Annual Assessment Report 2023-2024

BA Political Science

Department of Political Science

College of Letters, Arts, & Social Sciences

CONTACT
Name of Program Assessment Lead Liza Taylor
Name of Person Completing Report Liza Taylor

DISCIPLINARY ACCREDITATION No

DEVELOPMENT AND DOCUMENTATION OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
How were the program's SLOs developed? (select all that apply)
   o   We developed them as a program/department using our own knowledge and expertise of the field.

Other than the CPP Catalog and the Office of Assessment and Program Review website, where else are your SLOs published? Select all that apply.
- Department Website - provide URL: https://www.cpp.edu/class/political-science/about/learning-outcomes.shtml

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES IN 2023-2024

This section provides the opportunity for programs to share and discuss assessment activities conducted in **AY 2023-2024.** This includes data collection, rubric development, data analysis, discussion of findings, development or implementation of closing the loop improvement strategies, update of your assessment plan and/or curriculum matrix, etc.

How many total SLOs does your program assess according to your assessment plan?
- 6

How many SLOs did your program assess this past year in 2023-2024?

- My program assessed SLOs in AY 2023-2024 (e.g., artifact collection, scoring, closing the loop, etc.).

Please list the SLOs examined

- SLO #1: Students can demonstrate the ability to conduct library research on political science topics using a variety of scholarly and current resources.
- SLO #2: Students can demonstrate the ability to analyze quantitative and qualitative data.
- SLO #3: Students can effectively present arguments, both about research and political positions, orally and in writing.
- SLO #4: Students can demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to think critically about the processes and institutions of American Government.
- SLO #5: Students can demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to think critically about the processes and institutions of governmental systems other than that of the United States and about international relations.
- SLO #6: Students can demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to think critically about the theoretical and legal underpinnings of political systems and processes.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO): Students can demonstrate the ability to conduct library research on political science topics using a variety of scholarly and current resources.

Assessment Activities	Evidence Used	Evaluation and Interpretation of Evidence
• Collected/Analyzed/Developed/Modified/Discussed assessment tools	• Capstone product (e.g., project, senior thesis, etc.) (Direct) • Oral performance (e.g., presentation, defense, conference presentation, etc.) (Direct)	• Used rubric or scoring guide

Findings			
N of Artifacts	Criterion Used	Goal Met	Eye-opening Result
89	We scored them on three relevant metrics: a) assessment of appropriate peer reviewed sources(average of 8 or better considered a success); b) total # of sources used (average of 8 or better considered a success); and c) appropriate citation format (average of 7 or better considered a success).	According to the senior thesis results = NO b) total # of sources used = YES c) appropriate citation format = YES	Student averages fell just below what we would consider "success" on their ability to effectively assess appropriate and relevant peer reviewed sources. Considering that they only just barely missed this mark, it is not too alarming. However, it is also true that in informal discussions with students and in their collective exit interview students reiterated that they struggled with the literature review component of the thesis. We are in the process of thinking through scaffolding around literature review preparation in earlier PLS courses.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO): Students can demonstrate the ability to analyze quantitative and qualitative data.

Assessment Activities	Evidence Used	Evaluation and Interpretation of Evidence
• Collected/Analyzed/Developed/Modified/Discussed assessment tools	• Capstone product (e.g., project, senior thesis, etc.) (Direct) • Oral performance (e.g., presentation, defense, conference presentation, etc.) (Direct)	• Used rubric or scoring guide
• Closing the loop (e.g., investigated other pressing issues related to SLO achievement, changed course sequence, etc.) Please explain: We are in the process of revamping our methods sequence and our capstone in order to close the loop here. We will need another few years to measure its effectiveness.		

Findings			
N of Artifacts	**Criterion Used**	**Goal Met**	**Eye-opening Result**
89	We scored students on a "methodology" metric and specifically on their ability to use and analyze quantitative or qualitative data (average of 8 or better considered a success)	No	Students are just under what would be deemed "success," based both on how we scored them in their senior theses. We are aware that this is an area that needs more intentional scaffolding and we are in the process of revamping our methods sequence. We don't expect to be able to measure the effects of curricular changes for several years because we began discussions around changes to our methods sequence last year and are still in the process of deciding on what changes to implement.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO): Students can effectively present arguments, both about research and political positions, orally and in writing.

Assessment Activities	Evidence Used	Evaluation and Interpretation of Evidence
• Collected/Analyzed/Developed/Modified/Discussed assessment tools	• Capstone product (e.g., project, senior thesis, etc.) (Direct) • Oral performance (e.g., presentation, defense, conference presentation, etc.) (Direct)	• Used rubric or scoring guide

Findings				
N of Artifacts	Criterion Used	Goal Met	Eye-opening Result	
89	For direct evidence related to written theses, we scored students based on a few relevant metrics: a) Clear & Compelling Argumentation (average score of 8 or better considered a success) b) Clear& Logical Organization (average score of 8 or better considered a success) c) Writing Fluency Related to Style (average score of 6 or better considered a success) d) Technical Competence Related to Grammar (average score of 5 or better considered a success) e) Clarity of Research Problem/Statement (average score of 8 or better considered a success) For direct evidence related to oral presentation of theses, we scored students based on a few relevant metrics: a)Clarity and Organization (average score of 4 or better considered a success) b) Style (average score of 4 or better considered a success) c) Evidence and Findings (average score of 4 or better considered a success)	According to the written theses results (direct evidence): a) Clear & Compelling Argumentation =YES b) Clear & Logical Organization – YES c)Writing Fluency Related to Style –YES d) Technical Competence Related to Grammar - YES e) Clarity of Research Problem/Statement –NO According to the oral theses results (direct evidence) a) Clarity and Organization –YES b) Style –YES c) Findings and Evidence – NO	Students are mostly meeting department goals on this SLO. According to our scores, they are developing clear written arguments, they are mostly organizing their results and findings in a compelling way, and they are effectively proving their arguments through their written presentation. It looks like one area related to organization that can be improved, which will strengthen their ability to present clear and fully persuasive written arguments, is their ability to clearly set up their research question. This is an important part of effective writing and something we will need to give a bit more attention to in later iterations of the capstone project. I say later iterations because we are in the process of revamping both our methods sequence and elements of the capstone senior thesis (discussed more below). In relation to presenting their arguments and findings orally, students do well with the organization and style of presentation, but still struggle with relaying their evidence/findings. Given that they had success on the written presentation of findings (measured by the clear and compelling argumentation score), their lower scores on orally presenting their findings and evidence would suggest that something about the oral component proves more challenging for them. This could track with the lower score on clearly presenting their research question/problem even in the written form. Students may be struggling to pull away from the minutia of their project to see the big picture question/motivation and the big picture takeaways, all things that become incredibly important when presenting a very short/condensed version of your project on the Senior Conference panels.	

Student Learning Outcome (SLO): **Students can demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to think critically about the processes and institutions of American Government.**

Assessment Activities	Evidence Used	Evaluation and Interpretation of Evidence
• Collected/Analyzed/Developed/Modified/Discussed assessment tools	• Capstone product (e.g., project, senior thesis, etc.) (Direct)	• Used rubric or scoring guide

Findings			
N of Artifacts	**Criterion Used**	**Goal Met**	**Eye-opening Result**
49	This SLO is subfield specific, focused on the combined fields of American Politics and Public Administration. We have disaggregated our theses data by subfield and can therefore assess the average overall grade (average of 6.7 and above considered success).	American Politics subfield = NO Public Administration subfield = YES	Student averages fell just below what we would consider "success" for American Politics, but well over our threshold of success for (American) Public Administration. These subfields were the most popular of all the subfields for senior thesis projects (49 in total), which tracks with what is often typical in relation to student interest. The slightly lower scores in American Politics could be explained by the likelihood of using quantitative methods in such projects, which we already know students struggle with.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO): Students can demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to think critically about the processes and institutions of governmental systems other than that of the United States and about international relations.

Assessment Activities	Evidence Used	Evaluation and Interpretation of Evidence
• Collected/Analyzed/Developed/Modified/Discussed assessment tools	• Capstone product (e.g., project, senior thesis, etc.) (Direct)	• Used rubric or scoring guide

Findings			
N of Artifacts	**Criterion Used**	**Goal Met**	**Eye-opening Result**
23	This SLO is also subfield specific, focusing on IR and Comparative Politics. With disaggregated thesis data by subfield we can measure the overall score in each subfield (average score of 6.7 or better considered success).	International Relations subfield =NO Comparative Politics subfield =YES	We have mixed success on this SLO, which covers both the international relations subfield and the comparative politics subfield, both subfields broadly addressing students' ability to think critically about the political institutions and processes outside of the United States and shaping international relations. While students are meeting our success threshold in relation to demonstrating the ability to think critically about institutions and process outside of the United States and comparing across different national contexts, students are falling just below our threshold of success in relation to thinking critically about international relations. This suggests that we might need to devote more attention to scaffolding toward thesis in this subfield.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO): Students can demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to think critically about the theoretical and legal underpinnings of political systems and processes.

Assessment Activities	Evidence Used	Evaluation and Interpretation of Evidence
• Collected/Analyzed/Developed/Modified/Discussed assessment tools	• Capstone product (e.g., project, senior thesis, etc.) (Direct)	• Used rubric or scoring guide
• Closing the loop (e.g., investigated other pressing issues related to SLO achievement, changed course sequence, etc.) Please explain: We are in the process of accommodating critical theory projects for senior thesis. We will not be able to measure the success of these changes in relation to closing the loop for a few years but the changes are underway.		

Findings			
N of Artifacts	**Criterion Used**	**Goal Met**	**Eye-opening Result**
11	This SLO is subfield specific, focused on the subfields of Political Theory and Public Law. With disaggregated overall scores by subfield we can measure the average score (average score of 6.7 or better considered a success).	Public Law subfield =YES Political Theory = YES	Students writing senior theses in both political theory and public law are consistently meeting our standard of success. Though we have the fewest projects in these combined subfields (only 11 in total), the students who choose to focus here are showing that they have acquired the ability to think critically about the theoretical and legal underpinnings of political systems and processes. Our goal here, however, is focused on expanding the range of possible theses projects available to students and the low numbers of students choosing to pursue research in this subfield suggests we need do more to build interest and competency in pursuing these projects. This is something we are in the process of doing and something we will be reporting on in the years to come.

IMPROVING THROUGH ASSESSMENT

Overall, what best describes how the program used the results in 2023-2024? Select all that apply.
- Course-level changes (e.g., syllabus, content, pedagogy)
- Program curricular changes (e.g., course sequencing, changes to required curriculum, added or deleted courses)

Ideas to improve student learning can come from different constituents. With whom did the program discuss assessment planning and/or share results during AY 2023-2024? Select all that apply.
- Program/department faculty as whole
- Program/department assessment committee

The past academic year posed both challenges and opportunities. Please share any assessment discoveries (e.g., insights about assessment procedures, great achievements, etc.) regarding program assessment in 2023-2024 so that others may learn from your experiences.

As indicated in both our 2021-2022 and our 2022-2023 reports, we are in the process of revamping our methods sequence (two semester-long required courses). As of last year (2023-2024), we are also now in the process of revamping our capstone experience, by making room for a wider range of political science projects (specifically projects that use critical interpretive and political theory methods). Through a summer assessment mini grant, we have created a completely new thesis track which comes with its own tailored assessment rubric. The work done here has led to an interest in modifying the current thesis rubric to better scaffold our curriculum toward the capstone experience. Part of this work includes rethinking and ultimately redrafting our programs SLOs to align with these various changes. Because of these ongoing program and curricular changes, year-by-year annual assessment right now is not as helpful as it will be once these changes are finalized and we are in a position to assess the changes. Nevertheless, based on the unchanged program, we are pleased that students are meeting many (indeed most) of our success metrics. The metrics where students are falling short of "success" (methods, presenting evidence/findings, situating research question/problem, thinking critically about American politics and IR) are the very metrics we are in the process of addressing through curricular and programmatic changes. It will likely take another year or so to fully make these changes, at which point we look forward to assessing the modified sequence.

Please share how the program triangulates various data sources to determine student success. Consider assessment findings, CPP's GI2025 markers, CSU Dashboard, CPP's Student Success Dashboard on Tableau, CPP's Graduating Senior Survey on Tableau, course evaluations, etc.

The senior Capstone project (thesis or internship) is the crowning experience for our majors and therefore the main focus of our assessment efforts. Building competency in the skills necessary to complete either project (as reflected in our department SLOs) as well as enthusiasm for substantial political science research and/or practical experience working in a political science related field, we believe, strengthens retention rates and shortens time to graduation. As mentioned last year, we are still in the process of revamping our methods sequence to offer more tailored instruction on the variety of methods necessary for the full range of political science research projects (including quantitative, qualitative, critical interpretive, and theory methods). This will position us to better nurture the variety of interests of our majors (including those drawn to critical projects reflecting Area F commitments and content), and to build enthusiasm toward the Capstone project. We believe more intentional scaffolding, beginning with modified SLOs, a revamped methods sequence, intentional capstone mentoring beginning in the PLS 1011 course and ramping up in their junior year, and curricular modifications in subfield-specific courses will help to strengthen the capstone experience and

retention rates, especially for our most vulnerable students who may feel shut out of the capstone experience due to unfamiliarity with quantitative methods and/or an interest in critical projects that don't seem to fit within the traditional methods of political science. Modernizing our methods and thus also our capstone experience will target especially vulnerable students.

Does the program offer a certificate or credential (e.g., teaching credential)?
- No

The most current assessment plan and curriculum matrix we have on file for your program may be found <u>here</u>. To ensure we have the most updated assessment plan and curriculum matrix for your program, and for posting on our website, please upload the following documents:

Assessment Plan - Yes

Curriculum Matrix - Yes