

BA Political Science – Assessment Plan

Program Learning Goals

Undergraduate students gain familiarity with American political behavior and institutions, the nature of politics in the rest of the world, and the sources of international conflict and cooperation. All students majoring in political science take a course in basic political methodology, which provides them with the competency to read and interpret data. And all students are required to take a course in argument, providing them with a framework to construct, defend, and criticize theories and evidence. Moreover, the department is distinctive in supporting a range of undergraduate courses in positive political theory. Our undergraduate curriculum reflects the faculty's commitment to provide undergraduates with the ability and tools to think for themselves about the world they inhabit--to question, to write clearly, to make assertions, and to understand the relationship between theory and evidence.

Undergraduate students are prepared to hold positions in government or policy, or related fields. Graduates are also prepared for graduate work in law, political science, policy or related fields.

Program Learning Objectives

Graduates of the BA Political Science program will be able to:

1. Knowledge: Have a good understanding of the generally accepted divisions of the field of political science—namely, American government, comparative government, international relations, and political theory.
2. Political argument/ communication: To understand and appreciate sound political arguments, including developing a framework to construct, defend, and criticize theories and evidence.
3. Practical competency, methods: To learn techniques of analysis appropriate to the study of politics and public policy. This includes competency to read and interpret data and to understand basic statistical analyses.
4. Research/ Inquiry, Critical analysis: To find source material about political problems and solutions and to write coherent, rigorous analyses of political ideas and problems.

5. Practice: As appropriate for individual students, to gain contextual understanding and practice in the discipline through participation in internships locally, in Washington, DC, and abroad. (program may require internship for future graduates)

6. As appropriate for individual students, advise them thoroughly and prepare them rigorously for graduate study in political science, public policy, law, and other graduate programs.

Program Assessment Plan (frequency of implementation)

Direct methods

- Core and elective courses in the BA Political Science curriculum contain embedded assignments, research papers, and exams that measure achievement of program learning objectives. (every term)
- As appropriate for students, completion of reflective memo, journal, research paper related to internship experience. (possible measure) (annual)

Indirect methods

- Post-graduation placement in graduate school, or employment as reported in senior survey (percentage accepted, quality of the programs) . (annual)
- Success in professional schools and ultimate job placement as reported in alumni survey. (every 5 years)
- Awards and Scholarships received by students. (annual)
- High level of satisfaction with overall program, advising, and teaching quality ratings in senior survey (annual)
- High level of ability self-assessment for program learning outcomes in senior survey (annual) and alumni surveys (every 5 years)
- Senior focus group review of program quality and learning processes (possible measure) (every other year)

Assessment Data Review

Assessment data will be reviewed annually by the undergraduate program oversight committee.