

Political Science Graduate Program

Data-Based Decisions

Learning Objective 1

Understand research design and methods important to the field and use them to conduct research about significant political questions.

We collected information from course syllabi for POLS 6010. We determined this course would fulfill Learning Objective 1. We undertook an analysis of grades for these courses beginning with the Fall 2013 semester and gathered data up to the Fall 2016 semester. We found that more than 100% of our students earned a grade of C- or above. This suggested that our students were meeting or close to meeting Learning Objective 1.

We also looked at statistics from the IDEA surveys that were sent to our students beginning with the Fall 2013 semester and collected data up to the Fall 2016 semester. The analysis demonstrated that our department rated Similar, Higher, or Much Higher than peers in our comparison group. (See outcomes data <http://politicalscience.usu.edu/about/assessment>)

Based on students' comments more homework and better feedback to students on their homework will be incorporated into this course.

Learning Objective 2

Demonstrate familiarity with scholarly literature in the student's specific field of inquiry.

We collected information from both the American Politics and Political Theory Track and the International Security Track. We determined this information would help us assess whether Learning Objective 2 was being met. We undertook an analysis of grades for courses in these tracks beginning with the Fall 2013 semester and gathered data up to the Fall 2016 semester. We found that 100% of our students earned a passing grade. This again suggested that our students were meeting or close to meeting Learning Objective 2.

Student comments suggested that there was too much emphasis on data analysis and research design. These were difficult for them. Accordingly, the faculty teaching the classes have decided to focus less on explaining the data behind the findings and more on examples from the news cycle.

Learning Objective 3

Effectively apply critical thinking and analytical skills to address significant issues in the political world.

We collected information from both the American Politics and Political Theory Track and the International Security Track. We determined this information would help us assess Learning Objective 2. We undertook an analysis of grades for courses in these tracks beginning with the Fall 2013 semester and gathered data up to the Fall 2016 semester. We found that 100% of our students earned a passing grade. This again suggested to use that our students were meeting or close to meeting Learning Objective 3.

We also looked at statistics from the IDEA surveys that were sent to our students beginning with the Fall 2013 semester and collected data up to the Fall 2016 semester. The analysis demonstrated that our department rated Similar, Higher, or Much Higher than peers in our comparison group. (See outcomes data <http://politicalscience.usu.edu/about/assessment>)

Learning Objective 4

Write clearly and cogently about political questions, using appropriate language in the discipline, and be able to construct organized and coherent verbal presentations on political topics.

We collected information from course syllabi for POLS 6970 Thesis Research. We determined this course would fulfill Learning Objective 4. We undertook an analysis of grades for this course beginning with the Fall 2013 semester and gathered data up to the Fall 2016 semester. We found that more than 50% of our students have and incomplete or fail.

Based on the data collected we are exploring additional measures that can be taken to better meet the needs of our students.