

**AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM.**



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# **Bachelors in Political Science Student Learning Assessment Plan**

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The Political Science program has primarily attracted students in government service (military and civilian) who directly enhance their professional knowledge for current and future use. The Political Science program provides an excellent foundation for careers in government such as public management, administration of justice, military service and the gaining and holding of elected positions.

## **Political Science Program Profile**

In the Political Science Program, students learn about politics and study questions such as the following. Are democracies with a president and legislative branch more representative than those with a prime minister who leads the legislature? Is a two-party system better than a multi-party system? How can governments respect diverse ethnic, racial, and religious identities, and still promote bonds of common citizenship? What should be the role of the United States in an increasingly interdependent global economy? These are the types of questions that political scientists explore, but they also represent issues that require ordinary citizens to make informed judgments. This program prepares graduates for careers in government such as public management, administration of justice, military service and the gaining and holding of elected positions. Graduates from political science programs are found in many professions; particularly those involved in large organizations with extensive internal networks requiring skills in dealing with and managing other people.

### **Bachelors of Arts in Political Science Degree Program Student Learning Outcomes**

The Political Science Program aims to develop graduates with the following knowledge. The following student learning outcomes are available to students on the web, course catalog, etc

#### *Political Theory and Systems*

- Analyze the fundamental theories and philosophies of government, governance, economy, and civil society; apply them to contemporary political systems.
- Examine the political elements of representative democracy and compare and contrast those elements with other political systems.

#### *The United States Political System*

- Analyze the three institutions of government that create and implement federal policy.
- Analyze the historical evolution and contemporary manifestations of the federal system and its intergovernmental implications.

#### *Political Parties and Interest Groups*

- Explain the evolution of interest groups in the United States; describe the role of interest groups in the modern democratic process.
- Analyze the impact of political parties and third part movements on federal, state, and local government.
- Describe the impact of interest groups and political parties on bringing issues and policy options to the national and local political agenda

## Curricular Mapping

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes	Core & Required Courses	Major Courses	Narrative Comments
<p><b>Academic Skill</b>            Graduates of APUS will possess academic skill related to their specific discipline. The graduate will master the generally accepted theories, concepts, principles, and/or practices associated with their discipline.</p>	<p>RQ300 – Research, Analysis &amp; Writing            SS497 – Senior Seminar in Political Science</p>		<p>Courses provide the student with the research skills and the opportunity to demonstrate theories, concepts, principles, and/or practices associated within the discipline</p>
<p><b>Communication</b>            Graduates of APUS will be able to clearly communicate ideas in written form.</p>	<p>MH304, RQ300, S0311, SS301, SS304, SS305, SS411, SS497</p>	<p>GM311, CJ330, GM413, GM452, MH411, RQ312, SS306, SS330, SS408</p>	<p>Courses provide student various assignments that enhance communication skill sets.</p>
<p><b>Critical Thinking</b>            Graduates of APUS will be able to analytically identify issues with the ability to evaluate problems, formulate solutions, and evaluate the consequences. Graduates will be able to express a variety of other viewpoints and methods of inquiry.</p>	<p>RQ300 – Research, Analysis &amp; Writing            SS497 – Senior Seminar in Political Science            MH304, S0311, SS301, SS304, SS305, SS411</p>	<p>GM311, CJ330, GM413, GM452, MH411, RQ312, SS306, SS330, SS408</p>	<p>First two core/required courses, stress critical thinking skill sets             Subsequent courses require students in newsgroups to state their analyses and become prepared to defend them to both their classmates and professor.</p>
<p><b>Information Literacy</b>            Graduates of APUS will be technologically proficient in accessing and using information. The graduate will be able to gather information from a variety of sources, use information in an appropriate manner to address issues and take action.</p>	<p>MH304, RQ300, S0311, SS301, SS304, SS305, SS411, SS497</p>	<p>GM311, CJ330, GM413, GM452, MH411, RQ312, SS306, SS330, SS408</p>	<p>Course syllabi and classroom software platforms now introduce students to numerous opportunities to access information from web-based research sites.</p>
<p><b>Lifelong Learning</b>            Graduates of APUS will have the ability to identify, pursue and acquire specific and new knowledge after the end of formal schooling. They will be able to apply this knowledge in real world settings.</p>	<p>MH304, RQ300, S0311, SS301, SS304, SS305, SS411, SS497</p>	<p>GM311, CJ330, GM413, GM452, MH411, RQ312, SS306, SS330, SS408</p>	<p>By providing students with a highly interactive classroom and promoting academic success with peer-to-peer learning, students will develop a positive attitude to learning and recognize life experiences as learning opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Degree Program Learning Outcomes</b></p>			
<p><b>Political Theory and Systems</b>            Analyze the fundamental theories and</p>	<p>SS 305, SS411</p>		<p>Courses provide an in-depth understanding of</p>

philosophies of government, governance, economy, and civil society; apply them to contemporary political systems.			liberal democracies and other governance systems in the global community.
Examine the political elements of representative democracy and compare and contrast those elements with other political systems. The United States Political System	SO311, SS301, SS304,SS305, SS411	GM311, GM413	Courses provide skill sets in understanding the American political system in terms of actors and processes and comparing it with other governmental systems.
The United States Political System Analyze the three institutions of government that create and implement federal policy.	SS301	GM311, MH411, GM452	Provides knowledge skills in institutions of governance and issue forums for producing government policy
Analyze the historical evolution and contemporary manifestations of the federal system and its intergovernmental implications.	SS301	GM311, MH411, GM452	Courses provide information of historical evolution of the U.S. political system and the making of public policy.
<b>Political Parties and Interest Groups</b> Explain the evolution of interest groups in the United States and their various roles assumed in both historical and modern democratic processes.	SS304		Course provides basic knowledge of political parties and interest groups in the process of democratic participation and public engagement.
Analyze the perspectives of political parties and their impact on federal, state, and local government.	SS304	SS306, SS408	Requires the student to assess the role of specific actors in the political system.

**Assessment in Political Science Program  
Bachelor in Political Science  
Reporting Period: 2005**

**Direct Measures of Assessment for Continuous Improvement**

Direct Measures	Use of Assessment Information for Continuous Improvement
All Political Science students are required to take the Academic Profile test, a test of general academic knowledge and skills.	Data are shared regularly with LOA council, Deans, and department chairs. Results demonstrate that critical thinking scores are low. SS330 (Ethnic – Major Course) has established course assignments that utilize critical thinking and analysis.
Political Science students are required to write essays and papers in all upper level courses.	Due to inconsistencies in proper citations, Political Science Program has established a format (APA) for writing and citation of papers.
GM311 uses case studies and Web activities to demonstrate how public administrators function in our federal system, requiring students to examine leadership from a public administration view.	Case studies are examined to ensure that students understand leadership from a public administration view. If students are deficient in their understanding, faculty will reinforce material through newsgroup discussions.
SS304 students analyze political parties and/or interest groups and their impact on Federal or State and local government in a term paper. Grading rubric establishes a set of criteria with a scoring scale, and serves to inform student of evaluation criteria.	Grading rubric results are used to inform faculty of student’s understanding of material. Faculty reinforces material in newsgroups for next course if student’s exhibit deficiencies in a particular area.
All Political Science Majors are required to take the Major Field Test, a standardized test that assesses mastery of concepts, principles, and knowledge of Political Science.	Not enough students have taken the test to yield results yet.

**Indirect Measures of Assessment for Continuous Improvement**

Indirect Measures	Use of Assessment Information for Continuous Improvement
Faculty and department chairs are required to fill out a faculty evaluation worksheet to review the content of their syllabi, use of Educator tools, conduct within the classroom, and best practices.	Department chairs follow up on the faculty evaluation sheet if there are deficiencies in the course and/or syllabus. Results show that Faculty are not using rubrics for writing assignments and newsgroups are not being used effectively to promote peer-to-peer learning.
To evaluate student support for modifications to the classroom platform, students were given a specific survey that addressed newsgroup inter-action, peer-to-peer interaction, and in-class exercises that offered a demonstration of applied knowledge	Survey results revealed positive comments on all classroom modifications, affirming a positive reception by students on the increase of newsgroup interaction, peer-to-peer interaction, and in-class exercises that offered a demonstration of applied knowledge
Student testimonials	Student testimonials are distributed among faculty and department chairs. Department chairs encourages faculty to follow up with testimonials, taking appropriate course and degree program level actions. Student comments on the value of increased interactivity and in-class exercises have been shared

	with the Director of LOA and other Chairs.
Review of Political Science Course Objectives by LOA Director using objectives checklist	Political Science faculty that teach core or required courses were required to go through a course objectives review process. SS403 (International Development) and CJ330 (Constitutional Law) course objectives were revised to reflect best practices and alignment with evaluation procedures and course content.
Review of Political Science Program by Provost	A Best Practices in Online Learning workshop was created by the Director of Faculty Development to encourage the use of best practices in online teaching and learning. Political Science instructors that taught core or required courses were required to go through the workshop. Instructors were also required to convert their old student course guide into a new syllabus template to ensure consistency for degree program and courses.
Political Attitude Survey	Political attitude results are used for faculty to determine students current understanding of course issues. Newsgroup discussions may focus on a particular area if students have deficiencies.
Students are prompted to take an end of course survey that asks student about course instruction, instructor's effectiveness, and classroom technology	Faculty are sent follow up reports and asked, "What modifications have you made to this course as a result of the end of course survey results?" Summary information is presented to Deans, department chairs, and the LOA council. New end of course survey process is too preliminary to yield information, but trends will be examined in the future.
Students are required to take an end of program survey	End of Program survey has just been distributed and results are coming in.
Employer survey asks how well alums have demonstrated proficiency in APUS' institutional outcomes.	Survey has just been revised to reflect the new institutional outcomes, so there are not enough employer results to examine data yet.