.*

**Assessment Activity**

<p><b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p><b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p><b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i></p>	<p><b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i></p>
<p>Students will demonstrate evidence of satisfactory oral and written communication skills as well as competency in critical analysis and/or problem solving through the completion of a politics internship.</p>	<p>Direct Measure: The acceptable level of performance for each student as reported on the Employer Evaluation of Internship Performance Form will be ratings of Excellent or Good on 7 of the 8 criteria chosen from the Career Services rating scale and a majority of positive comments regarding student performance on the narrative portion of the form.</p> <p>The Acceptable level of performance for the group who complete internships in any one year is 85% of students receiving the ratings described above</p> <p>Indirect Measure: 85% of Student narratives on the journal and student evaluations indicate their experiences were positive and they were was</p>	<p>Career services administers an electronic survey to each student's supervisor. Students submit weekly journals to the Academic Internship Mentor in the program.</p>	<p>Direct Measure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Each intern has a site supervisor who is required as a part of the career services internship agreement to submit to the Academic Internship Mentor (AIM) an evaluation form developed by the career services describing the student's performance in the internship. This outcome is analyzed by scoring the ratings received by interns according the rubric below. Additionally, the form offers the supervisor the opportunity to provide narrative that explains ratings given. The results are measured against the Performance Standard the Program expects students to meet.</li> <li>2. Ten students enrolled in POL 400 Internship during the 2014-2015 academic year. Site supervisors submitted Evaluation Forms for ten of those students. As the Rubric indicates all ten students received good or excellent ratings on all eight criteria. Thus, the acceptable level of performance was achieved.</li> </ol> <p>Indirect Measure:</p> <p>All ten student journals and evaluations indicated they had strong and beneficial experiences.</p>

	adequately prepared for the work.		

**Internship Evaluation Rubric**

	<b>Exceeds Criteria</b>	<b>Meets Criteria</b>	<b>Fails to meet Criteria</b>
	<b>10-8</b>	<b>7-6</b>	<b>5-0</b>
Attendance and Punctuality	10		
Follows Directions	10		
Adheres to Deadlines	10		
Takes Initiative without Supervision	10		
Oral Communication Written Communication	10		
Ability to Accept Criticism	10		
Apply Academic Knowledge to the Workplace	10		

**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students** *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

The learning outcome far exceeded our expectations. All ten students (100%) achieved “exceeds criteria” for this learning outcome.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**

We hope to continue our efforts to support our students in achieving satisfactory oral and written communication skills as well as competency in critical analysis and/or problem solving through the completion of a politics internship.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**

We will continue to work closely with our students on program improvements. Specifically, we will have students meet with the Academic Internship Mentor a year before their senior year in order to review the requirements for the internship and address issues regarding internship placement and expectations.

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**Learning Outcome 2: 2)** Students will demonstrate an understanding of principles in politics through a four hour comprehensive exam taken during the last semester before graduation.

Is this outcome being reexamined?  Yes  No

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

**Assessment Activity**

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Students will demonstrate an understanding of principles in politics through a four hour comprehensive exam taken during the last semester before graduation.	Direct Measure: A “meets the criteria” or better rating on the items in the rubric for this outcome found below, achieved by 85% of the exam takers is the performance standard for this outcome.	Each student’s performance on the comprehensive exam given to all graduating seniors. Exam answers were assessed by instructors according to the rubric and those reported results were collected.	Students were allotted four hours to answer five comprehensive exam questions. Each question corresponded to a required course taken during their time at Marymount. Twelve students took the exam. Using the rubric below, twelve out of twelve of the students achieved the “meets or exceeds” criteria (100%)

	<b>Exceeds Criteria</b> <b>10-8</b>	<b>Meets Criteria</b> <b>7-6</b>	<b>Fails to meet Criteria</b> <b>5-0</b>
Demonstrated understanding of principles of American Policy Process:	11	1	
Demonstrated understanding of principles of Western Political Concepts:	11	1	
Demonstrated understanding of principles of Constitutional Law:	12		
Demonstrated understanding of principles of Comparative Politics:	11	1	
Demonstrated understanding of principles of International Politics:	12		

**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students** *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

Based on the direct measure (questions on the comprehensive exam) the learning outcome was fulfilled.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**

This is the second time the department has used the comprehensive exam as a formal assessment tool. The department has been hesitant about use the exam as an assessment tool in part because many of these students are a few years removed from the material. That is, many of them took the required courses related to the exam one or two years before graduation.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**

We are very encouraged by the outcome because the results show us that students are retaining the material even years after taking the course. We plan to further integrate the comprehensive exam into future assessment reports and use it as part of our program review next year.

**Learning Outcome 3:** Students will demonstrate satisfactory skills in the development of a research question, and/or thesis, gathering appropriate evidence from primary and/ or secondary sources, analysis of that evidence in a well written and well organized research paper that affirms or refutes the research question and thesis through a senior thesis research project.

Is this outcome being reexamined?  Yes  No

*If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.*

**Assessment Activity**

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
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<p>Students will demonstrate satisfactory skills in the development of a research question, and/or thesis, gathering appropriate evidence from primary and/ or secondary sources, analysis of that evidence in a well written and well organized research paper that affirms or refutes the research question and thesis through a senior thesis research project.</p>	<p>Direct measure: The acceptable level of student performance will be a ratings of “meets or exceeds criteria” on all the items in the rubric (see below) achieved by 80% of the students in the class.</p>	<p>Direct Measure: The rubric for each student completing the research paper will be the data collected for this outcome.</p>	<p>Students engaged in original research and produced a 30 page research paper. Students submitted research proposals, annotated bibliographies, outlines, rough drafts, and final drafts. The attached rubric was used to evaluate the work. Seven of the eight (87.5%) students achieved the “meets or exceeds criteria.”</p> <p>Indirect measure: Students completed an in-class evaluation. Five students completed the in-class evaluation. All five students found the one on one tutorials very helpful and indicated that the oral thesis defense helped refine their overall paper. Only three out of the five students found the peer review session helpful. Four out of five students found the writing workshop extremely useful.</p>

Rubric

Criteria

Exceeds Criteria

Meets Criteria

Fails to meet Criteria

5

4

3

2

1

\*\*\*The paper presents a well formulated research question and thesis

  3  

  4  

    

    

  1  

\*\*\*The paper applies appropriate primary and/or secondary resources to the investigation of the research of the question

  3  

  4  

    

    

  1  

\*\*\*The paper is well written and well organized

  3  

  3  

  1  

    

  1  

\*\*\*The paper applies appropriate analysis and



interpretation to the sources as they pertain  
to the research question

\_\_3\_\_ \_\_3\_\_ \_\_1\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_1\_\_

\*\*\*Chicago style is accurately and thoroughly used  
to document sources in footnotes and  
bibliography

\_\_\_\_ \_\_7\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_1\_\_

\*\*\*The findings are plausible and well defended.

\_\_3\_\_ \_\_3\_\_ \_\_1\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_1\_\_

### Interpretation of Results

**Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students** *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

For this learning outcome, 87.5% of the students met the expectations. We have seen a great deal of improvement over the last three years in this outcome.

### **Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**

This year we added more tutorials to the course to help students reach their goals. In the indirect measure (in-class survey), we see that students reacted positively to the extra tutorials and writing workshop. They stated that these extra components helped keep them accountable and assisted them in the writing process. In addition, the requirement that all upper division courses in politics include a research paper of some kind is a strength that needs to continue to be emphasized. The program needs to continue to build strong writing and analytical skills starting with POL 250 (Research and Writing).

### **Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**

Senior Seminar is a great capstone for our majors. However, the timing of the course often coincides with internships, other upper division courses, and comprehensive exams. In our advising sessions, we are guiding our students to take a lighter load of courses during the last semester of their senior year.