

**Minnesota State University Moorhead
2007-2008 Assessment Report Cover Sheet**

(An electronic version of this form can be accessed at <http://www.mnstate.edu/assess>)

Note: All non-accredited programs are required to complete this form. Include Assessment Reporting Forms for each learning outcome assessed.

Academic Program:

Department: Political Science

College: College of Social and Natural Sciences

Date: 10/31/07

1. Name(s) of Department Assessment Coordinator and/or Assessment Committee Members

Dara for this report was compiled by Phil Baumann and Jim Danielson during the 2005-2006 academic year. Barbara Headrick wrote the final report with the input of the entire department.

2. List of All Student Learning Outcomes. (List all outcomes, placing an asterisk (*) by the outcomes you are assessing this year.)

I) Required of all majors

A) American

1) Students should have a basic understanding of the institutions, influences and processes that make up American government and politics. Course-embedded assessment

2) Students should have a basic understanding of the vital role citizen participation in American politics. Course-embedded assessment.

3) Students should have a basic understanding of the influence of the electoral system on American institutions and policies. Course- embedded assessment.

B) Public administration/public policy

1) Students should have a basic understanding of influences on bureaucrats and bureaucratic institutions in American politics. Course-embedded assessment.

2) Students should have a basic understanding of the institutions, influences, and processes that affect policymaking in the United States. Course-embedded assessment.

3) Students should have a basic understanding of the interaction between institutional behavior and policy decisions. Course-embedded assessment.

C) Public law

1) Students should have a basic understanding of the world's major legal families, institutions, theories, and philosophies. Course-embedded assessment.

2) Students should acquire knowledge of the Anglo-American legal system, including specific characteristics of private law, public law, and criminal law. Course-embedded assessment.

3) Students should have a basic understanding of roles of the various legal professionals and the effect of legal ethics on the practice of law. Course- embedded assessment.

D) International relations/comparative politics

1) Students should have a basic knowledge of the processes and principles guiding relations between international actors. Course-embedded assessment.

2) Students should have a basic knowledge of the interaction between global economics and international and domestic politics. Course-embedded assessment.

3) Students should have a basic understanding of politics and political systems other than those of the United States. Course-embedded assessment.

*E) Theory and methodology

*1) Students should have a basic understanding of the normative concepts and arguments that have been important in the study and practice of politics. Course-embedded assessment.

*2) Students can understand and apply the principles of research design. Course-embedded assessment.

*3) Students can use basic statistical methods for data analysis. Course-embedded assessment.

F) Skills

1) Students are capable of using the library and other resources. Upper-division course rating form.

2) Students demonstrate technical writing skills applying the APSA format. Upper-division course rating form.

- 3) Students can write engagingly and interestingly. Upper-division course rating form.
- 4) Students can make appropriate oral presentations. Upper-division course rating form.

II) Elective. Students should have a more sophisticated understanding of knowledge and research in political science in at least one sub-field of the discipline.

A) American politics

1) Students should be able to use their understanding of principles, theories and practices of institutions to analyze how policy is made in the United States. Upper-division course rating form.

2) Students should be able to analyze influences from political parties and interest groups on U.S. electoral and political systems. Upper-division course rating form.

3) Students should be able to apply knowledge of government institutions and the behavior of political actors to analyze current U.S. politics and policies. Upper-division course rating form.

B) Public law

1) Students should have a sophisticated understanding of U.S. criminal law and procedure, including Constitutional protections for the criminally accused. Upper-division course rating form.

2) Students should have a sophisticated understanding of U.S. Constitutional law, including the development of the federal commerce power, the history of federalism, and current trends in civil rights and liberties. Upper-division course rating form.

C) International relations/comparative politics

1) Students should have a knowledge of principles and theories of international relations. Upper-division course rating form.

2) Students should have a knowledge of principles and theories of comparative politics. Upper-division course rating form.

3) Students should be able to analyze evidence in international relations and comparative politics. Upper-division course rating form.

4) Students should be able to apply knowledge in international relations and comparative politics to current world problems. Upper-division course rating form.

*D) Theory and methodology

*1) Students should have a sophisticated understanding of the principles and challenges of establishing valid scientific conclusions. Upper-division course rating form.

*2) Students should have a sophisticated understanding of the major philosophical and evaluative traditions of human political experience. Upper-division course rating form.

*3) Students should demonstrate the ability to apply items 1 and 2 in their roles as citizens and students of politics. Upper-division course rating form

3. Describe how your program has addressed the comments from the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee during the past two academic years? (If you have made changes to your plan, file a revised Assessment Plan Cover Sheet and Assessment Planning Form(s).)

The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee has not sent the department any comments.

4. If you have received an Instructional Improvement Grant in the past two years, identify the outcomes on which the grant was based and provide a summary here of the results from your grant.

Not applicable

5. Signatures

Department Chair or Program Director

Dean or Director

Required Attachments:

1. Assessment Reporting Forms
2. Records of department meetings when Assessment Report was discussed and approved.

Minnesota State University Moorhead

2007-2008 Assessment Reporting Form

Note: We explain our proposed action in response to all student learning outcomes examined at the end of this report after presenting each outcome and our results.

Academic Program: Department of Political Science

1. Learning Outcome Assessed:

I) Required of all majors

E) Theory and methodology

1) Students should have a basic understanding of the normative concepts and arguments that have been important in the study and practice of politics.

2. Describe assessment measure used for this learning outcome:

Course embedded in POL 315 including essay assignments and a “Think Paper” assignment to evaluate each student’s comprehension analysis and integration class concepts.

3. Expected/satisfactory student results:

Students should demonstrate an ability to apply normative concepts into a lucid, logically connected argument.

4. Actual results from the past year:

Results for the majors in the Fall 2006 POL 315 class demonstrated an above ability to apply normative concepts and present a logically connected argument. They were scientific and analytical in address empirical issues and evaluative questions.

5. Describe and explain available trend data for student performance on this outcome over the past several years. In other words, describe how the results of this measure have changed over the past several years.

No trend data is available.

Academic Program: Department of Political Science

1. Learning Outcome Assessed:

II) Required of all majors

E) Theory and methodology

2) Students can understand and apply the principles of research design.

2. Describe assessment measure used for this learning outcome:

Two course embedded instruments from Fall 2006 POL 310 are used to assess this objective. First, two essay questions on the midterm exam ask students to explain principles of research design. Second, students complete a written assignment that develops a research design to investigate a problem of the student's choosing.

3. Expected/satisfactory student results:

Students should clearly demonstrate of an understanding of research design

4. Actual results from the past year:

Evaluation of the research design questions (i.e., the “principles”) on the midterm produced an average result of 75%. Evaluation of the proposed research design (i.e., the “application”) yielded an average of 85%. In both cases, the results showed a bimodal distribution, with a small group of students performing substantially better than the mean, and the remainder performing slightly below the mean.

Students are more successful in mastering the applied aspects of research design than in developing understanding of the abstract issues and principles. This is expected in a first research methods course. The bimodal distribution is explained by a small number of students devoting greater energies to the course – they were more likely to ask questions and seek comments out of class to ensure their mastery of material. The greatest improvement could probably be achieved by restructuring assignments to try to induce more students to make such a commitment.

5. Describe and explain available trend data for student performance on this outcome over the past several years. In other words, describe how the results of this measure have changed over the past several years.

No trend data is available.

Academic Program: Department of Political Science

1. Learning Outcome Assessed:

- I) Required of all majors
 - E) Theory and methodology
- 3) Students can use basic statistical methods for data analysis.

2. Describe assessment measure used for this learning outcome:

Three course embedded instruments from Fall 2006 POL 310 were used to assess this objective. The final exam was devoted entirely to data analysis and the interpretation of results. Two written assignments of increasing complexity and sophistication were also used to assess facility with data analysis.

3. Expected/satisfactory student results:

Students should demonstrate the ability to apply and interpret statistical methods in data analysis.

4. Actual results from the past year:

Results from the three instruments are consistent. On the first (more basic) data analysis written assignment, the mean result was quite high at 86%. On the second (more complex) written assignment, the mean result was 84%. On the final exam, the mean result was 78%. The lower score on the final exam is likely the consequence of time pressures associated with the exam. The bimodal distribution of scores was much less evident here than on objective E2.

This goal is largely achieved. Students demonstrate the ability to use basic statistical techniques responsibly, and to interpret the results substantively

5. Describe and explain available trend data for student performance on this outcome over the past several years. In other words, describe how the results of this measure have changed over the past several years.

No trend data is available.

Academic Program: Department of Political Science

1. Learning Outcome Assessed:

II) Elective. Students should have a more sophisticated understanding of knowledge and research in political science in at least one sub-field of the discipline.

D) Theory and methodology

1) Students should have a sophisticated understanding of the principles and challenges of establishing valid scientific conclusions

2. Describe assessment measure used for this learning outcome:

The following questions from the upper-division rating form (attached):

Theory and Methodology

_____ Understanding of principles and practices of science.

Each Fall 2006 POL 310 student's performance was assessed on a scale of one (poor) to seven (excellent), with four defined as average.

3. Expected/satisfactory student results:

Students should perform above average.

4. Actual results from the past year:

The mean for objective D1 was 4.7.

5. Describe and explain available trend data for student performance on this outcome over the past several years. In other words, describe how the results of this measure have changed over the past several years.

No trend data is available.

Academic Program: Department of Political Science

1. Learning Outcome Assessed:

II) Elective. Students should have a more sophisticated understanding of knowledge and research in political science in at least one sub-field of the discipline.

D) Theory and methodology

2) Students should have a sophisticated understanding of the major philosophical and evaluative traditions of human political experience.

2. Describe assessment measure used for this learning outcome:

The following questions from the upper-division rating form (attached):

Theory and Methodology

_____ Understanding of philosophical/evaluative traditions.

Each Fall 2006 POL 315 student's performance was assessed on a scale of one (poor) to seven (excellent), with four defined as average.

3. Expected/satisfactory student results:

Students should perform above average.

4. Actual results from the past year:

The mean for objective D2 was 5.

5. Describe and explain available trend data for student performance on this outcome over the past several years. In other words, describe how the results of this measure have changed over the past several years.

No trend data is available.

Academic Program: Department of Political Science

1. Learning Outcome Assessed:

II) Elective. Students should have a more sophisticated understanding of knowledge and research in political science in at least one sub-field of the discipline.

D) Theory and methodology

3) Students should demonstrate the ability to apply items 1 and 2 in their roles as citizens and students of politics.

2. Describe assessment measure used for this learning outcome:

“C” from the questions below on the upper-division rating form (attached):

Theory and Methodology

_____ A. Understanding of principles and practices of science.

_____ B. Understanding of philosophical/evaluative traditions.

_____ C. Ability to apply A and B above.

Each Fall 2006 POL 310 and POL 315 student’s performance was assessed on a scale of one (poor) to seven (excellent), with four defined as average.

3. Expected/satisfactory student results:

Students should perform above average

4. Actual results from the past year:

The mean for objective D3 in POL 310 was 5.2.

The mean for objective D3 in POL 315 was 5.

5. Describe and explain available trend data for student performance on this outcome over the past several years. In other words, describe how the results of this measure have changed over the past several years.

No trend data is available.

Academic Program: Department of Political Science

6. Proposed action in response to results:

The results in this report demonstrate that our students overall are reaching the department's learning outcomes in theory and methodology. Clearly, the two courses connected to these outcomes are performing well. Our ability to continue to meet this level of performance is likely to be damaged by the recent loss of a faculty line. That faculty member regularly taught Political Thought (POL 315) and to continue to offer this course we have had to ask a faculty member to add it to his already full load of class offerings and adjust other courses accordingly. The loss of this faculty line limits our ability to respond to the results in this report. The most obvious areas in need of improvement for our students are related to research design. We will seek to reinforce the lessons on research design in POL 310 in our other upper-division classes. We will also continue to reinforce to our advisees on the need to take the related requirement of Math 234 before taking POL 310. If we could regain the lost faculty line, we could consider adding a new course so that one course could emphasize research design while the other emphasized statistical analysis, but our current resources make that impossible. We will include these considerations during the examination of all our courses as part of our 6-year self-report efforts this year.

Department of Political Science
Upper-Division Course Rating Form

This rating sheet is to be used by faculty to assess each political science major's performance in upper-division courses. The following scale is to be used:

- 7 Excellent
- 6
- 5
- 4 Average
- 3
- 2
- 1 Poor
- NA Not applicable/No opportunity to observe

1. Understanding of knowledge and research in American politics.
 - _____ A. Ability to understand and apply principles, theories, and practices of institutions.
 - _____ B. Ability to analyze influences of parties and interest groups in US politics.
 - _____ C. Ability to apply knowledge of institutions and behavior to analyze current politics and problems.

2. Understanding of knowledge and research in public law.
 - _____ A. Understanding of criminal law and procedure.
 - _____ B. Understanding of U.S. Constitutional law.

3. Understanding of knowledge and research in international relations and comparative politics.
 - _____ A. Understanding of principles and theories of international relations.
 - _____ B. Understanding of principles and theories of comparative politics.
 - _____ C. Ability to analyze evidence in international relations and comparative politics.
 - _____ D. Ability to apply knowledge in international relations and comparative politics to current world problems.

4. Research and communication skills.
 - _____ A. Ability to use the library and other resources.
 - _____ B. Demonstrates technical writing skills, including use of APSA format.
 - _____ C. Ability to write logically and engagingly.
 - _____ D. Ability to present clear, appropriate oral presentations.

5. Theory and Methodology

_____ A. Understanding of principles and practices of science.

_____ B. Understanding of philosophical/evaluative traditions.

_____ C. Ability to apply A and B above.

Political Science Department Meeting
October 36, 2007 12:30 p.m.
MacLean Hall 378

Faculty Present: Barbara Headrick, Paul Kramer, Andrew Conteh and Phil Baumann
Recorder: Mary O'Reilly-Seim
Guest: Kerstin Cameron

Headrick called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

1. Summer School.

The group discussed the new Summer School allocation restriction of 6 credits. Dr. Conteh discussed his concerns about jeopardizing the future of the department's Summer School options if he offers courses. Conteh will communicate his decision about course offerings to Headrick early next week.

2. Assessment Report

The group discussed the Assessment Report Form (see attached copy) and the proposed actions. An animated discussion followed in which many points were brought forth. The department was pleased with the overall results of the assessment. Points of concern discussed included ability to continue to offer POL 315 with the loss of one faculty member, the need to get students to take Statistics course before taking POL 310, and the need to improve student's comprehension of research design. Headrick will prepare the final report for submission to Dean Jeppson and the assessment committee.