

POLITICAL SCIENCE (BA)

Program Learning Assessment

2011-2015 Assessment Planning Cycle Key Findings and Proposed Actions

October 1, 2015

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**John Jay College of Criminal Justice
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Political Science (BA)

Mission

The Political Science Major 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, Policy & Society; B. Justice & Politics; C. Urban Politics and Community Leadership; and D. Comparative/International Politics & Human Rights.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will initiate, develop, and present independent research.

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.

Students are expected to:

- Use proper grammar and syntax in writing;
- Present ideas in an organized manner;
- Present arguments in support of and in opposition to their positions
- 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.

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;
- Demonstrate understanding of the development of their opinions referencing information and how that information is used and interpreted.

4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science, as represented by the major's foundations requirements and concentrations.

Students are expected to demonstrate familiarity with the major theories and ideas of the following subfields of political science:

- 4a. American Politics and Government: the structure of the federal government, the powers of governmental institutions, and the behavior of political actors;
- 4b. Law and Courts: the role of laws and the judicial system to the functioning of government;
- 4c. Urban Politics: institutions, issues, and relationships particular to urban areas;
- 4d. Political Theory and Philosophy: concepts of justice, the roles and organization of governments, and the relationship between government and citizens.
- 4e. Comparative Politics: the processes and concepts particular to different political systems;
- 4f. International Relations: the major theories and explanations of interactions between states.

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 objectives 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 is in the process of revising the major and developing 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.

Of the four learning objectives listed above, the first three are assessed directly using research papers from POL 409, which is the Political Science Major capstone course. Throughout the program of study, students are expected to develop research and writing skills and attain enough knowledge to develop informed opinions on political issues and ideas. As the requirement for the capstone course, research papers from POL 409 are the best tool to directly assess how well majors have developed these skills and this knowledge at the conclusion of their study in our program. The first three learning objectives will also be assessed indirectly through items from the *National Survey of Student Engagement* and the *John Jay College Student Evaluation of the Major*. Direct and indirect assessment of these learning objectives is discussed in detail in Section VI of this document. Results from the assessment of these three objectives will have implications both for the structure of the capstone course and, more importantly, lower level courses in the program where students are expected to have developed in these areas.

The final learning objective is assessed directly through tools available through 200-level courses and indirectly using items from the *National Survey of Student Engagement* and the *John Jay College Student Evaluation of the Major*. 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 200-level foundations courses in four out of 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 200-level foundations courses that **all** majors share the learning experience. This objective will be assessed over the course of three academic years.

Summary of Assessment Activities

The 2013-2014 assessment report was shared with the faculty via email in September 2014. Results and recommendations from the assessment report were presented and discussed in the department meeting held on September 9, 2014. The recommendations from this report, with comments updating the department's progress, are as follows:

- The Major Coordinator will arrange a meeting with POL 225 (Introduction to Research in Politics) and POL 409 (Colloquium for Research in Government and Politics) instructors to discuss ways that both courses could be restructured so that students in POL 409 can further develop the skills they started building in POL 225.

This meeting, arranged and chaired by Prof. Monica Varsanyi, was held April 16, 2015. Instructors shared their experiences teaching each course and discussed a variety of methods for improving students' research skills, including their ability to engage in independent research. Prof. Varsanyi will draft a document, to be circulated to the faculty, highlighting research related concepts that faculty could reinforce in the courses they teach.

- The Major Coordinator will continue the discussion of writing and research skills with the faculty in the context of the feedback survey.

This discussion was continued in the context of the aforementioned meeting with POL 225 and POL 409 instructors. Prof. Varsanyi presented a summary of the meeting to the department in our April 22, 2015, department meeting. Prof. Sidman presented draft results showing the positive impact of POL 225 on overall student performance.

Assessment Procedures

Direct Assessment of the Major

As this is the fifth year summary report, there is no new direct assessment of student work included here. This report presents direct assessment results from the last four years, and for all four learning outcomes of the major. A list of courses and sample sizes used for direct assessment is presented in **Table 1**.¹ The results are discussed in the Direct Assessment Results section of this report. Rubrics used for direct assessment are presented in **Appendix A**. As a reminder, the learning outcomes of the major are:

1. Students will initiate, develop, and present independent research (*Independent Research*).²

¹ All tables and figures are presented after the Conclusions and Recommendations section in the order in which they are discussed in the text. Appendix A begins after the presentation of tables and figures.

² Parenthetical phrases list the short name for the learning outcome that will be used throughout the remainder of this document.

2. Students will write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate, and form and express cogent arguments (*Effective Writing*).
3. Students will become knowledgeable members of the community capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas (*Reasoned Judgments*).
4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science, as represented by the Major's foundation requirements and concentrations (*Subfield Knowledge*).

In the first assessment report of the major (2010-2011), we assessed the major on the first three learning outcomes applying a rubric designed by the Major Coordinator to student work from the capstone course. After 2010-2011, that rubric was abandoned in favor of rubrics that could be used to assess student work at various levels, and not just work performed in the capstone. Items from the original rubric are mapped onto items from the rubrics that the department currently uses in order to present the original assessment of the first three learning outcomes relative to assessment results generated after that first year. This mapping is presented in **Appendix A**.

Indirect Assessment

We include two sets of indirect assessments of the major: discussion of survey results and an analysis of course grades focusing on the impact of POL 225. For the discussion of survey results, we include previously reported data from the 2009 John Jay Student Evaluation of the Major, with selected items grouped into the four learning outcomes, and data from the 2012 version of the same survey. We restate the 2009 results, which have been presented in previous assessment reports. For each item, we also include the results from 2012 and, most importantly, the difference between 2012 and 2009. The discussion highlights changes in student evaluations of the major.

For the analysis of course grades, we begin with results presented in the 2013-2014 assessment report showing the impact of POL 225 on performance in POL 409. New to this report is a statistical analysis of grades in POL courses during the Fall 2014 semester, examining differences between students who have and have not taken POL 225.

Direct Assessment Results

Figures 1a through 4 are structured similarly. Each set of bars depicts student performance on a given rubric item. Rubric items are indicated along the horizontal axis in bold type. Courses from which the results are derived are indicated along the horizontal axis in regular type with the year in which the outcomes were assessed for that course. For example, "409 (2011)" refers to assessment results from POL 409 presented in the 2010-2011 assessment report. All assessment results relating to a particular rubric item are presented in chronological order. Each bar contains three regions. The bottom, white region represents the percentage of students that fail to meet expectations. The middle region with diagonal black lines represents the percentage of students that meet expectations. The top, black region represents that

percentage of students that exceed expectations. Each percentage is listed in its proper region (normal type for “fails to meet expectations,” italics for “meets expectations,” and bold for “exceeds expectations”). All bars total to 100%.

Figures 1a and 1b present the assessment results for *Independent Research*, which was originally assessed in 2010-2011 and 2013-2014. Over time, combining POL 225 and POL 409 students in 2013-2014, student performance has improved on all aspects of the outcome, except “Limitations,” which was not assessed in 2010-2011. Looking only at performance in POL 409, student performance has improved in “Topic Selection,” “Propose Solutions/Hypotheses,” “Analysis,” and “Conclusions.” The percentages of students who fail to meet expectations decreased by 18.3, 36.7, 11.6, and 1.7 points on each item respectively. Student performance declined slightly on “Existing Knowledge” and “Design Process,” where the percentage of students failing to meet expectations increased by 3.3 and 5 points respectively. Improving student performance is at least partially due to the creation of POL 225, which formally introduces research skills and emphasizes these aspects of research. The 2010-2011 assessment results also led some instructors, especially those teaching POL 409, but others as well, to more heavily emphasize thesis statements and arguments in their course assignments.

Figure 2 presents the assessment results for *Effective Writing*, which was originally assessed in 2010-2011 and 2012-2013. Unlike *Independent Research*, which included assessments from the same course (POL 409) at two points in time, differences in results for *Effective Writing* and *Reasoned Judgements* could be due to time, more specifically the intervention of changing the major, or due to course level (400 versus 100 and 200-level courses). This leaves some of our conclusions unclear until the next assessment cycle allows for more explicit comparisons. On “Context for Writing,” “Sources and Evidence,” and “Syntax and Mechanics” we find that performance declined between 2011 and 2013. Viewed differently, however, we can report that students improved between taking 200-level foundation courses and the capstone (the percentage failing to meet expectations declined 7.2, 22.8, and 26 points on each item respectively).

We think this latter explanation is more reasonable for “Context” and “Syntax.” Both of these items are more particular to the writing process and less intertwined with research skills. We would, therefore, expect that students become better writers as they progress from the 200 to the 400-level. The result for “Sources” is more likely temporal and related to the decline reported for the “Existing Knowledge” item as part of the *Independent Research* outcome. “Content Development” and “Disciplinary Conventions,” which includes organization of the work, are, like the use of existing sources, more closely related to the research process, at least the way this process is taught in POL 225 and POL 409. We are comfortable concluding, based also on anecdotal evidence, that the improvement of students over time on these items (declines in failing to meet expectations of 9.3 points and 26.4 points respectively) reflects genuine improvement in writing skills.

Figure 3 presents the assessment results for *Reasoned Judgments*, which was originally assessed in 2010-2011 and 2012-2013. As on *Independent Research*, student performance on *Reasoned Judgments* has improved on nearly every item over time. Unlike with writing skills, all of the aspects of *Reasoned Judgments* are related to research skills. As research skills have

improved over time, so have critical thinking skills as assessed through the *Reasoned Judgments* learning outcome. Between 2011 and 2013, the percentage of students failing to meet expectations declined 26.2 points on “Explanation of Issues,” 7.6 points on “Evidence,” 50.7 points on “Student’s Position,” which includes the development of arguments and hypotheses, and 23 points on “Conclusions.” Student performance declined slightly on “Influence of Context,” where the percentage failing to meet expectations increased by 7.2 points.

Figure 4 presents the assessment results for *Subfield Knowledge*, which was originally assessed in 2011-2012. The paragraphs that follows were originally presented in the 2011-2012 assessment report.

Students performed extremely well on all four aspects of *Subfield Knowledge* assessed through the rubric. Student performance was best on “Factual Knowledge.” 94.8% of the sample at least met expectations with fifty percent of students exceeding expectations. Student performance was also very high on “Knowledge of Theories” and “Literature.” On both items, 84.5% of the sample at least met expectations with 34.5% and 48.3% exceeding expectations on each item respectively. Student performance was lowest, although still high, on “Application of Theories” with 77.6% of the sample at least meeting expectations.

It is important that students develop a set of skills in the context of the discipline; that students attain knowledge of the facts and theories of the discipline they study and gain familiarity with its literature. In this respect, Political Science students perform extremely well. Our students are very proficient at demonstrating the attainment of factual knowledge. Furthermore, many students demonstrate the ability to place this knowledge in the broader context of a subfield of the discipline. Students by and large demonstrated knowledge of the relevant literature in the context of their assignments. Students were able to at least accurately describe, and in large measure apply, the major theoretical approaches of the different subfields in the discipline.

Indirect Assessment Results: Survey Results

This section of the report discusses responses to the John Jay Student Evaluation of the Major in 2009 and 2012, focusing on how these responses have changed over time. In 2009, 23 Political Science majors responded to the survey; in 2012, that number was 120. For both years, we include the same items grouped into the four learning outcomes of the major. The results are reported in **tables 2** through **5**. Overall, and consistent with the direct assessment results, student perceptions of the major and its faculty have improved over time.

The indirect assessment of all four learning outcomes includes questions asking students the extent to which courses in the major have “done something,” where this something could be the development of a skill, the acquisition of knowledge, etc. Students respond using a four-point scale including: very much, some, a little, and not at all. **Table 2** (*Independent Research*) reports that the percentage of students saying that their major courses very much “helped them to speak clearly and effectively” increased by 13.9 points (all of the other percentages declined). For “thinking critically and analytically,” the combined percentage of some and very much increase 5 points. For “writing clearly and effectively,” the percentage of students responding

that major courses helped them very much increased 20.7 points (**Table 3, *Effective Writing***). The percentage responding very much to the “acquire a broad general education” item increased 2.1 points (all other percentages declined or did not change) and the combined percentage of some and very much to “learn to solve complex real-world problems” increased 15.2 points (**Table 4, *Reasoned Judgments***). Lastly, the percentage of students feeling that major courses have very much helped them acquire specific knowledge about an academic field increased 12.4 points, with all other percentages declining (**Table 5, *Subfield Knowledge***).

Another set of items common to multiple outcomes ask students the extent to which they agree with listed statements on a four-point scale including: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. An increased percentage of students agree (or strongly agree) that studying Political Science has changed the way they understand an issue or concept (4.4 points; **Table 4, *Reasoned Judgments***; **Table 5, *Subfield Knowledge***). Relatedly, the percentage of students strongly agreeing that faculty members prepare carefully increased by 5.1 points (**Table 5, *Subfield Knowledge***). On a mostly positive note, the final item of this set asks students how much they agree that major courses provide a great deal of depth in their subject matter. The percentage of students agreeing declined 14 points; some of that opinion shifted to disagree, which increased 3.6 points, but more of it shifted to strongly agree, which increased 9.4 points (**Table 5, *Subfield Knowledge***).

The last set of items we discuss ask students to rate various aspects of the faculty on a four-point scale including: excellent, good, fair, and poor. All of these items are presented in **Table 5** as indirect assessments of *Subfield Knowledge*. We observe a similar dynamic on the first two items presented (quality of teaching and teaching ability of faculty). On both, there appears to be a shift from poor to fair and from good to excellent, suggesting positive movement in evaluations, although not as positive as a reduction in both poor and fair complemented by increases in good and excellent. This is what we observe for the last three items. Between 2009 and 2012, the percentage of students who rate the knowledge and experience of the faculty as good or excellent increased 5.9 points. The percentage of students who rate the teaching methods of faculty as good or excellent increased 21.6 points. The percentage rating the quality of feedback they receive from faculty as good or excellent increased an enormous 31.3 points, with most of that decline coming from students who rated the quality of feedback as poor.

Indirect Assessment Results: Effects of POL 225

By far, the most significant change to the major resulting from our assessment activities is the development of POL 225, *Introduction to Research in Politics*. 225 was developed in large part as a response to the findings detailed in our 2010-2011 assessment report. That report presented assessment results for *Independent Research*, *Effective Writing*, and *Reasoned Judgments* using capstone papers as samples of student work. The results indicated that a significant proportion of students were not exhibiting the level of research, writing, or critical thinking skills expected of them once they had reached that point in the curriculum. The purpose of 225 is to formally introduce students to the empirical research process early in the curriculum (the department recommends that students take 225 in the sophomore year) and, in doing so, *explicitly* foster the development research, writing, critical thinking, and information literacy skills.

225 is not meant to be the only course where these skills are developed. The hope is that the early, formal introduction of these skills will teach students how to further cultivate these skills in all of their other courses. While the immediate focus of 225 is on teaching students how to properly conduct research, the hope has been that students will begin developing all of the skills they will need to make them better students. For example, in learning how to properly read an academic journal article, students can better understand the assigned reading in other courses. The evidence of the benefits of 225 is presented in the Direct Assessment Results section. As noted above, student exhibition of research skills in the capstone has improved on several aspects of these skills since the addition of 225 to the major.

Table 6, which originally appeared as Table 4 in the 2013-2014 assessment report, presents some limited statistical evidence of the positive impact of 225 on conducting independent research. As of last year, there still had not been many students taking the capstone that had previously taken 225. The next couple of academic years will likely afford greater opportunities for this type of direct assessment whereas we expect a more equal mix of students in the capstone who have and have not taken 225.

Table 6 presents the mean scores on all seven rubric items for five capstone students in the sample that took 225 and twenty-five capstone students that did not. The scores range from 1 to 3 with higher scores implying greater proficiency on the particular rubric item. The last column of **Table 6** presents the differences between the means of students that took 225 and students that did not. Students that took 225 had a higher mean on all seven items; three of these differences are significant for at least the 10% level (on “Topic,” “Knowledge,” and “Conclusions”). Students that have taken 225 appear better able to select a creative, focused topic, provide better synthesis of the existing literature, and draw sounder conclusions based on their research.

In addition to improving work in the capstone, 225 is expected to improve student performance in all major courses. To test this argument, data were collected from CUNYFirst for Political Science majors in major courses during the Fall 2014 semester, and a random effects model was estimated nesting course grades within students. The dependent variable is the course grade, coded as the GPA equivalent of the letter grade (e.g., A = 4.0, A- = 3.7). The model includes a number of student and course characteristics available through CUNYFirst as independent variables.

Six student characteristics are included in the model. First, we include the cumulative GPA of the student as of Spring 2014, the semester immediately prior to Fall 2014. Second, we include a dummy variable indicating whether the student took POL 225 prior to Fall 2014. We expect both variables to positively affect course grades in Fall 2014. We also include the interaction between cumulative GPA and having taken POL 225, expecting the effect of the interaction to be negative. That is, the impact of formal introduction of research skills should decrease with the observed performance of the student. Put another way, taking 225 should have a stronger impact on students who do not typically perform at a high academic level (a B student should improve more after taking 225 than an A student). Third, we include a dummy variable indicating female students. Fourth, we include the total number of credits earned by the student.

Fifth, we include the number of credits the student is attempting in Fall 2014. Sixth, we include a dummy variable indicating transfer students. We expect the effects of the first three of these variables to be positive; we expect transfer students to exhibit lower course grades on average.

We also control for four course characteristics: days on which the course is run, the location of the classroom, whether the course runs at night, and the level of the course. We include days using dummy variables for Tuesday/Thursday courses and Wednesday/Friday courses (Monday/Wednesday courses comprise the excluded category). Location includes dummy variables for North Hall and Westport (the New Building is the excluded category). Course level includes three dummy variables indicating 200, 300, and 400-level courses (100-level is the excluded category). We have no expectations for any of these except course level; all three course level dummy variables should have negative effects on course grades given that the effects are relative to 100-level courses. The results are presented in **Table 7**.

Table 7 demonstrates a number of interesting effects. First, the Lagrange Multiplier χ^2 , listed at the bottom of the table, is significant suggesting that the intercept does vary for students. Second, a few of the control variables are significant and possibly worth investigating on a larger scale. As expected, the more credits a student has amassed, the better on average she performed in Fall 2014 POL courses. Students taking Tuesday/Thursday courses performed significantly worse than their peers, receiving roughly one letter grade step lower in courses on average (e.g., a B- compared to a B). Students taking courses in Westport performed significantly better by about the same magnitude.

More to the point, prior GPA, having taken 225, and their interaction are all statistically significant. The results suggest that taking 225 has its largest (positive) effects on students who previously had lower GPAs. As **Figure 5** demonstrates, an increase in prior GPA causes an increase in Fall 2014 course grades for both 225 and non-225 students. Holding prior GPA constant, students that have taken 225 receive higher course grades than non-225 students until prior GPA is between 3.3 and 3.4, a roughly B+ average. At this point, the curves for 225 and non-225 students intersect and students that have not taken 225, and have a prior GPA of 3.4 or greater, appear to receive better course grades.

We examine the differences between 225 and non-225 students more explicitly in **Figure 6**, which plots the difference in course grades between 225 and non-225 students and includes 90% confidence intervals for the difference. **Figure 6** shows that taking 225 significantly improves the future course grades of students up to a prior GPA of 2.9, just shy of a B average. After that, there are no significant differences between 225 and non-225 students. For students with the lowest prior GPA (about 1.4), the average effect of taking 225 on course grades is 0.7, roughly two letter grade-steps (i.e., a D+ to a C). Even at the highest prior GPA where taking 225 still significantly affects course grades, taking 225 increase course grades by 0.2 on average, almost a whole letter grade-step (i.e., B to B+).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Political Science major has undergone several significant changes in the last five years. This report, and others during this five-year assessment cycle, has discussed the effects of POL 225 on student performance on the learning outcomes of the major. The introduction of POL 225 is significant, but only one part of these changes. POL 225 was introduced as part of a revision to the major, which became operative as of the Fall 2012 semester. In addition to requiring students to take this introductory research course, the department removed several courses offered by other disciplines from the major, required students to take courses in all five of the major's foundation categories (instead of four out of five), and increased the number of credits students are required to take in their concentration from 12 to 15. The department has introduced a number of new courses, several of which are offered at the 300-level. The department has also added several new faculty members, complementing our already outstanding faculty. All of these changes, informed by regular assessment, are responsible for moving student performance in a positive direction on nearly every metric presented here.

While performance has improved, the most recent assessments of research skills, particularly in POL 409, show that a significant proportion of students fail to meet expectations in several areas. Creating a research design and proposing solutions or hypotheses are two areas that stand out, with 43.3% and 30% of students failing to meet expectations respectively. To address the development of research skills throughout the curriculum, we offer two recommendations:

- **Prof. Varsanyi will circulate a document suggesting research related concepts that all faculty could reinforce in their courses.**
- **The department will investigate different models for the delivery of POL 409 allowing instructors greater opportunities to work individually with students in the development of their research projects.**

One of the major issues raised in the aforementioned meeting of POL 225 and POL 409 instructors is the difficulty in providing enough project-specific feedback to individual students. POL 409, which typically seats 25 students per section, is built around students conducting independent research. Developing a research design, including the crafting of testable arguments, is a process that requires a significant amount of personalized feedback. In a class of 25 students, instructors are limited in the amount of personalized attention they can provide to each student.

The department would like to investigate the possibility of running sections of POL 409 with smaller enrollment caps. Fewer students will give instructors greater ability to work more closely with individual students in the development of their capstone research projects, and by extension the development of their research skills.

While the fifth year summary report would typically be a vehicle for recommending broader curricular adjustment, we do not do so here for two reasons. First, we are generally satisfied with the trajectory of the major. We instituted major changes three years ago and are

pleased with the impact those changes are having. This, however, does not preclude a discussion of large and small curricular adjustment. That conversation will happen at the end of the next academic year. The Political Science major is scheduled to engage in its self-study in 2016-2017. We decided to hold a retreat at the end of the Spring 2016 semester, partly to set an agenda for our self-study. These assessment results, in addition to data collected next year, will be part of that discussion.

**Table 1.
Courses and Sample Sizes Used for Direct Assessment**

<i>Learning Outcome</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Course (Year)</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>
Independent Research	Figure 1a Figure 1b	POL 409 (2011)	60
		POL 225 (2014)	31
		POL 409 (2014)	30
Effective Writing	Figure 2	POL 409 (2011)	60
		POL 101 (2013)	30
		POL 206 (2013)	58
		POL 220 (2013)	
		POL 230 (2013)	
		POL 257 (2013)	
		POL 260 (2013)	
		POL 270 (2013)	
		POL 278 (2013)	
		POL 375 (2013)	
Reasoned Judgments	Figure 3	POL 409 (2011)	60
		POL 101 (2013)	30
		POL 206 (2013)	58
		POL 220 (2013)	
		POL 230 (2013)	
		POL 257 (2013)	
		POL 260 (2013)	
		POL 270 (2013)	
		POL 278 (2013)	
		POL 375 (2013)	
Subfield Knowledge	Figure 4	POL 206 (2013)	58
		POL 220 (2013)	
		POL 230 (2013)	
		POL 257 (2013)	
		POL 260 (2013)	
		POL 270 (2013)	
		POL 278 (2013)	
		POL 375 (2013)	

Note: The year listed in the parentheses is the year of the Spring semester of the academic year during which work from that particular course was collected. For example, POL 409 (2011) means that student work from collected from POL 409 during the 2010-2011 academic year.

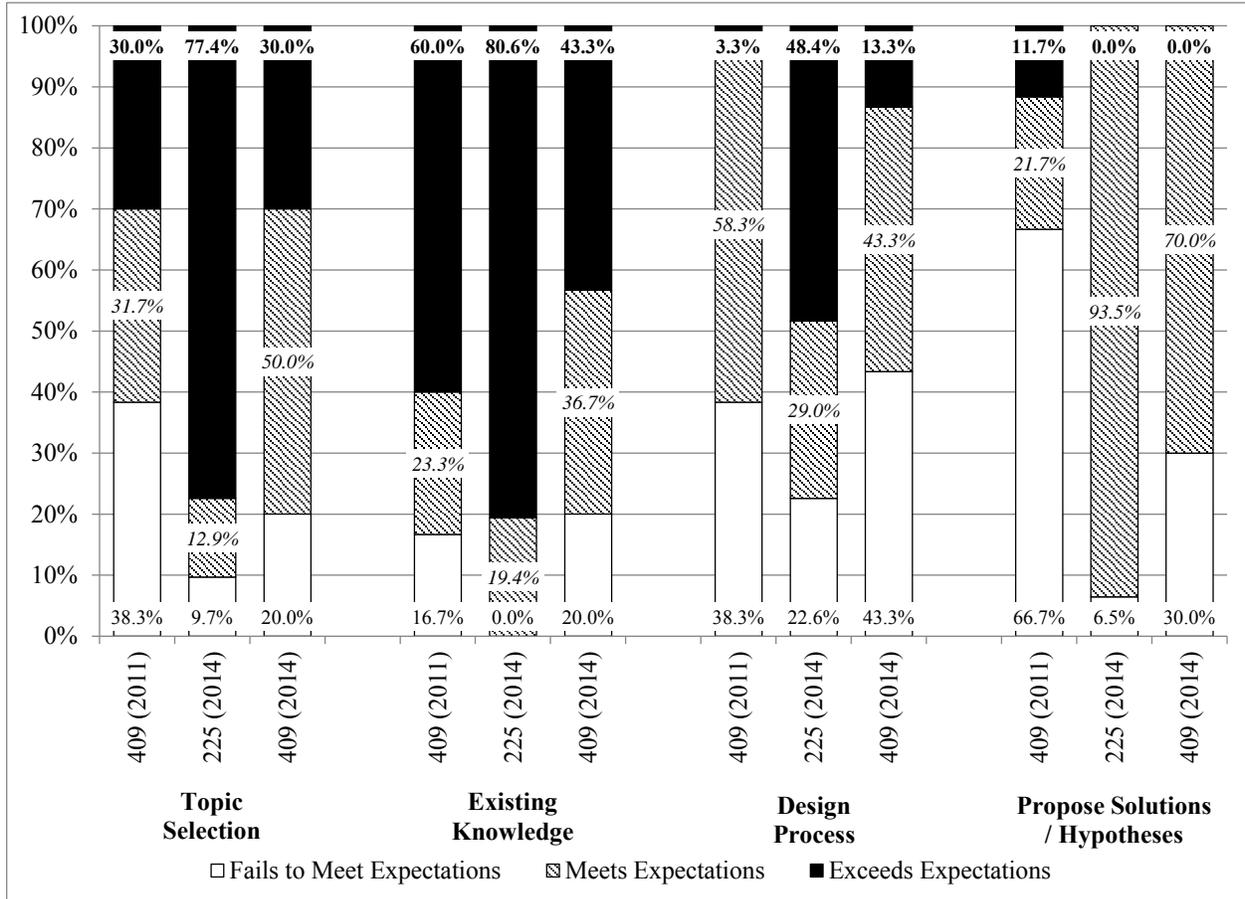


Figure 1a.
Assessment Results for *Independent Research* by Rubric Item

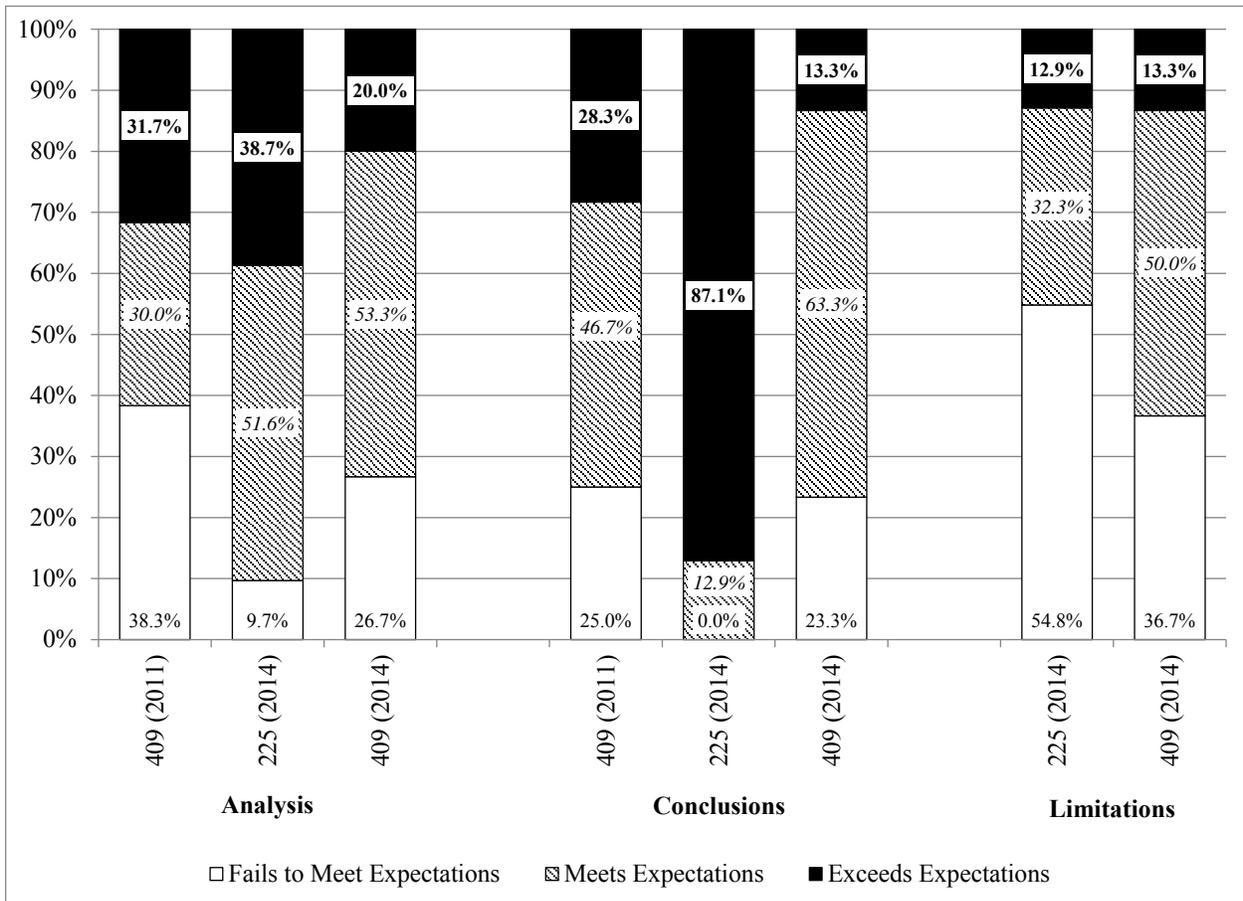


Figure 1b.
Assessment Results for *Independent Research* by Rubric Item

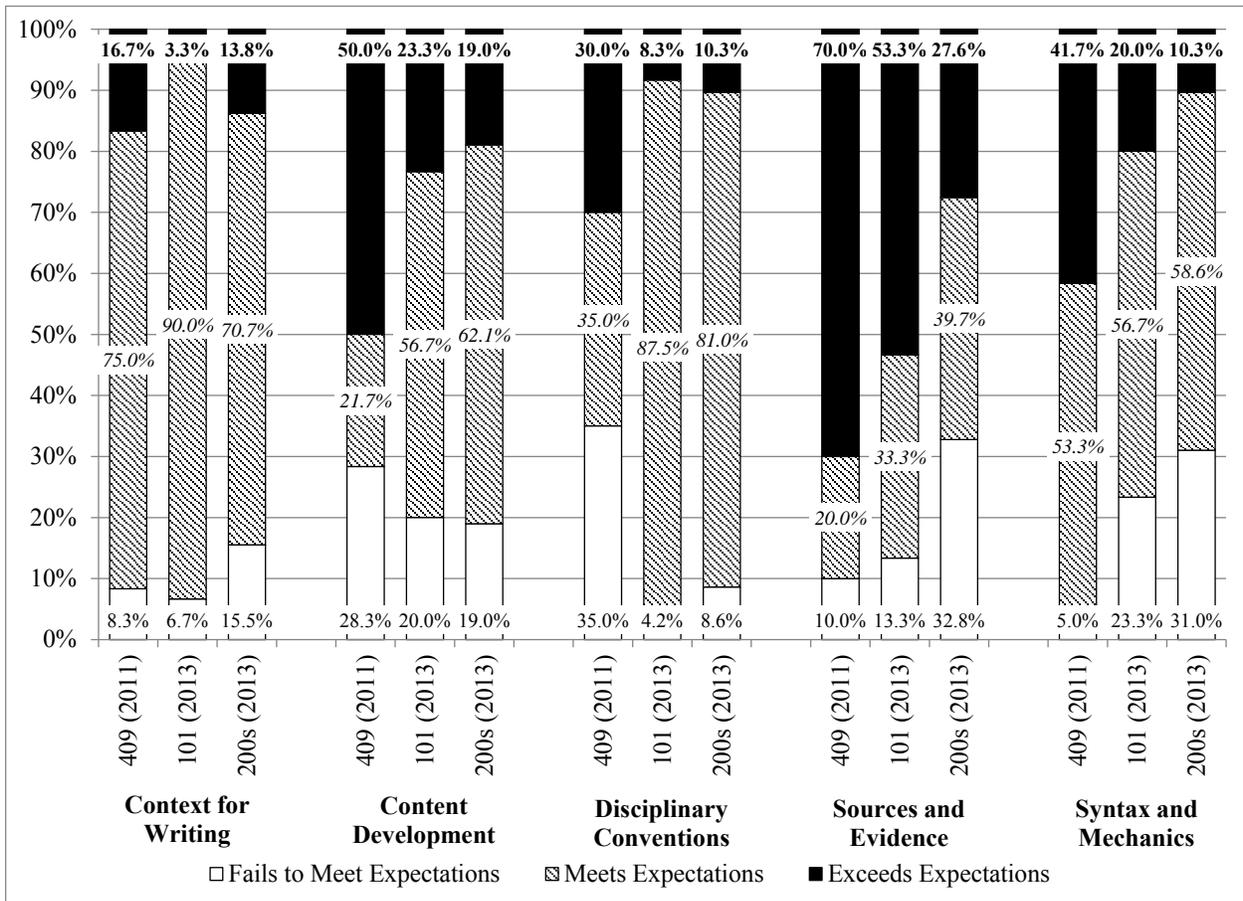


Figure 2.
Assessment Results for *Effective Writing* by Rubric Item

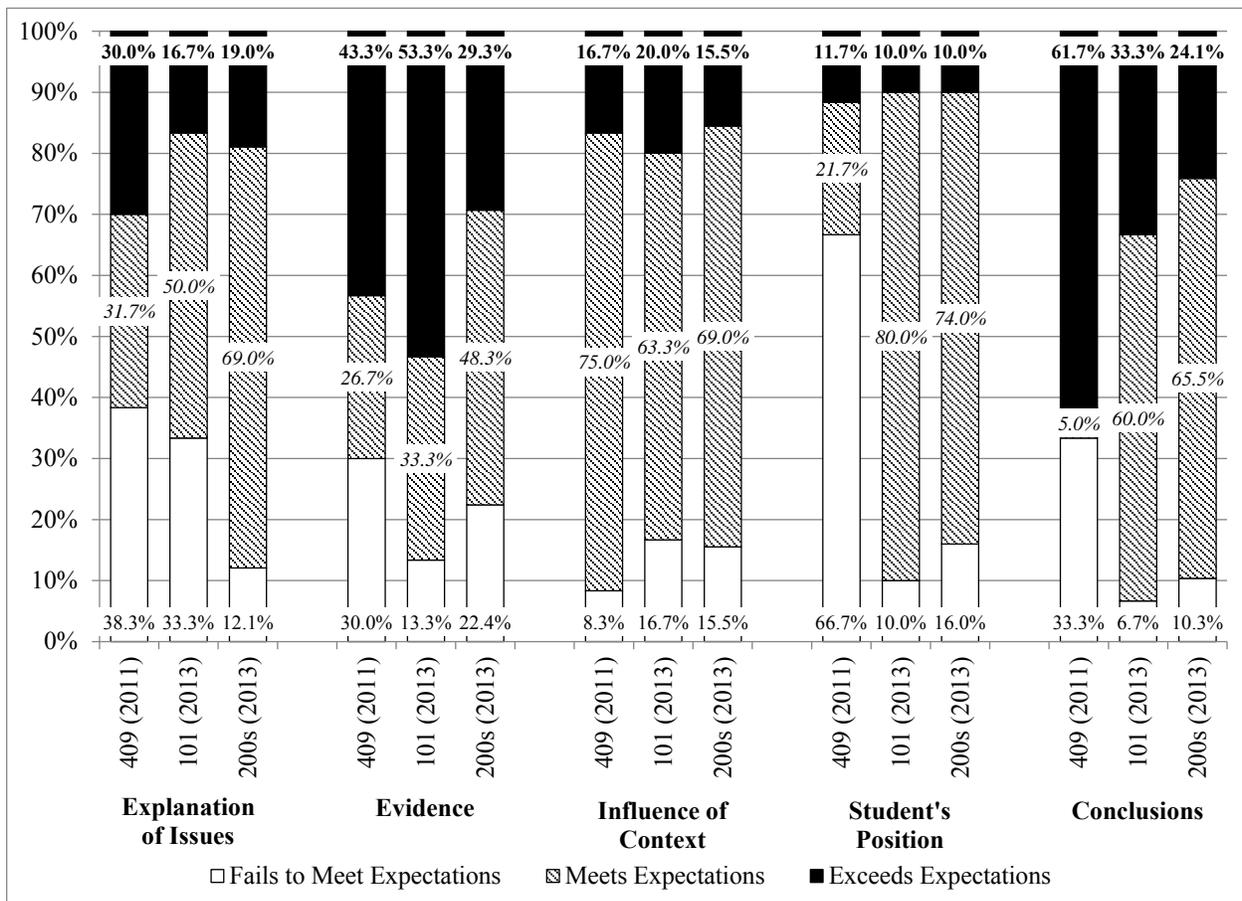


Figure 3.
Assessment Results for Reasoned Judgments by Rubric Item

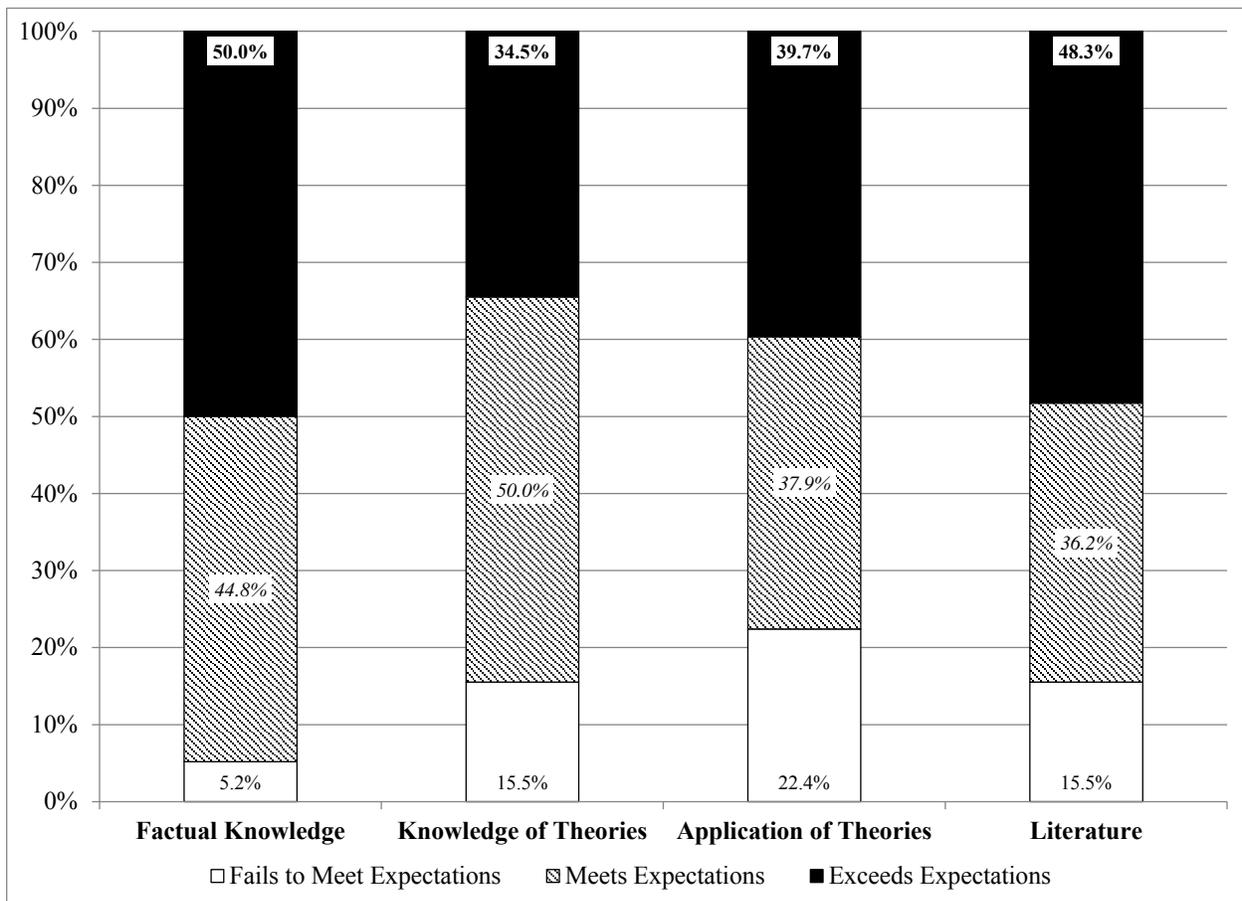


Figure 4.
Assessment Results for *Subfield Knowledge* by Rubric Item

Table 2.
Indirect Assessment Results for *Independent Research*

<i>To what extent have courses in your major:</i>						
		<i>Very Much</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Not at All</i>	
Helped you to speak clearly and effectively?	2009	28.8%	39.8%	16.4%	15.0%	
	2012	42.7%	35.9%	10.7%	10.7%	
	Δ('12-'09)	13.9%	-3.9%	-5.7%	-4.3%	
Taught you to think critically and analytically?	2009	57.9%	23.5%	15.0%	3.5%	
	2012	56.3%	30.1%	6.8%	6.8%	
	Δ('12-'09)	-1.6%	6.6%	-8.2%	3.3%	
<i>Considering the classes you have taken this semester, about how much writing have you done?</i>						
		<i>7 or More</i>	<i>4 to 6</i>	<i>2 to 3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>None</i>
Number of written papers or reports 20 pages or more	2009	3.4%	3.4%	18.3%	8.6%	66.2%
	2012	3.1%	0.0%	9.2%	26.5%	61.2%
	Δ('12-'09)	-0.3%	-3.4%	-9.1%	17.9%	-5.0%
Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	2009	13.0%	21.4%	43.1%	18.7%	3.8%
	2012	10.2%	26.5%	42.9%	8.2%	12.2%
	Δ('12-'09)	-2.8%	5.1%	-0.2%	-10.5%	8.4%

Table 3.
Indirect Assessment Results for *Effective Writing*

Learning Objective 2: Effective Writing						
<i>To what extent have courses in your major:</i>						
		<i>Very Much</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Not at All</i>	
Taught you to write clearly and effectively?	2009	25.9%	42.5%	18.6%	13.0%	
	2012	46.6%	35.0%	6.8%	11.7%	
	Δ('12-'09)	20.7%	-7.5%	-11.8%	-1.3%	
<i>Considering the classes you have taken this semester, about how much writing have you done?</i>						
		<i>7 or More</i>	<i>4 to 6</i>	<i>2 to 3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>None</i>
Number of written papers or reports less than 5 pages	2009	24.7%	8.8%	37.4%	7.1%	22.0%
	2012	31.6%	16.3%	36.7%	8.7%	7.1%
	Δ('12-'09)	6.9%	7.5%	-0.7%	1.6%	-14.9%

Table 4.
Indirect Assessment Results for Reasoned Judgments

<i>To what extent have courses in your major:</i>					
		<i>Very Much</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Not at All</i>
Helped you to acquire a broad general education	2009	53.2%	33.0%	6.8%	7.1%
	2012	55.3%	32.0%	6.8%	5.8%
	Δ('12-'09)	2.1%	-1.0%	0.0%	-1.3%
Helped you learn to solve complex real-world problems	2009	38.6%	26.8%	31.1%	3.5%
	2012	42.7%	37.9%	7.8%	11.7%
	Δ('12-'09)	4.1%	11.1%	-23.3%	8.2%
<i>Rate how much you agree or disagree with...</i>					
		<i>St. Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>St. Disagree</i>
Studying this major has changed the way I understand an issue or concept	2009	49.7%	37.7%	12.7%	0.0%
	2012	45.9%	45.9%	5.1%	3.1%
	Δ('12-'09)	-3.8%	8.2%	-7.6%	3.1%

Table 5.					
Indirect Assessment Results for <i>Subfield Knowledge</i>					
To what extent have courses... helped you to acquire specific knowledge about an academic field		<i>Very Much</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Not at All</i>
	2009	39.1%	41.0%	9.1%	10.8%
	2012	51.5%	38.8%	1.9%	7.8%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	12.4%	-2.2%	-7.2%	-3.0%
Courses in this major provide a great deal of depth in their subject matter		<i>St. Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>St. Disagree</i>
	2009	33.5%	63.0%	3.5%	0.0%
	2012	42.9%	49.0%	7.1%	0.0%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	9.4%	-14.0%	3.6%	0.0%
Studying this major has changed the way I understand an issue or concept	2009	49.7%	37.7%	12.7%	0.0%
	2012	45.9%	45.9%	5.1%	3.1%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	-3.8%	8.2%	-7.6%	3.1%
Most faculty members prepare carefully for their courses	2009	28.9%	61.8%	5.8%	3.5%
	2012	34.0%	58.3%	6.8%	1.0%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	5.1%	-3.5%	1.0%	-2.5%
<i>Rate the...</i> Quality of teaching in the major		<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor</i>
	2009	32.3%	54.9%	0.0%	12.8%
	2012	36.0%	47.7%	12.6%	3.6%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	3.7%	-7.2%	12.6%	-9.2%
Teaching ability of faculty in the major	2009	28.8%	58.4%	9.3%	3.5%
	2012	40.8%	47.6%	10.7%	1.0%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	12.0%	-10.8%	1.4%	-2.5%
Knowledge and experience of faculty in the major	2009	45.1%	42.2%	12.7%	0.0%
	2012	45.6%	47.6%	5.8%	1.0%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	0.5%	5.4%	-6.9%	1.0%
Teaching methods of faculty in the major	2009	17.3%	45.6%	30.2%	6.9%
	2012	27.2%	57.3%	14.6%	1.0%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	9.9%	11.7%	-15.6%	-5.9%
Quality of feedback from faculty about your course performance in the major	2009	10.5%	34.9%	28.9%	25.7%
	2012	27.2%	49.5%	21.4%	1.9%
	$\Delta('12-'09)$	16.7%	14.6%	-7.5%	-23.8%

Table 6.			
The Effects of POL 225 on Research Skills Exhibited in POL 409			
<i>Rubric Item</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>Non-225</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Topic	2.60	2.00	0.60**
Knowledge	2.60	2.16	0.44*
Design	2.00	1.64	0.36
Hypotheses	1.80	1.68	0.12
Analysis	2.00	1.92	0.08
Conclusions	2.20	1.84	0.36*
Limitations	2.20	1.68	0.52
Total Score	15.40	12.92	2.48*
Observations	5	25	
* p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05 (one-tailed tests)			
Note: This table presents difference in means tests between the mean scores of POL 409 students in the sample that have taken POL 225 and students that have not taken POL 225. Each proficiency level is coded as follows: fails to meet expectations = 1; meets expectations = 2; exceeds expectations = 3. For any given rubric item, the mean score can range from 1 to 3. The difference between mean total scores is also examined. The range for total scores is 7 (scoring 1 on all items) to 21 (scoring 3 on all items).			

Table 7.
Random Effects Model of Student Grades in Fall 2015

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>
<u>Student Characteristics</u>		
Cumulative GPA (Sp. 2014)	1.075**	0.113
Took POL 225 Prior to Fall 2014	1.251**	0.558
225 x Cumulative GPA	-0.375**	0.178
Female	-0.109	0.102
Total Credits	0.006**	0.002
Credits in Term	0.010	0.016
Transfer Student	-0.030	0.106
<u>Course Characteristics</u>		
Tue./Thu.	-0.378**	0.072
Wed./Fri.	-0.316	0.281
North Hall	-0.087	0.087
Westport	0.350*	0.210
Night	-0.056	0.077
200-level	-0.517	0.343
300-level	-0.093	0.351
400-level	-0.583	0.360
Intercept	-0.346	0.491
Observations (Course Grades)	542	
Students	246	
Avg. Courses/Student	2.2	
Overall R ²	0.330	
Wald $\chi^2_{(15)}$	190.95**	
LM Test for Random Effects: $\bar{\chi}_{(1)}$	17.97**	
* p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05		
Note: The dependent variable is the letter grade given in POL courses during the Fall 2015 semester converted to its numerical equivalent (e.g., A=4.0). The random effects model nests student course grades within students.		

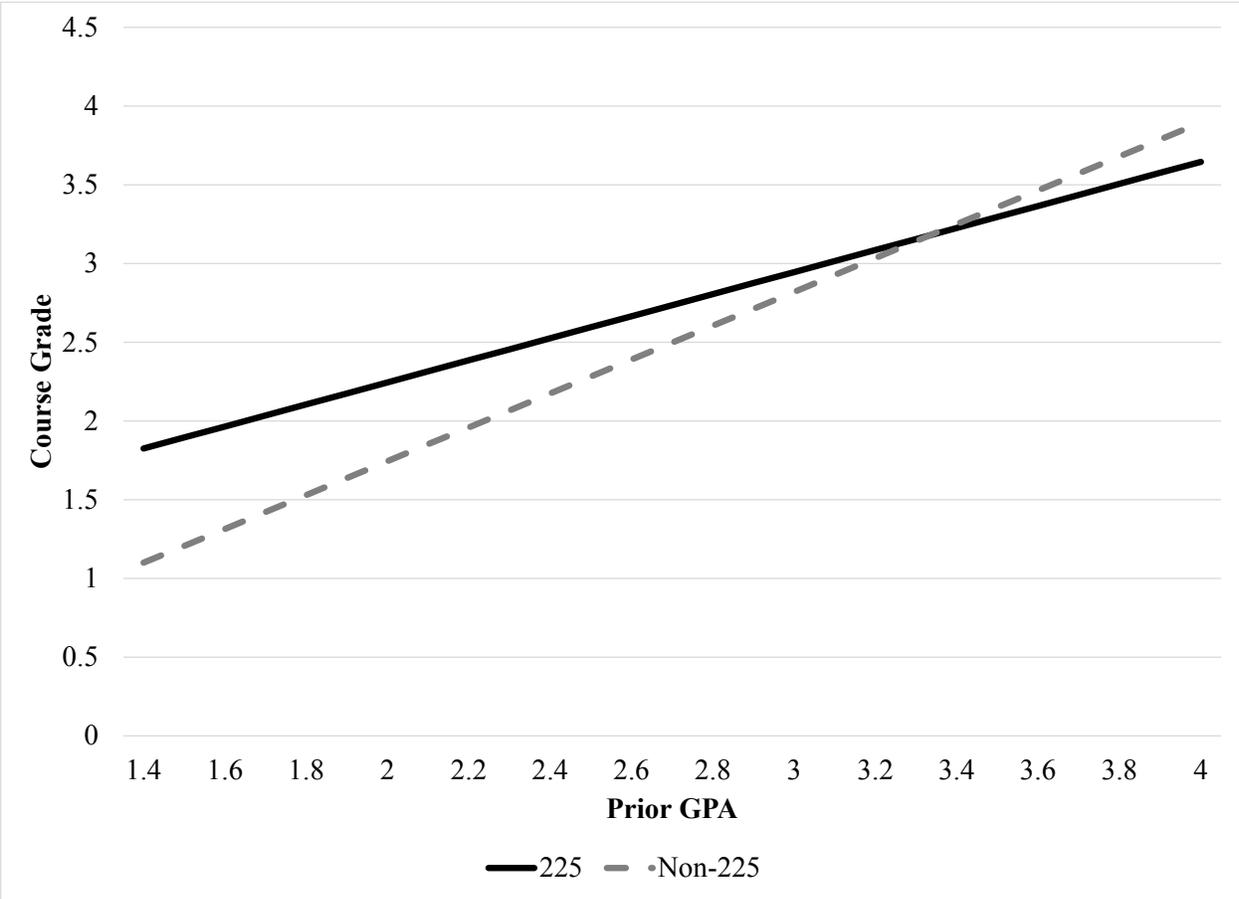


Figure 5.
Effect of Spring 2014 GPA on Fall 2014 Course Grades for 225 and Non-225 Students

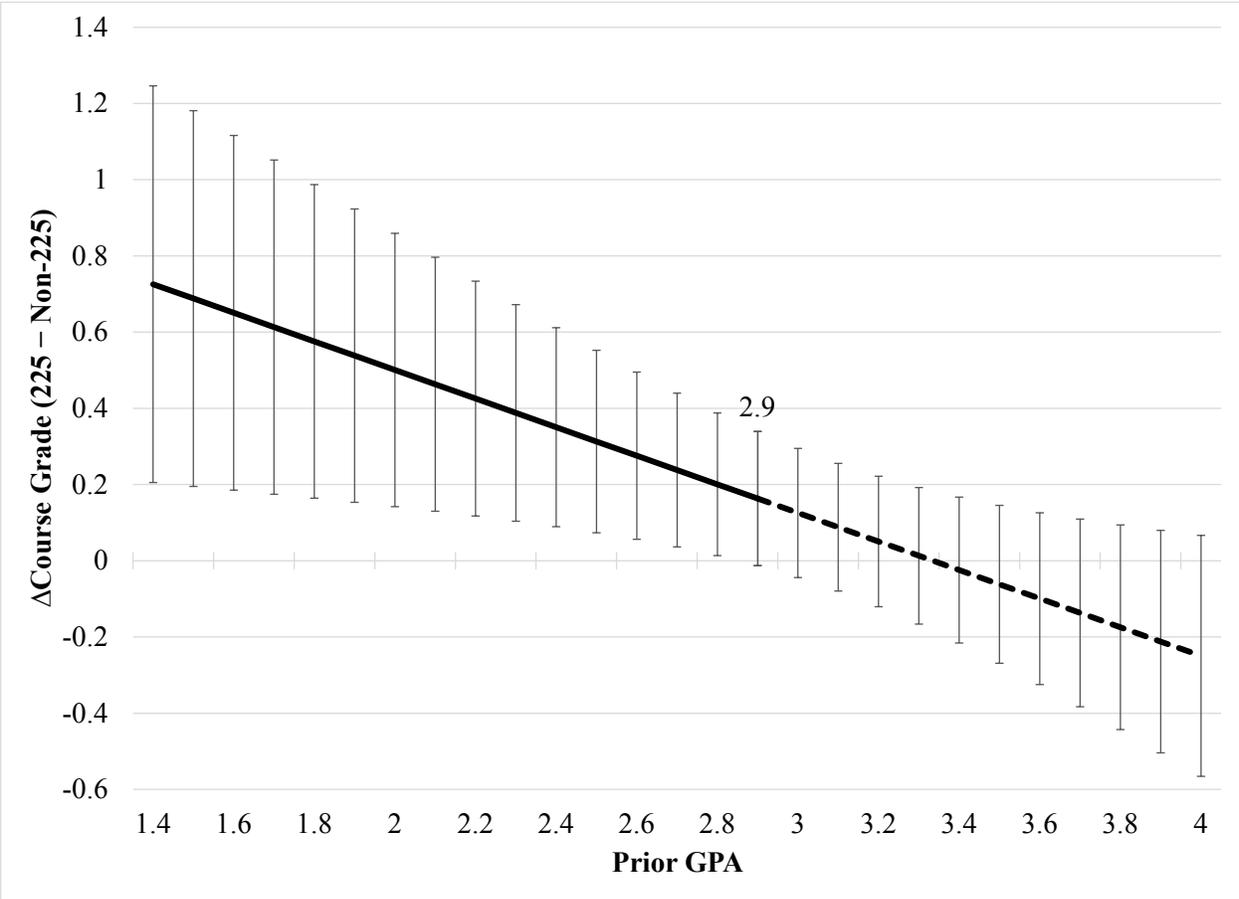


Figure 6.

Difference in Fall 2014 Course Grades between 225 and Non-225 Students

Note: Error bars signify 90% confidence intervals for the difference between 225 and non-225 students. The difference is positive and significant until prior GPA equals 2.9; the difference is not significant thereafter.

Political Science (BA)

Program Learning Assessment. Key findings and proposed actions
(2011-2015)

Program Learning Goals

1. Initiate, develop, and present independent research.
2. Write effectively, engage in intellectually grounded debate.
3. Capable of reasoned judgments on political issues and ideas.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major subfields of political science.

Outcomes Assessment

Program Learning Goal #	% Meet / Exceed ¹	Key Findings	Proposed Actions (Semester Implemented)	Was action effective? ⁴ Follow-up assessment Sem. Year % Meet / Exceed
2011				
Assessment Context² : Capstone POL 409 (n=60), Tool³ : Paper				
1	31.7	Thesis does not lend to arguments and evidence.	Develop new research methods course to introduce research, writing and reasoning earlier in the major (F12).	See 2014
2	58.3	Need increased attention to mechanics of writing.		
3	58.3	Need to increase linking conclusions from independent research to existing literature		
Assessment Context : Sophomores to Seniors (n=23), Tool : Evaluation of the Major Survey (2008-09)				
1	81.4	Courses in the major teach to think critically.	Develop new research methods course to introduce research, writing and reasoning earlier in the major (F12).	Sp16
2	68.4	Effective writing is emphasized to some extent.		Sp16
3	65.4	Courses need emphasis on solving complex real-world problems.		Sp16
Assessment Context : Seniors (n=33), Tool : National Survey of Student Engagement (2008-09)				
1	3.3 of 4	Students believe that academic experiences contribute to their ability to analyze quantitative problems, write clearly and effectively, and examining diverse points of view.	Develop new research methods course to introduce research, writing and reasoning earlier in the major (F12).	Sp15
2	3.3 of 4			Sp15
3	3.2 of 4			Sp15
2012				
Assessment Context : POL 220, 230, 375, 206, 257, 260, 278 (n=58), Tool : Exam Essays, Research Paper, Paper				
4.1	94.8	Students demonstrate attainment of knowledge in subfields.	Long term recommendation is to evaluate the impact of the new research methods course (POL225) on student's ability to apply theories in their work.	
4.2	84.5	Accurately describe major theoretical approaches.		
4.3	77.6	Ability to apply theories correlates with information literacy.		
4.4	84.5	Students demonstrate knowledge of relevant literature.		
Assessment Context : Sophomores to Seniors (n=23), Tool* : Evaluation of the Major Survey (2008-09)				
4	80.1	Courses contribute to acquisition of knowledge.	Address faculty and students perception of feedback and what can be done to improve students performance (Sp13)	Sp16
4.3	45.4	Students critical of faculty feedback on course performance.		Sp16

(1) Percent represents ratio of students who met or exceeded expectations. Where scores represent mean performance, the mean score and highest scale value are indicated (e.g., 3.3 out of 4). (2) Assessment context may relate to comprehensive program review, specific academic setting (e.g., course #, capstone, internship), class standing (e.g., seniors, transfers, alumni), post-graduation outcomes (e.g., placement, further education, employers ratings of employee skills), or indicators of learning progress. (3) Examples of tools include exams, portfolios, research projects, lab reports, papers, essays, surveys, licensure tests, performances, presentations. (4) Re-assessment of learning follows the implementation of actions to determine their effectiveness in improving learning outcomes.

Outcomes Assessment

Program Learning Goal #	% Meet / Exceed	Key Findings	Proposed Actions (Semester Implemented)	Was action effective? Follow-up assessment Sem. Year % Meet / Exceed
2013				
Assessment Context : POL 220, 230, 375, 206, 257, 260, 270, 278 (n=58), Tool : Exam Essay, Paper				
2	83.8	Greatest difficulty using sources to support arguments.	Investigate obtaining writing assistance for students (winter 2014). Administer revised survey on feedback received by students (winter 2014). Responses from faculty on how they provide feedback (Sp14). Request POL101 instructors to include use of outside research (Sum 2013).	
3	80.4	Greatest difficulty using information to investigate arguments.		
Assessment Context : POL 101 (n=30), Tool : Exam Essay, Paper				
2	78.3	Similar findings to major courses above. Performance of major students was much better than that of 101 students.		
3	73.3			
Assessment Context : Freshmen, Tool : National Survey of Student Engagement (2008-09)				
2	3.3 of 4	Academic experience contributed to writing clearly and effectively, and to interest in local, state, and national elections.		
3	2.3 of 4			
2014				
Assessment Context : POL 225 (n=31), POL 409 (n=30), Tool : Paper				
1		Over 50% exceed expectations on Topic, Knowledge, and Conclusions. Over 80% meet expectations on 5 of 7 rubric items. POL409 students who took POL225 appear better able to select a focused topic, synthesize existing literature, and draw sounder conclusions.	Meeting with POL225 and POL409 instructors to discuss ways that both courses could be restructured so that students in POL409 can further develop the skills they started building in POL225 (Sp15).	
Assessment Context : 200, 300, 400-level courses (n=128), Tool : Feedback on Writing Assignments Survey				
1		Students rate the feedback they receive at least 'Good' on quality (80.2%), content (87.4%) and writing (83.5%). Seniors tend to offer more positive ratings on quality and content and freshmen tend to offer more negative ratings. Taken with direct assessment results, survey results speak positively about faculty development of student research skills.	Continue discussion of writing and research skills with faculty to include faculty satisfaction with student application of feedback and what major-wide adjustments are appropriate to improving the development of students' skills (Sp15)	

Appendix A:
Rubrics used to Assess Learning Outcomes of the Political Science Major

Mapping of Original Rubric Items to Current Rubric Items

<i>Original Rubric Item</i>	<i>Current Rubric Item</i>
<p><i>Introduction</i></p> <p>Thesis Statement</p> <p>Research Frame</p> <p>Reference to Conclusions</p>	<p>Research: Topic Selection</p> <p>Judgments: Explanation of Issues</p> <p>Writing: Context/Purpose for Writing (none)</p>
<p><i>Literature Review</i></p> <p>Types of Sources</p> <p>Treatment of the Literature</p> <p>Relationship between Literature and Research</p> <p>Presentation of Supporting Arguments</p> <p>Presentation of Alternative Arguments</p>	<p>Writing: Sources & Evidence</p> <p>Research: Existing Knowledge (none)</p> <p>Judgments: Evidence</p> <p>Judgments: Evidence</p>
<p><i>Analyses & Conclusions</i></p> <p>Phenomena</p> <p>Proposed Relationships</p> <p>Methodology</p> <p>Discussion of Results</p> <p>Appropriateness of Conclusions</p> <p>Context of Conclusions</p>	<p>(none)</p> <p>Research: Propose Solutions/Hypotheses</p> <p>Judgments: Student's Position</p> <p>Research: Design Process</p> <p>Research: Analysis</p> <p>Research: Conclusions</p> <p>Judgments: Conclusions & Related</p>
<p><i>Writing Style & Format</i></p> <p>Grammar and Syntax</p> <p>Use of Language</p> <p>Use of Jargon</p> <p>Organization of Writing</p> <p>Citation Format</p> <p>Reference / Works Cited Page</p>	<p>Writing: Control of Syntax & Mechanics</p> <p>Writing: Control of Syntax & Mechanics</p> <p>Writing: Control of Syntax & Mechanics</p> <p>Writing: Content Development</p> <p>Writing: Disciplinary Conventions</p> <p>Writing: Disciplinary Conventions</p>
<p>Note: This table maps items from the original rubric, as applied to capstone papers, to the rubrics developed after 2010-2011 to assess the first three learning outcomes. The information listed in the "Current Rubric Item" column lists a short name for the rubric (e.g., Writing for Writing Effectively) and a short name for the item. The original capstone rubric and all four rubrics that are used currently are presented on the following pages.</p>	

Original (2010-2011) Rubric for Learning Outcomes 1 through 3

<u>Introduction</u>		Total Points:	<u>8</u>
Thesis Statement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thesis is clear and appropriate. 2. Thesis is appropriate, but unclear. 3. Thesis is incomplete (i.e. missing an explanation). 4. Thesis is inappropriate to the topic. 5. Lacks a thesis statement. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 3 2 1 0
Research Frame	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research is framed w/respect to prior work and as an important question. 2. Research is framed as an interesting or important question. 3. Research is framed w/respect to prior work 4. Research is not placed in context. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 2 1 0
Reference to Conclusions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foreshadows or references eventual conclusions. 2. No reference to eventual conclusions. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 0
<u>Literature Review</u>		Total Points:	<u>16</u>
Types of Sources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cites appropriate academic/scholarly research. 2. Cites appropriate, popular work on the topic. 3. Cited work is inappropriate to the topic. 4. Little-to-no literature cited. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 2 1 0
Treatment of the Literature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sources are synthesized into thematic discussions. 2. Sources are discussed individually, but appropriately. 3. Sources are discussed in an unorganized manner. 4. No literature cited. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 2 1 0
Relationship between Literature and Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion is appropriate and identifies gaps in the literature. 2. Discussion of the literature is appropriate to the research question. 3. Discussion of the literature is not related to the research question. 4. No literature cited. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 2 1 0
Presentation of Supporting Arguments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arguments lead to a supportive position and are supported by empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work. 2. Arguments and support are offered, but are not connected to the research. 3. Arguments are offered and defended, but not supported by empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work. 4. Arguments are offered, but are undefended. 5. Author does not offer any arguments. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 3 2 1 0
Presentation of Alternative Arguments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arguments are presented and discussed with reference to empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work. 2. Arguments are presented and discussed without reference to empirical evidence or the citation of appropriate work. 3. Arguments are presented, but are not discussed or minimally discussed. 4. Author does not present opposing arguments. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 2 1 0

Analyses & Conclusions		Total Points:	<u>22</u>
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 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 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:	<u>17</u>
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

Rubric for Learning Outcome 1: Independent Research

<i>Item</i>	<i>100-Level: 200-Level: 300-Level: 400-Level:</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Meets Expectations Meets Expectations</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Meets Expectations Meets Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations</i>	<i>Meets Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations</i>
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 missing, incorrectly developed, or unfocused.	Inquiry design demonstrates a misunderstanding of the methodology or theoretical framework.	
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 unsupported 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.	

Rubric for Learning Outcome 2: Effective Writing

<i>Item</i>	<i>100-Level: 200-Level: 300-Level: 400-Level:</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Meets Expectations Meets Expectations</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Meets Expectations Meets Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations</i>	<i>Meets Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations</i>
Context of and Purpose for Writing <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</i>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	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 context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	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 <i>Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields.</i>	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, presentation, and stylistic choices	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.	

Rubric for Learning Outcome 3: Reasoned Judgments

<i>Item</i>	<i>100-Level: 200-Level: 300-Level: 400-Level:</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Meets Expectations Meets Expectations</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectations Meets Expectations Meets Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations</i>	<i>Meets Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations Fails to Meet Expectations</i>
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 <i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i>	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.	

Rubric for Learning Outcome 4: Subfield Knowledge

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