John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Department of Political Science

Political Science Comprehensive Assessment Plan

Outline of Document

Revised 10/15/14

John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Political Science Major Assessment Plan

I. Mission Statement

The Political Science Major[1] is designed to enhance students' knowledge of politics, policy, governance, and government ranging from a global to a local perspective. The Major seeks to accomplish this mission by introducing students to the principal fields of inquiry in political science in its Foundations section, and by providing students with the opportunity to pursue a Concentration-of-Choice in one of four areas: A. Law, Courts, and Politics; B. Justice and Politics; C. American and Urban Politics and Policy; and D. Comparative/International Politics and Human Rights.

II. Learning Outcomes

Major Learning Outcomes

1. *Students will initiate, develop, and present independent research (Independent Research).*[2]
   Students are expected to:
   - Write clear thesis statements;
   - Be familiar with and cite the literature relevant to their research topic;
   - Collect evidence relating to their thesis;
   - Draw conclusions appropriate to the findings of their research.

2. *Students will write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate, and form and express cogent arguments (Effective Writing).*
   Students are expected to:
   - Use proper grammar and syntax in writing;
   - Present ideas in an organized manner;
   - Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the context, audience, and purpose for which they are writing;
   - Ground positions and arguments in scholarly research.

3. *Students will become knowledgeable members of the community capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas (Reasoned Judgments).*
   Students are expected to:
   - Demonstrate exposure to information representing various viewpoints with respect to political issues and debates;
   - Differentiate facts and opinions with respect to political issues and debates;
   - Formulate and express their own opinions on political issues;
   - Present arguments in support of and in opposition to their positions;
   - Demonstrate understanding of the development of their opinions referencing information and how that information is used and interpreted.

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[1] To differentiate uses of the terms, "Major" and "Minor," with an uppercase "M," are generally used to identify the programs of study. "major" and "minor," with a lowercase "m," are used to identify students in those programs. The context should also indicate whether the term is used to identify a program or student, or as an adjective denote the significance (or lack thereof) of something.
[2] Parenthetical phrases list the short name for the learning outcome that will be used throughout the remainder of this document.

4. *Students will demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science, as represented by the Major's foundation requirements and concentrations (*Subfield Knowledge*).*

> Students are expected to:
> - Demonstrate the attainment of factual knowledge in these subfields;
> - Demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to apply the major theories or approaches in these subfields;
> - Demonstrate familiarity with the relevant academic sources in these subfields.

Minor Learning Outcomes

The last three learning outcomes listed for the Major, *Effective Writing*, *Reasoned Judgments*, and *Subfield Knowledge* also serve as the learning outcomes for the Minor in Political Science. The Minor is currently unstructured, requiring an additional 15 credits of Political Science courses beyond POL 101; the Minor, however, is in the process of revision, giving it a defined structure. There are no courses offered by the department that are specific to the Minor and not the Major. This, coupled with the ability of students to declare minors at any point in their academic careers, makes it impossible to provide unique assessments of the Minor. Discussions of Minor assessment will, therefore, be tied to discussions of Major assessment on these three outcomes particularly where these outcomes are assessed using student work from foundation courses.

III. Assessment Philosophy

The purpose of outcomes assessment is to enhance the learning experiences of current and future students. The Political Science Department has developed learning outcomes that represent knowledge that is necessary for political scientists and that represent the requisite skills and knowledge that make students marketable for the variety of careers suited to Political Science majors. Our assessment program is designed to generate qualitative and quantitative information that will be used to identify the Political Science Major's strengths and weaknesses. That, in turn, allows us to identify areas where improvements to our program might be necessary or desirable. Once implemented, the changes can be examined for effectiveness through future outcomes assessment.

In this respect, the assessment program is expected to facilitate the Political Science Department's current practice of program examination and curricular revision. The most recent program self-study and external review highlighted areas for programmatic improvement. In response, the department has revised the Major and developed new courses to enhance student knowledge of the major subfields of the discipline and increase the program's attention to undergraduate research training. The assessment program will generate important data highlighting the program's performance on these and other objectives in light of these revisions.

Specifically, the department's assessment program reflects the structure of the Major, its recent revisions, and its participation in the general education curriculum at the college.

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Independent Research is assessed at two stages in the curriculum: in POL 225, which is a newly created required foundation course in research methods, and in POL 409, the Major's capstone course. As the requirement for the capstone course, research papers from POL 409 are an excellent tool to directly assess how well majors have developed research skills at the conclusion of their study in our program. Initially, only capstone papers were used to assess the Major on *Independent Research*. Now that POL 225 exists, it provides the department with an opportunity to assess research skills earlier in the program and examine the development of these skills between the foundation "level" and the capstone.

Capstone papers are also very appropriate for assessing the Major on *Effective Writing* and *Reasoned Judgments*. This is not, however, the only place where writing and critical thinking skills are assessed. The department has adopted a holistic approach to assessing these skills. Student work is to be collected from the capstone and lower level foundation courses. Both sets of skills will be assessed using the same instruments, as described in this document. The use of a consistent instrument will allow the department to examine how student writing and thinking progress at each level of study in the program. Instead of only assessing capstone papers and finding, for example, that writing skills need improvement, the analyses described here will afford us the ability to tailor curricular revisions when needed to different points in the curriculum.

Student work from foundation courses is also used to assess the Major on *Subfield Knowledge*. Given the design of the Political Science Major, this point in the program is the natural place to assess the knowledge developed by students with respect to the major subfields of political science. Briefly, students are required to take foundation courses in five areas. It is in these courses that all majors develop knowledge of the subfields of political science. Students then opt into a concentration, listed in the mission statement above, in which they take higher level courses to improve their research and writing skills and develop more detailed knowledge in their area of concentration. While more knowledge is attained for each particular concentration in these higher level courses, it is in the foundations courses that **all** majors share the learning experience. As noted above, assessments of *Effective Writing*, *Reasoned Judgments*, and *Subfield Knowledge* using student work from foundation courses also apply to assessment of the Minor. In light of the issues presented above and assessment of different outcomes at different times, annual reports will rarely reference the Minor. Assessment of the Minor will, however, be given a dedicated discussion in the end of cycle report.

In addition to these assessments, the department will provide periodic assessment of POL 101, American Government and Politics, on *Effective Writing* and *Reasoned Judgments*. POL 101 is the prerequisite for the Major and it is an important part of the general education curriculum at the college. Assessment of POL 101 on these skills will demonstrate its value to the college as a general education course and provide a baseline assessment of writing and critical thinking skills to which assessments of higher level courses can be compared.

IV. Assessment Cycle and Schedule

The Political Science Major will be assessed according to a five-year cycle. The following tables present the current (2010-2015) cycle and the next five-year cycle (2015-2020). Starting with the 2015-2016 academic year, the first year of the next five-year cycle, assessment will generally proceed as follows. In years 1 through 4, samples of student work will be collected and assessed using the tools described in this document. Annual reports and recommendations will be prepared and presented to the department and the college. The fifth year of the cycle will be dedicated to the end of cycle report, which will review the previously collected data on all learning outcomes with an eye towards more substantial curricular changes if needed or desired by the department.

Direct Assessment

Learning outcomes will be assessed directly as described in the following section using samples of student work from the courses identified below.

First Five-Year Cycle (Fall 2010 through Spring 2015)		
Year	*Courses*	*Learning Outcomes*
Year 1: 2010-2011	**POL 409**	**1. Independent Research** **2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments**
Year 2: 2011-2012	**All Foundation Courses**	**4. Major Subfields**
Year 3: 2012-2013	**POL 101 (2011-2012)** **All Foundation Courses (2011-2012)** ***Report on the Political Science Minor (outcomes 2, 3, and 4) using results from Major courses in years 2 and 3**	**2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments**
Year 4: 2013-2014	**POL 225** **POL 409**	**1. Independent Research**
Year 5: 2014-2015	**Year 5 will be devoted to the creation and discussion of the end of cycle report. The end of cycle report will compile the previous annual reports in the cycle and recommend curricular changes to be discussed during the Major's five-year review.**	

Second Five-Year Cycle (Fall 2015 through Spring 2020)		
Year	*Courses*	*Learning Outcomes*
Year 1: **2015-2016**	**POL 225** **POL 409** **Foundation Courses A-C** **POL 235** **POL 270** **POL 273** **POL 206** **POL 234**	**1. Independent Research** **2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments** **2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments** **4. Subfield Knowledge**
Year 2: **2016-2017**	**POL 101** **Foundation Courses D-E** **POL 257** **POL 260** **POL 214** **POL 215** **POL 220**	**2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments** **2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments** **4. Subfield Knowledge**
Year 3: **2017-2018**	**POL 225** **POL 101** ***Report on the Political Science Minor (outcomes 2, 3, and 4) using results from Major courses in years 2 and 3**	**1. Independent Research** **2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments** **2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments**
Year 4: **2018-2019**	**1 300 courses in each subfield (dependent on course offerings)** **POL 409**	**2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments** **4. Subfield Knowledge** **1. Independent Research** **2. Effective Writing** **3. Reasoned Judgments**
Year 5: **2019-2020**	**End of Cycle Summary Report**	

Indirect Assessment

     Learning objectives will also be assessed using responses to items in the *National Survey of Student Engagement* and the *John Jay College Student Evaluation of the Major*. Items from these surveys have already provided an important complement to direct assessment results and,

in a few cases, allowed the department to place direct assessment results in context. These indirect assessment instruments will primarily be used in Year 1 and Year 2 assessments, which encompass direct assessment of all four learning outcomes. The department may develop additional indirect instruments if needed.

V. Direct Assessment Instruments

Direct assessment of the four Major learning outcomes, as well as the three of these outcomes applicable to the Minor, will be conducted using a separate scoring rubric for each outcome. These rubrics, presented in Appendix B (pp. 15-19), are largely drawn from the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) project of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). To be more specific, the AAC&U has developed VALUE rubrics for the assessment of several intellectual, practical, and social skills. For each skill, written communication for example, the rubric lists several items on which student work can be assessed. For each item, there are four levels of proficiency: benchmark, milestone 1, milestone 2, and capstone. Each successive level corresponds to a higher level of student work. We adapted VALUE rubrics for three learning outcomes, as described in the following subsections, to use as common instruments for courses at various levels.

Assessment Categories and Departmental Standards

In general, student work is placed in one of three categories for every rubric item. We use a common set of categories referring to departmental expectations for student work: **exceeds**, **meets**, and **fails to meet** expectations. Descriptions of work that fall under each of the categories are presented in each of the rubrics. In our first assessment plan and the 2010-2011 assessment report we used the following categories: Exceptional, Satisfactory, Near Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory. Despite the change in terminology, the meanings of the categories are equivalent. Exceptional corresponds with Exceeds Expectations; Satisfactory corresponds with Meets Expectations; Unsatisfactory corresponds with Fails to Meet Expectations, which also encompasses the Near Satisfactory category.

With respect to department standards for assessment results, we do not have a set percentage of students that we expect to meet expectations. We hope, although do not expect, that 100% of our students at least meet departmental expectations on every learning outcome. In every assessment report, we will discuss the percentage of students that at least meet expectations in the context of the learning outcomes assessed and, when that percentage falls short of 100%, we will recommend the appropriate steps to improve student performance.

Learning Outcome 1: *Independent Research*

The first Major learning outcome listed above states that students will initiate, develop, and present independent research. To assess the Major on this outcome, we score student work from the two required courses in the Major that explicitly address research skills: POL 225, which is our introductory research course, and POL 409, the Major capstone, which requires students to produce an independent research paper.

The rubric for *Independent Research* is presented in Table B1 (p. 16). It was adapted from the VALUE rubric for Inquiry and Analysis, which the AAC&U defines as follows: "Inquiry is a systematic process of exploring issues, objects or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them." In addition

to the items from this rubric, we include one item from the Problem Solving VALUE rubric, "Propose Solutions / Hypotheses." Taken as a whole, the seven items on our rubric encompass the research process from the selection of research topics to the drawing of conclusions based on analyses.

There are four descriptions listed for each item, each corresponding to a different assessment category. The top row of the rubric identifies the category appropriate to each course level for a given description. For example, with respect to topic selection, student work that identifies a manageable topic that is either too narrowly focused or excludes relevant aspects of the topic (the third description) would be scored as "Exceeds Expectations" if the student work came from a 100-level course, "Meets Expectations" if the work were from a 200 or 300-level course, or "Fails to Meet Expectations" if the work came from a 400-level course. The layout of this rubric is identical to the rubrics for *Effective Writing* and *Reasoned Judgments*; the description of this rubric, therefore, also applies to the rubrics for those two learning outcomes.

Learning Outcome 2: *Effective Writing*

The second Major learning outcome listed above states that students will write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate, and form and express cogent arguments. For the Major, we assess *Effective Writing* twice during the cycle. First, using student work from POL 225 and POL 409 and second, using a sample of student work from all foundation courses. Assessments from this second round will also serve as assessment on this learning outcome for the Minor. As noted above, we also conduct assessment of POL 101 on *Effective Writing*.

The rubric for *Effective Writing* is presented in Table B2 (p. 17). It was adapted from the VALUE rubric for Written Communication and assesses student work on the following items: context and purpose for writing, content development, application of disciplinary conventions to all aspects of the writing, use of sources and evidence, and control of syntax and mechanics.

Learning Outcome 3: *Reasoned Judgments*

The third Major learning outcome listed above states that students will become knowledgeable members of the community capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas. We assess *Reasoned Judgments* contemporaneously with *Effective Writing* on the same samples of work. Specifically, we assess the Major on *Reasoned Judgments* using student work from POL 225 and POL 409, the Major and the Minor using a sample of student work from all foundation courses, and for POL 101.

The rubric for *Reasoned Judgments* is presented in Table B3 (p. 18). It was adapted from the VALUE rubric for Critical Thinking, which the AAC&U defines as follows: "Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion." Student work is assessed on the following items: explanation of issues to be considered critically, use of evidence, analysis of the context in which positions are presented, the extent to which the student's position accounts for the complexities of the issue, and the connection between the conclusions drawn and the evidence presented.

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A Note on Assessing the First Three Learning Outcomes

      Independent Research was previously assessed in the 2010-2011 academic year using student work from only the Major capstone course. Direct assessment was conducted using a rubric developed specifically for the capstone course that included items for *Independent Research*, *Effective Writing*, and *Reasoned Judgments*. That rubric can be found in Appendix D (pp. 23-26). We decided to change the scoring rubrics for two reasons. First, as noted, the original rubric was developed specifically for the capstone course. As our thinking and planning with respect to assessment has developed, the value of assessing learning outcomes at different levels, not just the capstone, became apparent. This required rubrics with items and criteria that could be applied to courses at various levels. Second, the development of POL 225 has given us the opportunity to assess *Independent Research* both at the capstone level and at a lower level. Related to the first point, for *Independent Research* specifically, we wanted a rubric that could be applied to both POL 225 and POL 409 so that we could track the progression of student work and assess the impact of the new course, POL 225, on performance in POL 409.

Learning Outcome 4: *Subfield Knowledge*

      The final Major learning outcome listed above states that students will demonstrate knowledge of the Major subfields of political science, as represented by the Major's foundations requirements and concentrations. *Subfield Knowledge* is assessed in the second year of the cycle using a sample of student work drawn from all foundation courses offered during the academic year. *Subfield Knowledge* has already been assessed in the current cycle; those findings are in the 2011-2012 assessment report. These assessments will also contribute to assessment of the Minor, which is discussed in the end of cycle report.

      The rubric for *Subfield Knowledge* is presented in Table B4 (p. 19). This rubric was not adapted from any other rubrics. The AAC&U does not have a rubric to assess this type of student learning. The rubric was, however, developed with a similar style. We assess student work on four items relevant to the learning outcome: the extent to which students demonstrate the attainment of factual knowledge, demonstrated understanding of theories in the subfield(s) addressed by the courses, the ability to apply those theories, and the use of literature relevant to the subfield. Descriptions of each skill level (exceeds, meets, or fails to meet expectations) in the rubric are phrased in general terms. This was done so that the rubric could be applied to work written for courses in any subfield of political science (e.g., American Politics, Political Theory, International Relations).

VII. Indirect Assessment

      The assessment reports for the first two years of each cycle include responses from Political Science majors to items from the *National Survey of Student Engagement* and the *John Jay College Student Evaluation of the Major*. Appendix C (p. 20-22) presents these items and the learning outcomes onto which each item maps. As new instruments become available, or are developed by the department, the changes will be noted in the relevant assessment report.

Appendix A

Curriculum Map for the Political Science Major and Minor

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The curriculum map links the learning outcomes of several courses in the Political Science Major, primarily foundation and other required courses, to the learning outcomes of the Major. Note that, even if the learning outcomes of a course map onto a particular program learning outcome, that course is not necessarily used to assess that program learning outcome. All of the courses listed here are also used for assessment of the Political Science Minor except POL 225 and POL 409, which are highlighted to denote their exclusion from the curriculum map for the Minor.

Courses	Program Learning Outcomes				Course Learning Outcome
	1. Initiate, develop, and present independent research	2. Write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate, and form and express cogent arguments	3. Become knowledgeable members of the community capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas	4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science	
POL 101 American Government and Politics		Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze arguments and present logical and coherent arguments through written assignments.	Synthesize the material from the course to develop opinions regarding the proper role of the government in society.	Gain understanding of the following: the foundations and framework of the U.S. government; American political institutions and their role in policy-making; the roles of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media in the operation of the American system of government.	
POL 206 Urban Politics	Conduct independent research on urban politics, write a research paper, and present findings in class.	Write a research paper on issues specific to urban politics.	Analyze major trends in urban policies including fiscal policy, education, housing, public health, transportation, economic development and community revitalization. Identify and analyze the most pressing urban problems and the different policy approaches taken to address them.	Identify and apply key theories of urban politics. Demonstrate knowledge of urban governmental structures and understand the impact of federalism on urban politics and policy.	

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Courses		Program Learning Outcome		
	1. Initiate, develop, and present independent research	2. Write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate, and form and express cogent arguments	3. Become knowledgeable members of the community capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas	4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science
		Course Learning Outcome		
POL 214 Political Parties, Interest Groups and Social Movements	Conduct independent research on political parties, interest groups, and social movements.	Discuss the formation, organization, and influence of political parties, interest groups, and social movements through written assignments.	Evaluate the institutions citizens use to influence politics and policy.	Examine the ways that parties, interest groups, and social movements affect political decision making, and the obstacles to that influence.
POL 215 U.S. Congress	Conduct independent research on congressional districts, their representatives, and congressional elections.	Evaluate the operation of the U.S. Congress, the roles of Congress and its members, and the role of issues in elections through written assignments.	Evaluate the operation of the U.S. Congress, the roles of Congress and its members, and the role of issues in elections through written assignments.	Describe and evaluate the structure, organization, and operation of Congress. Examine the influence of elections and voters on congressional behavior. Describe and evaluate the relationship between Congress and other branches and levels of government.
POL 220 The American Presidency	Conduct independent research on a former president, presidential elections, and the role of the president in public policy.	Discuss the effective use of executive power, the relationship between the president and the public, and the president's role in policymaking through written assignments.	Discuss the effective use of executive power and the president's role in policymaking with respect to specific issues through written assignments.	Describe and evaluate the role and evolution of the Executive Branch. Examine the influence of elections and voters on the president's behavior. Describe and evaluate the relationship between the president and other branches and levels of government.
POL 225 Introduction to Research in Politics	Write proper research questions, thesis statements, and hypotheses. Conduct guided research on a substantive topic in political science.	Write a literature review as part of a research project, properly cite information in research projects, and write a properly formatted reference section.	Evaluate information including scholarly articles, news sources, websites, and blogs.	

Courses	Program Learning Outcome			
	1. Initiate, develop, and present independent research	2. Write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate, and form and express cogent arguments	3. Become knowledgeable members of the community capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas	4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science
	Course Learning Outcome			
POL 234 Introduction to Public Policy		Examine specific policy areas such as health care, the environment, anti-poverty initiatives, immigration and education through written assignments.	Demonstrate understanding of the central actors, institutions, processes and issues associated with the formation of public policy.	Examine the major policy issues confronting contemporary society through the lens of political science.
POL 235 Judicial Process and Politics		Demonstrate the ability to read and brief court cases and apply concepts. Demonstrate the ability to think critically and analytically about the political and legal arguments surrounding the interpretation of the Constitution and the role of the Supreme Court.	Demonstrate the ability to think critically and analytically about the political and legal arguments surrounding the interpretation of the Constitution and the role of the Supreme Court.	Examine the role of courts and public law through the study of the constitutional powers of the federal government.
POL 257 Comparative Politics		Assess questions of state entitlements and obligations to its citizens historically and comparatively. Examine and analyze scholarly writing and arguments in comparative politics through paper assignments.	Analyze the relationship between the state and citizens' social needs in areas like housing, health care, retirement, and wages.	Identify and examine processes and concepts related to different political systems.
POL 260 International Relations		Describe and discuss arguments in academic articles, the evidence supporting the authors' conclusions, and offer critique and analysis.	Through written work, demonstrate understanding of how political power, culture, identities, ideologies, and institutions shape global politics. Make connections between the concepts addressed in class and current events.	Recognize, understand, and apply the major theories (realist, liberal, constructivist, and radical) and basic concepts of international relations.

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Courses	Program Learning Outcome			
	1. Initiate, develop, and present independent research	**2. Write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate, and form and express cogent arguments**	**3. Become knowledgeable members of the community capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas**	**4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science**
	Course Learning Outcome			
POL 270 Political Philosophy		Analyze the notion of justice and, in particular, the various ways in which justice has been described by important writers concerned with political philosophy.	Analyze the significance of the differences that exist among the major schools or political thought, past and present.	Analyze the notion of justice and, in particular, the various ways in which justice has been described by important writers concerned with political philosophy.
POL 278 Political Sociology		Critically analyze political thought with particular attention to such values as liberty, democracy, equality, security, stability, and law through written assignments.	Systematically examine the underlying assumptions and logical coherence of normative political thought.	Compare traditional and contemporary political theories in terms of priorities of values and political culture.
POL 375 Law, Order, Justice and Society		Develop the capacity to evaluate and argue about fundamental political questions and improve ability to write expository interpretive essays.	Enhance the ability to read and interpret complex texts.	Gain a rich understanding of fundamental alternatives concerning law, political order, and justice that have formed the great dialogue in Western political philosophy.
POL 409 Colloquium for Research in Government and Politics (Capstone)	Develop and present an independent research paper in political science. Demonstrate familiarity with the relevant literature of a subfield. Draw conclusions appropriate to findings.	Present and discuss the scholarly debates relevant to the research topic. Present arguments favoring and opposing different conclusions.	Present and discuss the scholarly debates relevant to the research topic. Present arguments favoring and opposing different conclusions.	Demonstrate understanding of debates within the various subfields of political science through examination of the relevant literature and its application to independent research.

Appendix B

Direct Assessment Rubrics

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Table B1.

Rubric for Learning Outcome 1: *Independent Research*

Each description column is rated differently by course level. The four rating labels in each column header correspond, top to bottom, to 100-Level, 200-Level, 300-Level, and 400-Level.

Item	Exceeds Expectations / Exceeds Expectations / Exceeds Expectations / Exceeds Expectations	Exceeds Expectations / Exceeds Expectations / Meets Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations	Fails to Meet Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations
Topic selection	Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic that addresses potentially significant yet previously less-explored aspects of the topic.	Identifies a focused and manageable/doable topic that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that while manageable/doable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable.
Existing Knowledge, Research, and/or Views	Synthesizes in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches.	Presents in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches.	Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.	Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.
Design Process	All elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are skillfully developed. Appropriate methodology or theoretical frameworks may be synthesized across disciplines or relevant subdisciplines.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are appropriately developed, however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are appropriately developed, however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing, incorrectly developed, or unfocused.
Propose Solutions / Hypotheses (Problem Solving Rubric)	Proposes one or more solutions/hypotheses that indicates a deep comprehension of the problem. Solution / hypotheses are sensitive to contextual factors as well as all of the following: ethical, logical, and cultural dimensions of the problem.	Proposes one or more solutions/hypotheses that indicates comprehension of the problem. Solutions / hypotheses are sensitive to contextual factors as well as the one of the following: ethical, logical, or cultural dimensions of the problem.	Proposes one solution/hypothesis that is "off the shelf" rather than individually designed to address the specific contextual factors of the problem.	Proposes a solution/hypothesis that is difficult to evaluate because it is vague or only indirectly addresses the problem statement.
Analysis	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus.
Conclusions	States a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings.	States a conclusion focused solely on the inquiry findings. The conclusion arises specifically from and responds specifically to inquiry findings.	States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings.	States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupportable conclusion from inquiry findings.
Limitations and Implications	Insightfully discusses in detail relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Discusses relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents limitations and implications, but are possibly irrelevant and unsupported.

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Table B2.
Rubric for Learning Outcome 2: *Effective Writing*

Item	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Meets Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*
Context of and Purpose for Writing *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).*	*100-Level: Exceeds Expectations* *200-Level: Exceeds Expectations* *300-Level: Exceeds Expectations* *400-Level: Exceeds Expectations* Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	*Exceeds Expectations* *Meets Expectations* *Meets Expectations* *Meets Expectations* Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and assumptions).	*Meets Expectations* *Fails to Meet Expectations* *Fails to Meet Expectations* *Fails to Meet Expectations* Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and expectation of instructor or self as audience). Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work. Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions *Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields.*	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, and presentation	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing. Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors. Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

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Table B3.
Rubric for Learning Outcome 3: *Reasoned Judgments*

Item	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Meets Expectations*	*Meets Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*
100-Level:	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Meets Expectations*	*Meets Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*
200-Level:	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*
300-Level:	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*
400-Level:	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Meets Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence *Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion*	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

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Table B4.
Rubric for Learning Outcome 4: *Subfield Knowledge*

Item	*Exceeds Expectations*	*Meets Expectations*	*Fails to Meet Expectations*
Factual Knowledge	The work demonstrates the attainment of factual knowledge in the subfield and expresses how this knowledge contributes to understanding of the subfield respective of the assignment.	The work demonstrates the attainment of factual knowledge in the subfield respective of the assignment, but does not relate these facts to an understanding of the subfield.	The work does not demonstrate the attainment of factual knowledge in the subfield respective of the assignment.
	E.g. the work correctly identifies the United States as a presidential system and expresses the implications of this for U.S. politics.	E.g. the work correctly identifies the United States as a presidential system without relating this fact to broader theories / approaches in comparative politics.	E.g. the work incorrectly identifies the United States as a parliamentary system.
Knowledge of theories / approaches in the subfield	The work demonstrates deep understanding of the major theories / approaches of the subfield respective of the assignment.	The work demonstrates basic understanding of the major theories / approaches of the subfield respective of the assignment.	The work demonstrates less than basic understanding of the major theories / approaches of the subfield.
	Deep understanding is demonstrated through recognition of assumptions and limitations of the theory / approach.	Basic understanding is demonstrated through full and accurate statement or description of the theory / approach.	Theories / approaches are misstated, not mentioned in the work, or described incompletely.
Application of theories / approaches in the subfield	The work applies one or more of the theories / approaches (e.g. to the analysis of an issue) and acknowledges the context to which the theory / approach is applied.	The work applies one or more of the theories / approaches (e.g. to the analysis of an issue) irrespective of the context to which they are applied.	The work does not apply any theories or adopt any approaches relevant in the subfield or theories / approaches are incorrectly applied within the assignment.
	E.g. the work applies a theory to the analysis of an issue acknowledging that alternative approaches may be appropriate in different contexts.	E.g. the work does not acknowledge the potential importance of situational context in the application of the theory / approach.	
Literature in the subfield	The work includes information from a variety of academic and, possibly, nonacademic sources relevant to the subfield and respective of the assignment.	The work includes information from at least one academic source in the subfield and may include relevant information from nonacademic sources.	The work does not include or includes minimal information from sources relevant to the subfield.

Appendix C

Indirect Assessment Instruments

Table C1. Items from the 2008-2009 National Survey of Student Engagement				
Item (Location in Survey)	*Learning Outcome*			
How often have you done each of the following: (Table 2)	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
Made a class presentation	X			
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas … from various sources	X			
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignments…		X		
Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments			X	
Put together ideas or concepts from different courses…			X	
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members…			X	
Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course				X
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations				X
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own				X
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of…				X
How much has your coursework emphasized... (Table 3)				
Synthesizing and organizing ideas…		X		
Making judgments about the value of information…		X		
Applying theories or concepts…		X		
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea…			X	
Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings…				X
How much reading and writing have you done: (Table 4)				
Number of written papers or reports 20 pages or more	X			
Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	X			
Number of written papers or reports fewer than 5 pages		X		
Number of books read … for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment			X	
Which of the following have you done... (Table 5)				
Work on a research project with a faculty member…	X			
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue			X	
Tried to better understand someone else's views…			X	
Learned something that changed the way understood an issue or concept			X	
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment				X
Contributed to your development in the following areas: (Table 9)				
Speaking clearly and effectively	X			
Thinking critically and analytically	X			
Analyzing quantitative problems	X			
Writing clearly and effectively		X		
Voting in local, state, or national elections			X	
Learning effectively on your own			X	
Solving complex real-world problems			X	
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills				X
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds				X
Developing a personal code of values and ethics				X
Contributing to the welfare of your community				X

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Table C2. Items from the Fall 2009 John Jay College Student Evaluation of the Major				
Item (Location in Survey)	*Learning Outcome*			
To what extent have courses in your Major: (Page 81)	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
Helped you to speak clearly and effectively	X			
Taught you to think critically and analytically	X			
Taught you to write clearly and effectively		X		
Helped you to acquire a broad general education			X	
Helped you learn to solve complex real-world problems			X	
Helped you to acquire job or work-related knowledge or skills				X
Helped you to acquire specific knowledge about an academic field				X
Considering the classes… how much writing have you done? (Page 81)				
Number of written papers or reports 20 pages or more	X			
Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	X			
Number of written papers or reports less than 5 pages		X		
Rate how much you agree or disagree with the statements below:				
This Major is providing me with preparation for my future professional work				X
The Major is providing me with preparation for further study				X
I see connections between the general education courses… and the courses… in the Major				X
Courses in this Major provide a great deal of depth in their subject matter				X
Studying this Major has changed the way I understand an issue or concept				X
Comments on the best things about the Major where appropriate. (Page 85)	X	X	X	X
Comments on the biggest problems in the Major where appropriate. (Page 86)	X	X	X	X

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Appendix D

Original Rubric for *Independent Research*, *Effective Writing*, and *Reasoned Judgments*
Specific to the Capstone Course

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Section	Qualities	Points
Introduction		**Total Points: 8**
Thesis Statement	1. Thesis is clear and appropriate.	4
	2. Thesis is appropriate, but unclear.	3
	3. Thesis is incomplete (i.e. missing an explanation).	2
	4. Thesis is inappropriate to the topic.	1
	5. Lacks a thesis statement.	0
Research Frame	1. Research is framed w/respect to prior work and as an important question.	3
	2. Research is framed as an interesting or important question.	2
	3. Research is framed w/respect to prior work	1
	4. Research is not placed in context.	0
Reference to Conclusions	1. Foreshadows or references eventual conclusions.	1
	2. No reference to eventual conclusions.	0
Literature Review		**Total Points: 16**
Types of Sources	1. Cites appropriate academic/scholarly research.	3
	2. Cites appropriate, popular work on the topic.	2
	3. Cited work is inappropriate to the topic.	1
	4. Little-to-no literature cited.	0
Treatment of the Literature	1. Sources are synthesized into thematic discussions.	3
	2. Sources are discussed individually, but appropriately.	2
	3. Sources are discussed in an unorganized manner.	1
	4. No literature cited.	0
Relationship between Literature and Research	1. Discussion is appropriate and identifies gaps in the literature.	3
	2. Discussion of the literature is appropriate to the research question.	2
	3. Discussion of the literature is not related to the research question.	1
	4. No literature cited.	0
Presentation of Supporting Arguments	1. Arguments lead to a supportive position and are supported by empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work.	4
	2. Arguments and support are offered, but are not connected to the research.	3
	3. Arguments are offered and defended, but not supported by empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work.	2
	4. Arguments are offered, but are undefended.	1
	5. Author does not offer any arguments.	0
Presentation of Alternative Arguments	1. Arguments are presented and discussed with reference to empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work.	3
	2. Arguments are presented and discussed without reference to empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work.	2
	3. Arguments are presented, but are not discussed or minimally discussed.	1
	4. Author does not present opposing arguments.	0
Analyses & Conclusions		**Total Points: 22**
Phenomena	1. Phenomena are identified and clearly defined.	3
	2. Phenomena are identified, but not clearly defined.	2
	3. Phenomena are identified, but not defined.	1
	4. No phenomena identified.	0
Proposed Relationships	1. Clear, directional relationship expected.	3
	2. Clear identification of dependent and independent phenomena.	2
	3. Proposed explanations for phenomena are unclear.	1
	4. No relationships identified.	0

Methodology	1. Methods are innovatively applied to the research question.	3
	2. Methods are appropriate to the research question.	2
	3. Methods are inappropriate to the research question.	1
	4. No information analyzed.	0
Discussion of Results	1. Results are presented, discussed, and have clear implications.	5
	2. Results and discussion are appropriate to the research question; discussion is not connected to prior work.	4
	3. Results and discussion are inappropriate to or incompletely address the research question.	3
	4. Discussion of results is unorganized.	2
	5. Results are presented, but not discussed.	1
	6. No results from original analyses.	0
Appropriateness of Conclusions	1. Conclusions are appropriate to the results and research question.	4
	2. Conclusions reference results, but are inappropriate to or incompletely address the research question.	3
	3. Conclusions do not reference results.	2
	4. Conclusions are inappropriate to the results.	1
	5. No conclusion written.	0
Context of Conclusions	1. Conclusions are based on the independent research of the author, respective of factual information and the opinions and arguments previously cited.	4
	2. Conclusions are based on research without referencing prior work.	3
	3. Conclusions are based on prior work without referencing research.	2
	4. Conclusions do not reference ideas, reference evidence, or place ideas in the context of prior work.	1
	5. No conclusion written.	0

Writing Style & Format	**Total Points:**	**17**
Grammar and Syntax	1. Few/no grammatical or syntactical errors.	3
	2. Some/few errors; no distraction to the reader.	2
	3. Several errors; mild distraction to the reader.	1
	4. Several grammatical and syntactical errors; distracting to the reader.	0
Use of Language	1. All/practically all language is used properly.	2
	2. Some improper use of words / language.	1
	3. Paper is poorly written; many words are used improperly.	0
Use of Jargon	1. All terms are well-defined and used properly.	3
	2. Terms are ill- or undefined, but most are used properly.	2
	3. Terms are defined, but used improperly.	1
	4. Technical terms are undefined and used improperly.	0
Organization of Writing	1. Paper is organized logically; sections are labeled; paragraphs are appropriate with good transitions between them.	3
	2. Sections are labeled; paragraphs are an appropriate length for their content.	2
	3. Paper follows a basic progression; paragraphs may be too long or short.	1
	4. Paper is unorganized; ideas do not follow a logical progression and several ideas are inappropriately placed together.	0
Citation Format	1. Citations are consistent follow an accepted format.	3
	2. Citations are proper, but inconsistent.	2
	3. Literature is improperly cited.	1
	4. No literature cited.	0
Reference / Works Cited Page	1. References are present, correctly formatted, and properly organized.	3
	2. References are present and correctly formatted, but unorganized.	2
	3. References are present, but incorrectly formatted.	1
	4. References are missing.	0

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The following table maps items from the original rubric to the first three Major learning outcomes. The final row lists the number of total points available for each learning objective. Departmental standards, which follow, provide the score ranges for each assessment category. Percentages represent the percent of available points a paper must receive to fall under a particular assessment category.

Rubric Item	Independent Research	Effective Writing	Reasoned Judgments
Introduction			
Thesis Statement	X		
Research Frame	X		
Reference to Conclusions	X		
Literature Review			
Types of Sources			X
Treatment of the Literature			X
Relationship between Literature and Research			X
Presentation of Supporting Arguments			X
Presentation of Alternative Arguments			X
Analyses & Conclusions			
Phenomena	X		
Proposed Relationships	X		
Methodology	X		
Discussion of Results	X		
Appropriateness of Conclusions	X		
Context of Conclusions			X
Writing Style & Format			
Grammar and Syntax		X	
Use of Language		X	
Use of Jargon		X	
Organization of Writing		X	
Citation Format		X	
Reference / Works Cited Page		X	
Learning Outcome Total Points:	26	17	20

Assessment Category	Independent Research	Effective Writing	Reasoned Judgments
Exceptional [85% - 100%]	23-26	15-17	17-20
Satisfactory [70% - 85%)	19-22	12-14	14-16
Near Satisfactory [60% - 70%)	16-18	11	12-13
Unsatisfactory [0% - 60%)	0-15	0-10	0-11