

Campus Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Unit Name: Department of History, Philosophy, and Political Science Assessment Summary Fall 2010 - Spring 2011

What are the student learning outcomes in your unit?

The history program seeks to:

- Form students who can effectively evaluate historical evidence
- Form students who read primary and secondary sources critically
- Form students who are able to conduct independent research

The philosophy program seeks to:

- Acquaint students with philosophical ideas from a wide range of historical eras
- Develop each student's critical reasoning and writing skills
- Form students who understand the importance of ethical reasoning and ethical practices

The student learning outcomes in the political science program are:

- Understanding of structures and processes of American government commensurate with citizenship duties and an effective civil society.
- Acquiring a high degree of familiarity with a broad range of political systems.
- Developing effective written and communication skills.
- Enhancing the ability of students to conceptualize problems and apply analytical tools to solve them.
- Exposing majors to at least three of the subfields of political science,

Which outcome did you assess this academic year?

Although our Department attempts to keep track of all the outcomes we seek to produce, this academic year, the introduction of H215 (a proseminar on the methodology of historical research) has prompted us to pay special attention to our ability to produce in students a keen awareness of questions of method.

While political science attempts to track all of our outcomes, as a consequence of our required courses, we specifically assessed exposing our majors to at least three subfields in political science, student acquisition of a broad range of political systems, and effective written and communication skills.

How did you assess their skills before, during and/or at the end of the semester/ academic year?

Our most significant courses for purposes of general assessment of academic skills are our capstone proseminars. In philosophy, the capstone is conducted as an independent studies course

(PHIL P383 or PHIL P490). In political science, the capstone is conducted as an independent studies course. The required written work in that course is evaluated by all political science professors. In history, J495 is offered both in the Fall and in the Spring. Since 2009, intensive writing has been a required component of all capstone courses in the Department. H215 has also been an important assessment tool, especially as regards basic methodologies for history research, interpretation, and writing. Starting from 2009, H215 has served as a pre-requisite for J495. This helps ensure that, when they take J495, history majors have adequate research and writing skills. H215 is typically offered in the Fall.

Because of its small size, the philosophy program frequently offers independent study courses in which a faculty member works one-on-one with a student. This direct interaction affords multiple opportunities to observe a student's reasoning, reading, and writing skills.

Please summarize the data you have collected this semester/academic year.

We are in the process of collecting data on whether our history majors' academic skills improve after taking H215. Other important sources of data are performance in proseminars and capstone courses, performance in upper level history and philosophy courses (especially independent study courses), student participation in the campus' undergraduate research conference, and performance in P150 (to assess the reasoning skills of philosophy majors).

Political Science administered a senior student survey asking three questions:

- a. How well did you achieve each of the following political science learning goals [list each learning goal with an appropriate Likert scale].
- b. What aspects of your education in political science helped you with your learning, and why were they helpful?
- c. What might the department do differently that would help you learn more effectively, and why would these actions help?

Please describe any programmatic changes you have made or are planning to make based on the data you have collected.

The most important changes are the introduction of H215, our recent affiliation with Phi Alpha Theta (a history honors society), our partnership with the Calumet Regional Archives, where some

of our students complete internships, and our encouragement and support of those students who wish to present their work at the IU Northwest undergraduate research conference.

We also devote periodic faculty meetings to the assessment of our curriculum and of student learning outcomes. In addition, we have been developing courses that focus on the use of primary and (local) archival sources. In philosophy, we have been developing courses centered on the dialogue between contemporary secondary sources and classic primary sources.

Political science continues to develop its programmatic offerings (adding additional courses) so that students are introduced to a broad array of areas under the political science rubric.

****Note:** Please use this template to provide the responses to the prompts above.**