Political Science Annual Assessment Report 2015-2016

June 30, 2017

Section 1: Student Learning Outcomes for Political Science

Learning Goals (Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, page 1 of Mission and Goals document)

1. Identify (basic) and explain (advanced) key terms and concepts in the major fields of the discipline.
   a. Political Thought and Philosophy
   b. American government and politics
   c. Comparative government
   d. International Relations
   e. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

2. Demonstrate the ability to
   a. Write/communicate clearly and effectively.
   b. Use quantitative and qualitative research tools appropriately.
   c. Research and analyze political issues and engage in problem solving.
   d. Behave ethically and professionally in keeping with disciplinary standards for personal integrity, academic honesty, respect for diversity, and civil dissent and discourse.

3. To be prepared for:
   a. Those careers outlined in the latest edition of the *APSA Careers and the Study of Political Science*, and especially careers in government/public service/political system or related areas.
   b. Graduate study/law school.
   c. Becoming active and involved citizens and leaders in the local community, the nation, and beyond.

Meeting Objectives (page 3 of Mission and Goals document)

1. Basic background in key areas provided by introductory courses for American Government (Y103), Political Theory (Y105), Comparative Politics (Y107), International Relations (Y109), and Law (Y211).

2. Writing skills provided in second half of basic composition requirement in Elements of Political Analysis (Y205). [Required of majors and minors.]

3. Quantitative and analytic skills provided by Quantitative Political Analysis (Y395). [Required of majors and minors.]

4. Maintain the appropriate rigor and presentation of high quality materials in upper-division and topics courses that cover various topics in depth and provide the detailed information necessary for a more thorough understanding of American government (including state and local), political theory, political processes, international relations, and politics of other countries.

5. Internships offered through Internship in Urban Institutions [government agencies] (Y398) and the Practicum [non-government internships] (Y482) provide the experience of using information and techniques learned in academic courses and prepares students for work in their profession. [Available to majors and non-majors.]

6. The Senior Seminar in Political Science (Y490) provides a capstone course for majors in which they integrate their training as political scientists in terms of writing, research, analysis, and evaluation to particular topics. The students also learn to provide critical evaluations of the work of others students. [Required of majors.]

Narrative on Learning Outcomes

The department's learning outcomes fit very consistently with the learning outcomes of political science departments according to the American Political Science Association's (APSA) book *Assessment in Political Science*. This means that our majors are expected to learn the same rigorous curriculum and demonstrate the same learning outcomes as most other departments in our discipline. The author of this cited study has been the head of the American Political Science Association's very active Teaching and Learning Section as well as the editor of the APSA flagship journal *American Political Science Review*. Consequently, he is a scholar who has an extensive knowledge of the discipline.

Section 1 - Table 1: Learning Outcomes in Political Science Departments

Learning Outcome	% reported in Ishiyama & Breuning study
Knowledge of Theories	65.2
Knowledge of Political Institutions and Processes	63.8
Knowledge of Fields in Political Science	66.7
Critical Thinking	68.1
Methods/Research Skills	62.3
Written Communication Skills	66.7
Oral Communication/ Presentation Skills	53.6
Citizenship	24.6
Career Goals	23.2
Cultural Diversity	17.4
Ethics/Values	11.6

Note: data from Table 4-2 "Learning Outcomes" in Ishiyama, John (2009) "Comparing Learning Assessment Plans in Political Science," *Assessment in Political Science*, (eds) Michaelle Deardorff, Kerstin Hamann, and John Ishiyama, Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, p.66.

Our departmental learning outcomes are not just valid and consistent externally with other political science programs. In addition, our learning outcomes fit quite tightly with IPFW's Baccalaureate Framework as illustrated in the following table: "Section 2A: Map of Programmatic SLO's to Baccalaureate Framework." We also provide specific items (or artifacts) that can assess student learning outcomes in the subsequent table: "Section 2B: Map of Programmatic SLO's to Identified "Core Courses" in the Curriculum."

Taken together, our learning outcomes show both validity and consistency with learning outcomes in our discipline, for the primary learning outcomes of the university's Baccalaureate Framework, and a clear curriculum to assess these learning outcomes.

Section 2A: Map of Programmatic SLO's to Baccalaureate Framework (Appendix D, Sec II)		

Acquisition of Knowledge
 	
Students will demonstrate breadth of knowledge across disciplines and depth of knowledge in their chosen discipline. In order to do so, students must demonstrate the requisite information- seeking skills and technological competencies
	1. Identify (basic) and explain (advanced) key terms and concepts in the major fields of the discipline.
	   a. Political Thought and Philosophy
	   b. American government and politics
	   c. Comparative government
	   d. International Relations
	   e. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods	

Application of Knowledge
 	
Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply that knowledge, and, in so doing, demonstrate the skills necessary for life-long learning
	2. Demonstrate the ability to
	   a. Write/communicate clearly and effectively.
	   b. Use quantitative and qualitative research tools appropriately.
	   c. Research and analyze political issues and engage in problem solving.	

Personal and Professional Values Students will demonstrate the highest levels of personal integrity and professional ethics.	2. Demonstrate the ability to d. Behave ethically and professionally in keeping with disciplinary standards for personal integrity, academic honesty, respect for diversity, and civil dissent and discourse.	
A Sense of Community Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive and responsible citizens and leaders in local, regional, national, and international communities. In so doing, students will demonstrate a commitment to free and open inquiry and mutual respect across multiple cultures and perspectives.	3. To be prepared for: c. Becoming active and involved citizens and leaders in the local community, the nation, and beyond Secondary outcome: successfully complete courses for/ or complete department's Certificate in Civic Education and Public Advocacy	

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
 	
Students will demonstrate facility and adaptability in their approach to problem solving. In so doing, students will demonstrate critical-thinking abilities and familiarity with quantitative and qualitative reasoning.
	2. Demonstrate the ability to
	   a. Write/communicate clearly and effectively.
	   b. Use quantitative and qualitative research tools appropriately.
	   c. Research and analyze political issues and engage in problem solving.	

Communication
 	
Students will demonstrate the written, oral, and multimedia skills necessary to communicate effectively in diverse settings.
	2. Demonstrate the ability to
	   a. Write/communicate clearly and effectively.
	   b. Use quantitative and qualitative research tools appropriately.
	   c. Research and analyze political issues and engage in problem solving.	

Alignment with IPFW Baccalaureate Framework

	Exemplary 3	Acceptable 2	Developing 1	Score or Holistic Evaluation
IPFW Baccalaureate Framework Alignment	Specific, clearly defined, student-centered Program-Level SLO's are aligned to all foundational areas of the Baccalaureate Framework	Generally defined student-centered Program-Level SLO's are aligned to all foundation areas of the IPFW Baccalaureate Framework	Program-Level SLO's are aligned to some foundation areas of the IPFW Baccalaureate Framework	
Notes & Narrative:				

Section 2B: Map of Programmatic SLO's to Identified "core courses" in the curriculum

Student Learning Outcome	Course	Artifact	Exemplary	Solid	Acceptable	Developing
Demonstrate the ability to:						
• Write/communicate clearly & effectively	Y207 Y490	Final Paper Seminar Project				
• Use qualitative & quantitative research tools effectively	Y395 Y490	Summary Essay Seminar Project				
• Research & analyze political issues & engage in problem solving	Y490	Seminar Project				
• Behave ethically & professionally in keeping with disciplinary standards for personal integrity, academic honesty, respect for diversity, & civil dissent & discourse	Y490	Seminar Participation & Presentation				
To be prepared for:						
• Those careers outlined in the latest edition of APSA Careers & the Study of Political Science, & esp in gov't/ public service/ political system or related areas	Alumni	Alumni survey Interpersonal communication				
• Graduate study/ law school	Alumni	Alumni survey Interpersonal communication				
• Becoming active & involved citizens & leaders in the local community, the nation & beyond	Current student & Alumni	Internships & practicums				

Section 2B cont. Map of Programmatic SLO's to Identified "core courses" in the curriculum (additional specific assignment assessment of primary introductory and methodological courses)						
Student Learning Outcome	**Course**	**Artifact**	**Exemplary**	**Solid**	**Acceptable**	**Developing**
Identify (basic) and explain (advanced) key terms and concepts in the major fields of the discipline						
• Political Thought and Philosophy	Y105	Summary Essay				
• American Government & Politics	Y103	Identifications				
• Comparative Government	Y107					
• International Relations	Y109	Summary Essay				
• Quantitative & Qualitative Methods	Y395	Summary Essay				

Note on Courses:
Y103 Introduction to American Politics
Y105 Introduction to Political Theory
Y107 Introduction to Comparative Politics
Y109 Introduction to International Relations
Y207 Elements of Political Analysis (approaches to research & writing: fulfills second writing course in COAS General Education)
Y395 Quantitative Political Analysis (research design, modes, and qualitative/ particularly quantitative methods)
Y490 Senior Seminar (eight student cap – original research project of substantial length >25 pages, based on particular political topic)

Section 3: Political Science Assessment Plan

Section 3A: Description of Political Science's Assessment Model

The curriculum map above specifies the courses and assignments that assess student learning outcomes for our department. These particular artifacts highlighted allow the department to assess whether the main assignments lead to the specified learning outcomes in our well-planned and well-advised course matriculation to degree for each student. Each of these artifacts will also allow us to evaluate/assess whether the assignments of key courses allows reasonable assessment of these student learning outcomes.

Not all of the learning outcomes and assessment measures listed in Section 2B will be part of the assessment report. We concentrate on some primary learning outcomes and measures that fit disciplinary assessment best practices. In previous years we have relied on grades from Y207 Elements of Political Analysis, Y395 Quantitative Political Analysis, and Y490 Senior Seminar to assess student learning. The department retooled our assessment model in Fall 2016 following the chair's attendance at a day-long short course: "What? I have to Lead a Program Assessment?" at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. The leaders of the program were Sean McKitrick, a political scientist who is now a regional accreditor with Middle States Commission on Higher Education and Jennifer Jensen, Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs at Lehigh University (and a Fort Wayne native). The short course was designed to develop assessment types that would meet the expectations of accrediting entities. It was a showcase of best practices in the discipline on learning assessment, department assessment, and tailoring assessment for meaningful program reviews.

The conclusion of the department was that the courses and artifacts we were assessing were very solid (see our curricular maps above) relative to the way many political science departments assess student learning (many do not offer an approaches and writing course or a capstone/seminar). In fact, in Michael Middaugh's *Planning and Assessment in Higher Education: Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness,* the following measures/artifacts are highlighted in his table: "Strategies for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes:" 1) Standardized Tests, 2) Locally Produced Tests and Test Items, 3) Portfolios: Collections of Student Work Specimens over Time, 4) Final Projects, 5) Capstone Experiences.[i] Some departments rely on pre-/post- scores from standardized tests such as the SAT subject tests, but these are cost prohibitive and do not discern the entire matriculation of the degree (what if a student transfers majors as a junior?). Our department includes four of the five suggested assessments: locally produced tests/test items (Y395 Quantitative Political Analysis), final projects (Y207 Elements of Political Analysis and Y490 Senior Seminar), capstone experience (Y490 Senior Seminar), and we keep all of these artifacts in a portfolio of each student's work in the degree.

Our curricular map and matriculation plan through the major, with an approaches and writing course (Y207 Elements of Political Analysis), a research methods course (Y395 Quantitative Political Analysis), and a capstone seminar course (Y490 Senior Seminar) is absolutely relevant and follows assessment best practices. This is reinforced when comparing our departmental assessment techniques with those most frequently mentioned by political science departments in the American Political Science Association's *Assessment in Political Science*. Section 3 – Table

1 demonstrates how extensive our department's assessment techniques are relative to other political science departments.

Section 3 – Table 1:   Most Frequently Mentioned Assessment Techniques
by Political Science Departments

Assessment Technique	% reported in this study	Used for assessment by IPFW Political Science
Graduating Student Survey/Questionnaire	50.0	Yes
Analysis of Student Grades/Performance	45.7	Yes
Senior Seminar/Capstone	35.7	Yes
Senior Exit Interview	24.3	Yes
Portfolio	22.9	Yes
Random Reading of Student Papers	17.1	Yes
Student Course Evaluations	17.1	Yes
Alumni Surveys/Interviews	21.4	Yes
Syllabi Analysis	7.1	No
Pre-test/Post-test	9.9	No
Post-test only	14.2	No
Faculty Observations	25.0	Yes

Note: data derived from studies and findings in Table 4-3. Most Frequently Mentioned Assessment Techniques, in Ishiyama, John. (2009) "Comparing Learning Assessment Plans in Political Science," Assessment in Political Science, (eds) Michaelle Deardorff, Kerstin Hamann, and John Ishiyama, Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, p.67.

Although we have multiple measures in our assessment techniques, we have relied on three direct assessments discussed above: the final project for Y207, statistical/empirical performance in Y395, and the capstone final writing project in Y490 – along with the portfolio of all of these works together. That puts us with best practices as far as sources. In the past, however, the department typically relied on grades for these projects/tests as indicators of learning outcomes. As Middaugh notes, grades (particularly course grades that we did not use) may be imprecise measures of learning. "Put bluntly, grades can be affected by the extent to which students regularly attend class, the extent to which they actively participate in class, and their verbal ability reflected in that participation."[ii] Student learning is better assessed on the outcome of a particular assignment.

As a result, the department adopted a new method of assessment other than grades. Two members of the assessment committee would assess the student learning outcome related to the final paper in Y207 Elements of Political Analysis, two more would assess the student learning

outcomes related to an essay answer and a multi-part empirical/statistical problem on the final for Y395 Quantitative Political Analysis, and two more would assess the student learning outcome related to the capstone research paper from Y490 Senior Seminar. A random-sample of five papers from Y207 would be assessed. A random sample of six Y395 test answers would be assessed. Finally, a random sample of three paper from each of the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 senior seminars would be assessed based on the three student learning outcomes associated with Y490. All identifying information from the student as well as any grade were hidden.

The two assessors for each primary learning outcome would evaluate the artifacts according to the benchmarks listed below. The team members would independently assess the learning outcome with a score. If the score given to an artifact was within a single category difference, the team could either: 1) deliberate to end up with a single value, or 2) average the scores related to the benchmarks. If the team members ended up more than a single benchmark category away from each other, an additional assessor would be brought in to assess the learning outcome from that artifact as a tie-breaker (this was not needed for this academic year). This follows assessment techniques used by many departments or programs at IPFW. In particular it allows us to evaluate whether these assignments/artifacts actually tap the learning outcome aimed at, and whether it can meaningfully assess that learning.

The department's assessment committee developed particular benchmarks and rubrics for each learning outcome based on the department's overall assessment scheme laid out above in the table: "Section 2B: Map of Programmatic SLO's to Identified 'core courses' in the curriculum." In addition to the four categories Exemplary, Solid, Acceptable, and Developing, these assessment teams also included an addition benchmark of "Unacceptable" for each learning outcome to be calculated in the rubric. This was to demonstrate a clear distinction between failure and rudimentary learning on each outcome. The benchmarks for assessment of learning are included for each learning outcome below as well as the rubrics for each SLO.

This method and assessment plan fits with best practices of assessment highlighted in the American Political Science Association's short-course discussed above as well as from the Michael Middaugh book *Planning and Assessment in Higher Education: Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness* highlighted above. It is also, according to the short-course leaders and Middaugh, exactly what program reviewers would view as best practices in visits to political science departments and in reading those departments' self-studies. The literature on political science assessment often suggests that artifacts from such courses provide solid student learning assessment artifacts. Consequently, we shifted our annual departmental assessment plan to specifically assess artifacts from each of these courses for the relevant student learning outcome.

Section 3B & 3C: Measures Used & Rubrics or Evaluation Metric Descriptions

Y207: Final Project:

SLO 1: Write/communicate clearly and effectively

Y207 Elements of Political Analysis is a required course that students are encouraged to take by the end of their sophomore year. It introduces students to different research approaches and writing conventions in the discipline. The final project is a (minimum) fifteen-page paper written in political science research manuscript style. The required course textbook (Baglione, Lisa. (2015) *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: a Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods 3rd Edition,* Washington, D.C.: CQ Press) provides the approach and style rules for such a paper and the instructor introduces elements of the paper sequentially with the book while providing feedback on topic, argument, style and drafts. The following are the assessment criteria for this project to assess the learning outcome.

Evaluation	Score	Criteria
Exemplary	5	Final paper written very clearly and very effectively based on political science standards*.
Solid	4	Final paper written clearly and effectively based on political science standards
Acceptable	3	Final paper written generally clearly and generally effectively based on political science standards
Developing	2	Final paper written partially clearly and/or partially effectively based on political science standards
Unacceptable	1	Final paper lacked clarity or ineffective based on political science standards

* standards derived from major political science research & writing textbook by a well-known political science publisher or that would be found on sample syllabi on the American Political Science Association sample syllabi collection.

Artifact 1

Student Learning Outcome	Exemplary 5	Solid 4	Acceptable 3	Developing 2	Unacceptable 1
Student Learning Outcome: Demonstrate the ability to: write/communicate clearly & effectively					

Y395: Final Test:

Students identified and explained key terms and concepts for quantitative political analysis for the first learning outcome. Students were to identify and discuss the significance of Median,

Standard Deviation, and the Normal Distribution as key concepts for SLO 1. For SLO 2, students had to calculate a chi-square test of independence from raw data and and evaluate the results of their finding. Chi-square is a very common statistic used in social science and is a building block for higher-level measures that cannot be as easily calculated, so its calculation and interpretation are key.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Identify (basic) and explain (advanced) key terms and concepts in the major fields of the discipline

Evaluation	Score	Criteria
Exemplary	5	Answer identifies and explains key methodological term & concept completely, coherently, in context (with examples).
Solid	4	Answer identifies and explains key methodological term & concept nearly completely, nearly coherently, and nearly always in context.
Acceptable	3	Answer identifies and explains key methodological term & concept sufficiently, generally coherently, and with some context.
Developing	2	Answer identifies and explains key methodological term & concept insufficiently, not coherently enough, and lacking context.
Unacceptable	1	Answer identifies and explains key methodological term & concept poorly, lacking coherence, and without context.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate the ability to use qualitative and quantitative research tools effectively

Evaluation	Score	Criteria
Exemplary	5	Uses quantitative research method (statistic) with precision and evaluates its meaning with precision
Solid	4	Uses quantitative research method (statistic) effectively and evaluates its meaning effectively
Acceptable	3	Uses quantitative research method (statistic) competently but not completely and competently but not exhaustively evaluates its meaning
Developing	2	Uses quantitative research method (statistic) with mistakes and evaluates the statistic with minimal grasp of it meaning.
Unacceptable	1	Does not use research method (statistic)

The following are the scoring rubrics used by the assessors, with each artifact receiving its own scoring rubric for each of the two assessors.

Artifact 1

Student Learning Outcome	Exemplary 5	Solid 4	Acceptable 3	Developing 2	Unacceptable 1
Student Learning Outcome 1: Identify (basic) and explain (advanced) key terms and					

concepts in the major fields of the discipline					
Student Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate the ability to use qualitative and quantitative research tools effectively					

Y490: Final Project

The capstone senior seminar requires students to study a political science topic in-depth and to produce a 25-page paper of original research on the topic. The Y207 final project is meant to build on the structure of the Y207 final project, but include substantial original research. Because of the more intricate components of the project, it involves a more intricate assessment of "SLO 1: write/communicate clearly and effectively." Consequently, the criteria differ from the same SLO for Y207 because of the project's advanced nature. Further, because there are three different learning outcomes, it allows each to go into more depth even though the paper links them together in one project.

SLO 1: Write/communicate clearly and effectively

Exemplary (5): Text always or nearly always follows genre conventions and required documentation styles. Conventional standards of grammar, syntax, and spelling are routinely upheld.

Solid (4): Text usually follows genre conventions and required documentation styles. Conventional standards of grammar, syntax, and spelling are usually upheld.

Acceptable (3): Text follows genre conventions and documentation styles in some ways but not in others. Errors in grammar, syntax, and spelling are somewhat common but do not impede the reader's ability to understand the writer's presumed meaning.

Developing (2): Genre conventions and documentation styles are often ignored. Errors in grammar, syntax, and spelling render many sentences and paragraphs difficult or impossible to understand.

Unacceptable (1): Genre conventions and documentation styles are routinely ignored. Errors in grammar, syntax, and spelling are widespread and fundamental, rendering large sections of the text difficult or impossible to understand.

SLO 2: Use quantitative and quantitative research tools effectively

Exemplary (5): Interpretation of academic studies or data is correct, sophisticated, and nuanced. Findings from studies or data are used very persuasively to support the logic of the analysis.

Solid (4:) Interpretation of academic studies or data is correct but not unusually sophisticated. Findings nearly always support the logic of the analysis.

Acceptable (3): Interpretation of academic studies or data is fairly correct but sometimes misses important points. Findings often but not consistently support the logic of the analysis.

Developing (2): Interpretation of academic studies or data is often incorrect. Findings often do not support the argument being made.

Unacceptable (1): Interpretation of academic studies or data shows little if any comprehension. Findings are barely used or are used in unpersuasive or inappropriate ways.

SLO 3: Research and analyze political issues and engage in problem solving

Exemplary (5): Many high-quality sources are used, and a variety of them are incorporated into discussion of any given subject. Their application to the analysis demonstrates deep understanding of the source, the paper topic, and the connection between the two.

Solid (4): Good sources tend to be used without undue reliance on any small number of them. Their application to the analysis demonstrates good understanding of the source, the paper topic, and the connection between them.

Acceptable (3): The quality and number of sources are adequate, but some sources are relied on too heavily. Application of sources to the analysis demonstrates fair but sometimes incomplete understanding of the source, the paper topic, and/or the connection between them.

Developing (2): The quality and number of sources is low, and there is an overreliance on a small number of sources while other sources are barely used. Application of sources to the analysis demonstrates poor understanding of the source, the paper topic, and/or the connection between them.

Unacceptable (1): Very few sources are used, and/or the quality of sources is poor. Application of sources to the analysis suggests very little understanding of the source, the paper topic, and/or the connection between them.

	Individual Artifact Scores						Mean SLO Score
	A1	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**	**A5**	**A6**	
SLO 1							
SLO 2							
SLO 3							

Section 3D: Description of Plan for Disseminating and Using Findings for Programmatic Learning Improvement

The primary goal of our assessments is to make sure that our assignments can meaningfully assess student learning and that students learn the preferred outcomes from these assignments. This will be fundamental to assess each year. We can make individual evaluations of the learning in each course annually. Given the active role members of our department will have on the assessment committee, we will better know the nature of work our students are producing in the core curriculum toward matriculation. This familiarity will broaden our understanding of the core work students are producing in our department as they progress toward their degree. We do note the extensive time commitment this places on faculty who already serve the department, College, and IPFW very actively.

We will need to evaluate student learning outcomes over time given our new assessment reporting. As our department moves forward with future program reviews, we will have solid time series data of student learning outcomes. We have to make sure that broad trends are assessed rather than very overly concentrating on any aberrant findings from a particular year/semester. It may be that one very solid cohort or one less solid cohort will throw off assessment trends. Further, some seminars do not work and sometimes a handful of students' final projects for Y207 may not pan out given the topic of study. As a very dynamic discipline, this may happen in political science. If a student is studying voting trends or the causes of war, a large event could disrupt a paper or project in unexpected ways. This should be accounted for in assessment.

The department's assessment report will be discussed in an annual departmental meeting with the goal of evaluating whether any particular changes in assignments, assessment methods, or instruction should be adopted. Further, the department looks forward to outside reviewer feedback on our assessment methods during program review. The department will also distribute its annual report to the IPFW Director of Assessment as well as the COAS Assessment Committee. Feedback from all quarters will be considered.

Section 4: Assessment Results

Section 4A: Current Year Assessment Findings

Y207 Elements of Political Analysis

SLO 1: Write/communicate clearly and effectively

Scores

	Artifact 1	**Artifact 2**	**Artifact 3**	**Artifact 4**	**Artifact 5**	**Average of all artifacts on SLO**
Demonstrate the ability to write/ communicate clearly & effectively	5	2	3.5	2	4.5	3.4

Analysis

This assignment provides a solid assessment of student learning of writing/ communicating clearly and effectively. These papers are relatively long for a sophomore-level course (over 15 pages with original, academic sources and full bibliographic citations). On average the students performed significantly above acceptable rates. It is noteworthy that two papers were at the developing stage, which significantly brought down the average score.

The consistency between the assessors demonstrates how much this course and project prepare the students to produce a clear written project. In other words, there were no examples of assessors evaluating papers substantially different. The learning goal was clear and assessable. This paper provides a solid assessment of the learning goal – particularly early in matriculation toward the degree as it also comes back as a learning goal for the senior seminar. Further, the clearly denoted assessment of political science standards means that there should be consistency in this assessment over time.

Y395 Quantitative Political Analysis

SLO 1: Identify (basic) and explain (advanced) key terms and concepts in the major fields of the discipline
SLO 2: Demonstrate the ability to use qualitative and quantitative research tools effectively

Scores

	Individual Artifact Scores (average of scores from assessors)					Mean SLO Score
	A1	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**	**A5**	
SLO 1	4	4	3.5	2.5	3.5	3.5
SLO 2	3	3.5	2	2	2	2.5

Analysis

Students did an acceptable to solid job in identifying and explaining key terms and concepts. On average, students did slightly less strongly on demonstrating the ability to use quantitative research tools, though they were between developing and acceptable. This could have been a consequence of the random selection of artifacts as most of the class did well on the final test.

As the assessment committee members for Y395 noted, it is not surprising that the students were better at identifying and explaining the terms and concepts than actually using them. This is often the case with methods course, where students learn key concepts and work to apply them. It is why the course is offered early in the junior-year sequence so that subsequent courses and the senior seminar can build from the foundation.

Y490 Senior Seminar

SLO 1: Write/communicate clearly and effectively
SLO 2: Use quantitative and quantitative research tools effectively
SLO 3: Research and analyze political issues and engage in problem solving

Scores

	Individual Artifact Scores						Mean SLO
	A1	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**	**A5**	**A6**	**Score**
SLO 1	5	4	4	4	5	2	4.00
SLO 2	3	5	4	5	5	3	4.17
SLO 3	3	5	4	4	5	3	4.00

Analysis

Student performance appears consistent across student learning outcomes. This demonstrates that this capstone project provides a strong tool to evaluate student learning generally and especially on these three goals. Were the performance to vary widely across learning outcomes, the assignment itself might not be a solid assessment tool of learning.

Concerning student learning, students generally did well on these learning outcomes when the mean SLO scores are analyzed. The average of a solid job or better on each learning outcome shows the students met the learning outcome expectations very well. This is especially noteworthy given that the artifacts came from two different seminars with two different disciplinary concentrations (realignment/ voting behavior vs. terrorism).

Section 4B: Proposed Changes to Address Findings

No large-scale issue arose that would question the assessment model. The artifacts, evaluative criteria, rubrics, and conclusions point to these being solid indicators of learning primary disciplinary learning outcomes. Also, students demonstrated an acceptable or higher level of learning these learning outcomes. The one example of this not occurring – the "developing-to-average" level of using quantitative research tools effectively – did not come as a surprise to the assessment committee members as it is a cumulative skill and the students acceptable-to-solid level of applying concepts shows that: "the students were better at identifying and explaining the terms and concepts than actually using them."

The assessment committee did make this proposal to be sure that key terms and concepts be put into practice: "More emphasis will have to be placed on this in the future." This will be noted in the instruction of Y395 based on these findings.

The only other question is whether the differing criteria between Y207 and Y490 on the SLO "write/communicate clearly and effectively" are still better as distinct criteria. It is the only SLO for Y207 and therefore breadth is beneficial whereas the more in-depth criteria for a capstone senior seminar paper should involve more detailed criteria. The department will judge whether two different criteria for the same learning outcome continues to be superior.

Section 4C: Prior Year Assessment Findings and Description of Changes Made

We have detailed the consistency between prior years' assessment and this year's as well as our major shift in assessment method going to direct evaluation of artifacts by committee rather than relying on grades. The department concludes that our assessment plan has remained solid and will only get better with the direct assessment of artifacts by a committee.

Section 4D: Assessment Findings for Curricular Changes Made

We have had no substantial shifts in curriculum that would affect our assessment model. The curriculum remains very open to solid assessment at different points in the sequence toward a major's graduation.

Section 5 Conclusions, Next Steps, and Communication

The department finds that students are learning the very outcomes we have listed in our mission and goals as a department. Further, these learning outcomes are consistent with learning outcomes in our discipline more broadly and our modes of assessment of these learning outcomes match or exceed the best practices of political science departments. They also fit closely with the learning goals of IPFW generally, and to our department specifically. Results demonstrate that our students are learning these valued outcomes. Further, the assignments and criteria for these learning outcomes provide a meaningful way to assess these learning outcomes.

The department looks forward to any feedback on our assessment report. We note that this should help us greatly in our self-study for our program review and in future program reviews as we consider findings from our assessment reports.

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[i] Middaugh, Michael F. 2010. *Planning and Assessment in Higher Education: Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness*, San Francisco: Josey-Bass, pp. 96-101.

[ii] Middaugh, Michael F. 2010. *Planning and Assessment in Higher Education: Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness*, San Francisco: Josey-Bass, p. 90