Departmental Assessment Plan of Student Learning
Department of Political Science
Saint Peter's College

"The science of politics offers an additional safeguard to the rights of the people, for it is through the free and informed discussion of the common affairs of the people that the true end of liberty is best served."
(James Madison, The Federalist)

1. **The mission of the Political Science department**

   The scientific study of politics faces challenges which though not wholly unique unto themselves do distinguish the field from others. Presumably, people in social situations do not generally to discuss and debate the ebb and flow of new ideas and theories in Newtonian physics, non-Euclidian geometry, differential calculus. But, politics is a subject on which most persons have opinions and about which most persons will, even if reluctantly, offer their assessments. This "fact" has been intensified by the revolution in communications which has occurred in this country and globally since the mass introduction of the internet. Nowadays there are increasingly numerous electronic "avenues" through which individuals may disseminate their view of current political events and trends and offer their analyses of those events and trends. Correspondingly, the individual searching for a broad range of sources finds the possibilities growing rapidly. But, there is an inherent danger to this proliferation of sources and it is that the consumer of information will become a "gourmand", i.e., a partaker of extensive quantities with little appreciation for and understanding of the need to seek to be a "gourmet", one who samples many ideas and theories.

   It is the mission of the department, broadly stated, to prepare our students to be knowledgeable, politically active, and ethical citizens not only in their local community, but also their country, and as members of an increasingly global society. To prepare our students to attain this goal necessitates the teaching of a science of politics, i.e., a rigorous, questioning, and probing analysis of what Madison (See quote above.) right calls "the common affairs of the people". While the faculty of the department recognize that the life paths of our students are likely to lead them into professional fields which are not viewed as being closely related to the specific study of politics, we seek to give our students a basic scientific foundation in the four disciplines of the study of politics - American politics, comparative politics, international politics, and political theory and social justice. It is the shared view of the department's faculty that through this scientific grounding we can best assure the completion of our mission.

2. **Student-centered learning objectives (goals) for the Political Science major**

   In general terms, the student-centered learning objectives for the Political Science major can be stated in the following terms.
   (a) To teach our majors to begin to comprehend the many avenues of the theoretical foundations of classical and contemporary political systems, behavior, thought and analysis;
   (b) to teach our majors to become proficient in the application of those theoretical foundations to their own lives, and to their interactions with others in their local political communities, the national political community, and the broader international political community;
   (c) to develop in our students the importance of both wanting and needing learn to analyze and to critically examine contemporary events in the communities of which they are part using the specific theoretical and practical tools to which they are introduced in each of four disciplines noted in #1 above; and
   (d) To scientifically analyze contemporary local, national, foreign, and global events using the specific theoretical tools and processes that correspond to the four political science disciplines.

   Specifically, with regards to each of the four disciplines of study offered by the department to our students, the student centered learning objectives for the Political Science major are:

   **In the American politics discipline**
   Americans by and large have a very limited understanding of the processes and institutions of the American political system. That fact is true of our students who tend to enroll in our courses either with an
almost total lack of interest in politics or with political ideas and opinions that have been formed through discussions with family members or from their exposure to the mass print and electronic media. Courses in this discipline, starting with the introductory political science course, are intended first of all to broaden the students' limited political understanding of the many dimensions of politics in the United States (events, institutions, and processes) and to progressively develop a capacity to scientific analyze the meaning and/or implications of those events, institutions, and processes. Democracy as a political and legal ethic can only survive and prosper if the citizenry is informed and ready and willing to engage in critical analysis of its institutions and processes. The study of politics in this discipline is structured to achieve both of those ends, i.e., the learning of information and the development of a scientifically rigorous capacity to critically analyze.

While not all of our majors elect to pursue a career in the legal profession, the faculty of the department are united in the view that an essential component of the study of politics is the study of the institutions and processes of law. Politics is the study of the "polis", that is, the community of the people and no community of the people can survive without efficient institutions and processes of order. Thus, in the courses on the study of law, we introduce our majors to the process of legal analysis in the areas of American constitutional law and civil liberties, judicial process, public international law, ancient legal systems, i.e., Greek and Roman law, and comparative legal systems (the common law and the civil law traditions). Of course, we do not seek to duplicate the intensive study of law that occurs in law school. Rather we seek to give our majors a firm foundation for that study if that is what they elect to pursue upon graduation. But, even for those majors who do not elect to pursue a legal career, we seek in our law courses to give them an understanding of and an appreciation for, the importance of law in the "polis".

In the comparative politics discipline -

The aim of this discipline is to expose students to a rigorous and systematic comparison and study of the world's different political systems. As currently structured, the comparative politics discipline seeks to explain the differences between as well as the similarities among, national political systems and cultures. It is particularly interested in exploring patterns of individual and collective political expression in different countries including political parties, interest groups, social movements, revolutionary movements, and terrorist organizations. Cross-cultural political phenomena such as nationalism and the institutional, i.e., governmental, and non-institutional political processes (e.g., the mobilization of public opinion through the media, demonstrations and protests, and insurrectional movements) are explored with the goal of learning what economic and social realities structures their expression in the case of institutional processes and what dynamic forces give rise to their expression in the case of non-institutional processes. Finally, the courses in this discipline look for trends and changes in patterns of national political systems and cultures, including the regionalization of politics as is occurring in the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other similar regional political "unification" efforts, and tries to develop general propositions or hypotheses that describe and explain these trends.

In the international politics discipline -

The international politics discipline should properly be called the international political economy discipline in that the courses offered by the department in this discipline all start from the premise that one cannot separate the study of international political affairs from the study of international economic interactions between states (countries). An increasing number of our students, whether they go on to further study at the graduate level or in law school or whether they enter the workforce upon graduation are finding themselves in an increasingly internationalized environment. Therefore, the courses in this discipline focus not only on the political and economic interactions between states but also those between international governmental organizations (e.g., the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and so on) and states; between the various international governmental organizations; between states and nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Medecins Sans Frontieres, Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches, etc.), and between nongovernmental organizations and international governmental organizations.

In the political theory and social justice discipline -

The aim of this discipline is to encourage intellectual research, thought, and analysis of political,
economic, and social structures and situations of injustice in the local, state, national, and global communities of which our students are members as well as the nonviolent resolution of conflict. In addition, an appreciation of justice and peace as seen through the lens of the world’s major faith and religious traditions has been incorporated in political theory courses, and particularly, in the courses in the social justice minor degree program.

With regards to courses in this discipline, the aim has been and continues to be the updating of a curriculum that has long focused on the history of Western political theory. It goes without saying that this component of the curriculum continues to be recognized as being of vital relevance to the study of political theory and social justice. It is, therefore, still intact and is still being taught. That having been said, the teaching of political theory and social justice at Saint Peter’s, as at many colleges and universities in the United States, has long focused its efforts on the history of Western political theory to the neglect, if not actual exclusion of other areas of political theory including feminist political theory, non-Western political theory traditions, and contemporary political thought. The courses offered in this discipline have gradually in the last decade undergone revisions aimed at a greater inclusion of those neglected areas of political theory.

3. **Program objectives in terms of desired student outcomes**

Our students have become increasingly conscious of the fact that their local community, their state, and the United States are all parts of a larger, increasingly globalized world of politics. While undoubtedly reflecting the great diversity of national origins, ethnicities, religions, and races to be found in the student body at Saint Peter’s College, this consciousness of an emergent global “polis” must properly be addressed by the department. Our students are curious and they want to know in part to satisfy their curiosity and in part to enable them to be competitive now and in the future in the global marketplace of ideas. Their being competitive in the marketplace of ideas, they understand, is increasingly likely to translate to their securing the professional careers to which they aspire. The faculty of the department are committed to giving our students the “tools” our students need to be competitive and to teaching them how to use those tools to that end. This goal, we all agree, necessitates developing in our students the capacity to think clearly and analytically and to be scientifically rigorous in their analysis of the many dimensions of political experience to which they are exposed both inside and outside of the classroom. In order to achieve the aforementioned goal, the members of the department believe that our classes must be reading-based and in which lectures are used to further discuss, elaborate and challenge students with information and ideas that they will need to absorb and use to answer thought-provoking questions on exams, essays, papers, and later on, in the course of their lives and professional careers.

Specifically, with regards to each of the four disciplines of study offered by the department to our students, the program objectives in terms of desired student outcomes for the Political Science major are:

**In the American politics discipline** -

As noted previously herein (See #2 above.), Americans by and large have a very limited understanding of the processes and institutions of the American political system. That fact is true of our students who tend to enroll in our courses either with an almost total lack of interest in politics or with political ideas and opinions that have been formed through discussions with family members or from their exposure to the mass print and electronic media. Other possible sources of information are often not well known, particular those from academia. Thus, in addition to their reading the books assigned in the courses, the students are introduced to a wide range of media sources.

As an example, a recent course addition to the curriculum in this discipline, “Mass Media and American Politics”, explores the power relationships between the modern mass media, including the internet, and the various branches of the American government. The course examines the laws, and the political manipulations, through which various actors in the American political process and in American government seek to influence the work and the output of the media. It also examines how the work and the output of the media significantly influences what government does and how its various actors operate. The instructor of the course, a senior reporter at *Time* magazine with twenty-one years of experience as a professional journalist, brings to the course the full range of his professional experience, combining it with a scientifically rigorous approach to the analysis of political events so that the students. An important part of the information that students are asked to absorb and analyze are the actual workings of a major news
organization that is focused on the reporting of political events.

In the comparative politics discipline -

Program objectives in this discipline are centered around the goal of getting the students to broaden their knowledge of current events in foreign countries and understanding what those events mean politically not only in the countries in which they occur but also what they mean in the greater global context. Exposure to wide range of print and electronic media both foreign and domestic is a another goal (related, of course, to the primary goal) and is intended to develop within the students an appreciation for varying points of view and analyses of the events about which they are reading. Most of our students enroll in courses in this discipline (and in the other disciplines of political science taught by the department) with one set of views on the interpretation of events occurring in the United States and in foreign countries. Such a framework of analysis is inherently constricting in terms of arriving at a genuine scientific analysis of events and from the outset, all of the courses in this discipline seek a broadening of that framework.

Students should also be given the opportunity to travel to other countries to actually see and begin to experience for themselves the lives of the people in those countries and the societies in which the people live. To that end, a yearly course will be added to the curriculum that includes a travel component to a foreign country as this is considered essential for student learning when discussing comparative politics. The first planned course/trip will take place in the winter trimester of the 2008-2009 academic year. The course entitled "Mexican Politics: Then and Now" will include a seven-day trip to Mexico City that is intended to get enrolled students to analyze the political culture and structures of Mexico from the Aztecs to the current time.

In the international politics discipline -

The courses in this discipline and Model United Nations program which is considered to be a key component of the discipline and in which all political science majors are encouraged, though not required (unless they enroll in the course in which participation at the Harvard National Model United Nations is a specific requirement), to participate are structured to meet the student-centered learning objectives listed in #2 above. Because our students often come to the first course they take in this discipline with a scanty knowledge base in international politics, the highest level of academic rigor is sought in the teaching of all of the courses in this discipline. This academic rigor consistent with the student-centered learning objectives previously noted herein emphasizes the immersion of the students in a concentrated and intense research process that seeks to critically analyze the assumptions and arguments to which they are exposed. The subject matter and lessons in the courses in this discipline proceed on the basis that it is not enough to know the arguments and the assumptions underlying them; one must also examine the "why" of those assumptions and utility and applicability of the arguments.

In the political theory and social justice discipline -

We live in a time in which many individuals are "media saturated but information poor". This, of course, is "deadly" in the study of any subject matter but particularly so in the scientific study of politics, as suggested by the statement on the mission of the political science department (See #1 above.). In a democratic society, in which the people are sovereign, informed decision-making is one sign of the health of the democratic system. If we believe that the people are to have a say in that which affects them substantively in their lives, then they simply cannot afford to be ignorant.

In addition to working on lectures that are intellectually stimulating and encourage constant class participation, the instructor has found that the use of documentary films is invaluable. Among the films which have been used are When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts by Spike Lee, along with Michael Eric Dyson's book, Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster. The use of Lee's film, which is both informative and gripping, has encouraged students to participate in class discussions and to complete their reading assignments, making the linkage between theory and the "real world" and in so doing, coming to understand, as Dyson posits, that Hurricane Katrina was not so much a natural disaster as it was a political disaster and they want to know why. Consistent with the student learning objectives listed in #2 above, students with little or no interest in politics and little or no appreciation for the utility and need to integrate theory with actual policy making and implementation have come to understand "why politics matters".
4. Desired student objectives and outcomes as linked to specific courses

Our course syllabi for each of the courses taught by the department include a statement that indicates what the course is about and what are the goals/objectives of the course. Currently some of these are brief and need to be more fully developed; others are quite extensive and do well in making clear the course’s desired student objectives and outcomes. A good example of the latter is that of Po378 - Global Inequality.

III. Basic premises underlying the content matter of this course

1. About this Course: This is a course in political economy and its title, “Global Inequality”, is strongly suggestive of the focus of our study for the semester: an exploration of the patterns of economic and political inequality that exist between countries and within countries in the contemporary international system. Three premises will guide our study. Your objective as a student enrolled in this course is to come to an understanding of how each of these premises, individually and combined, shed light on the the politics of the problem of global inequality. Your attainment of that objective must proceed in a manner that does not hesitate to question the validity of the assumptions made by the authors and other sources to which you will be introduced in class lectures and discussions and which you will encounter in the required course readings and the research sources you consult in the preparation of course assignments. You must also not hesitate to question the utility of proposed courses of action that are presented in class and in your own reading and research. But, that questioning must always be done in a manner that reflects the application of a well formulated process of analytical thought. “I agree or, do not agree with ...” does not satisfy as an analysis. I want to “the why” of your agreement or disagreement. You must also want to know “the why”.

1.1. Premise #1: The dominating economic reality of the world today is that it is capitalist. It is true that there are still a few countries which officially call themselves communist or socialist, for example, China, North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam. While such countries may continue to have political systems that operate according to some definition of communism, they are, like all of the other countries of the world, inextricably and unavoidably part of “a global capitalist economy”. The increasingly numerous and intricate linkages that are the primary structural feature of this global capitalist economy are most clearly revealed by the interactions and transactions associated with a complex cultural, economic, political, and social phenomenon known as globalization.

1.1.1. Corollary to Premise #1: The global capitalist system is not solely an economic phenomenon. It also has cultural, social and political aspects that impact the realities of all countries and all peoples.

1.2. Premise #2: The pattern of inequality in the world, often referred to as the “wealth gap”, has two aspects to it: the gap between “rich” and “poor” countries and the gap between the rich and poor within countries. The USA is clearly a richer country than is Mexico; but, there are some Mexicans who enjoy greater affluence and a better quality of life than do some Americans.

1.2.1. Corollary to Premise #2: Perhaps the single most important reality we will study in this course is that both “gaps” -- the one between rich and poor countries and the one between rich and poor within countries -- are growing. The rich are getting richer and the poor, while they may have more than they did twenty years ago, are, relative to the rich, getting poorer.

1.3. Premise #3: Despite the global dominance of capitalism, it is shortsighted to assume that the processes of what has become a global capitalist market now dictate all economic, political, and social realities of the more than six billion persons living on the planet. While it can be argued that economics is the “core” reality that influences all other forms of social interaction among human beings (e.g., politics, culture, etc.), it does not determine everything. Individual countries, to a greater or lesser extent depending on a number of factors, continue to have the capacity to politically influence the quality of the lives of their citizens. In other words, politics is not irrelevant; the actions and policies of national governments can and do still make a difference.

Specifically, with regards to each of the four disciplines of study offered by the department to our students, the desired student objectives and outcomes as linked to specific courses are:
In the American politics discipline -

Students must be seek to understand and exhibit in their writing and in their participation in class discussions that the processes of intellectual development and refinement of the mind are rigorous individual processes that necessarily involve a considerable amount of reading and the development of a capacity to seek to understand and to scientifically analyze the information to which they shall be exposed in lectures, class discussions, and course related readings. An important component of the American politics discipline is that of seeking to get the students to engage in real experiential learning, i.e., not in questionably relevant classroom simulated group project experiential education. To that end, the department maintains a close ties with the Washington Center internship in the nation's capital. The program places students in real political workplace situations, with real responsibilities, in the government, private, and non-profit sectors of Washington, DC. The faculty liaison of the department actively encourages students from all departments and in particular, the majors in political science to take advantage of this program so as to learn and understand what they will need to know and do in the real world, and to develop the professional attitude they will need to have in order to succeed in that world.

In the comparative politics discipline -

As previously noted in this report (See, in particular, #3 above.), the desired objectives and outcomes for students enrolled in courses in this discipline are centered around the goal of getting the students to broaden their knowledge of current events in foreign countries and gaining an understanding of what those events mean politically not only in the countries in which they occur but also what they mean in the greater global context. Thus, it is hoped that students will learn to think 'outside' of their American box. To cite a clarifying example, to seek to understand French politics and political culture with "an American eye", while not an entirely useless exercise is nevertheless an exercise of limited analytical validity if one's goal to is to understand French politics and political culture in the context of French governmental institutions, French political parties and interest groups, and French cultural realities. One must begin to understand French history, culture, and patterns of thought to genuinely understand French politics and political culture. In all of the comparative courses, the development of this capacity to think outside of one's familiar box is essential to begin to gain an understanding of the many political issues including gender politics, immigration and emigration, the role of borders and conceptualizations of sovereignty, and the interaction of politics and religion in the larger social context in which political events occur in every country.

In the international politics discipline -

The aim of the courses in this discipline is two-fold. First, it is considered essential that students arrive at an understanding of the implications of the fact that the United States is inescapably a part of a larger, inclusive global system in which its policy formulations and the actions taken from those formulations have political and economic consequences not just domestically, but globally. Similarly, political actions and events and economic interactions occurring outside of the borders of the United States likewise impact upon the political and economic realities of the United States and its citizens. Second, the students are led to understand and appreciate that the domain of what is "political" is an ever expanding one, i.e., that international politics is not only about war and peace, that it is also about economic development and vitality, inter- and intra-state political discourse and economic interactions, human migration, health and welfare, the intersection of different political cultures which is sometimes peaceful and at other times fraught with difficulties, and environmental concerns that are increasingly shared by all the peoples and the states of the world. The interrelated issues of the degradation of the environment, of the politicization of concerns about the state of the environment at the subnational, national, and global levels, and of the development of politically authoritative strategies to address those concerns are of increasing importance to the entire global community. Raising student awareness of environmental concerns and getting them to critically analyze political strategies intended to address those concerns is leading to the introduction in the 2008-2009 academic year of senior level seminar in international environmental politics.

In the political theory and social justice discipline -

With regards to courses in this discipline, the aim has been and continues to be the updating of a
curriculum that has long focused on the history of Western political theory. Rest assured, this component of the curriculum is still intact and is still being taught. What has been added, however, are courses that reflect contemporary scholarship, research in the field of political theory and the subject matter of the instructor’s own experience in the discipline. Accordingly, the course in Contemporary Political Theory focuses on the “debate” between critical political theorists and post-modern political theorists, which reflects both what the instructor has engaged in at political science conferences and what constitutes a good number of the courses in her graduate training. A course in Feminist Political Theory recognizes that the contribution of women theorists has been overlooked in the more traditional curriculum, offers an analysis of why women have been overlooked and recognizes that women are certainly very capable of theorizing politically. Finally the course on genocide, added to the curriculum on the basis of suggestions by several students, has fostered academic scholarship in this critical area of contemporary political thought and analysis. One of the students previously enrolled in the class, presented a paper at the International Genocide Association Meeting convened in the summer of 2007 in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

5. Methods to be used for measuring the attainment of the objectives/outcomes

Despite the sometimes great personal ideological differences that exist among the four full-time faculty members of the department, we are all in agreement that the methods to be used for measuring the attainment of the objectives/outcomes in our courses requires that we make our students do considerable reading and writing, and that we be persistent in our efforts to get them to speak in class by making presentations and engaging in discussions and debates with our fellow students. Consequently, our methods are geared to attaining those objectives. Of course, the methods employed in stimulating the desire to read and learn more and and those used to encourage oral and written expression are not intended merely to add more information simply for the sake of adding it. Rather, the methods used are intended to make our students think critically, to learn to weigh competing explanations and/or solutions to the issues presented them and to each develop a scientific process for the analysis of the subject matter to which they are exposed in class and in life.

Specifically, with regards to each of the four disciplines of study offered by the department to our students, the methods to be used for measuring the attainment of the objectives/outcomes for the Political Science major are:

In the American politics discipline

- Students enrolled in courses in this discipline are required to do a considerable amount of reading and research, particularly in the two American constitutional law courses. There is an emphasis on the development of logical patterns of thought brought together to form a tight, analytical argument that is well supported by the course readings and the students’ own research. While at the introductory level there is use of multiple choice and short answer quizzes and examinations, testing in the elective courses requires students to write extensively, with writing evaluated on the basis of the cogency of the analyses presented in their answers, a cogency that is derived from consideration of the material presented in class lectures and assigned readings.

The analysis of results process used in the courses in this discipline is based on the belief that the intellectual development and refinement of the mind at the college level is a rigorous individual process, and not a group project, not a show-and-tell power-point show, not a portfolio, not any kind of assessment that deflects learning from the acquisition, on an individual basis, of massive amounts of raw information, or that detracts from the development and demonstration, again on an individual basis, of a capacity to grapple with and analyze that information meaningfully. The emphasis is on reading, reading, and even more reading and then asking the students questions that call upon the activation of their mind - individually - to recall relevant information and to use this relevant information to analyze - individually - problems, issues or thoughts presented by the questions.

In the comparative politics discipline

- Students are required to do a considerable amount of writing which includes the keeping of journals on topics related to current events, the information to be gathered from the print and electronic media. The journals are not merely of the what I heard, what I saw, what I read, but include the student’s analysis of the
meaning and significance of the events reported in their journals as tied to the lessons presented in class lectures and discussions. Essay examinations are frequent and likewise seek not only to develop the students’ scientific analysis of the subject matter they encounter in course readings and that is presented to them in class lectures and discussions. Shorter writing assignments called reaction papers are intended to, as their name suggests, get the students to react to specific points that are presented in class lectures and/or raised during discussions and student class presentations. The student class presentations are undertaken as group projects and are either on the assigned readings or on analyses of material presented in class lectures. Finally, considerable “grade weight” is placed on class participation as a means to get the students to interact with and react to, the variety of information to which they are introduced in their required readings, lectures, and class discussions.

**In the International Politics Discipline**

In all of the courses in this discipline, the students have to do a considerable amount of reading and, except for the introductory course in political science, 3-5 research supported written exercises, termed “issue analyses” (in the politics classes) and “case decisions” in the two law courses included in this discipline (comparative legal systems and international law) generally of a length between 4-6 pages. The students are encouraged to consult with each other and with the course instructor, but must each submit his/her own issue analysis (or case decision). The issue analyses present the students with an issue or problem related to the ongoing lecture and class discussion material and asks them to present strategies to deal with the issue presented them. The strategies presented must be supported by logical, persuasive arguments. The goal in these exercises is to get the students to critically examine the nature and content of the issue and the implications of the strategies they propose for addressing the issues. In the case decisions, students are asked to resolve various elements of the dispute presented them making reference to legal principles, applicable rules of law, and court decisions. The intent of the case decisions is to develop within the students an appreciation of the process of law and to begin to develop a framework of logic-based problem solving.

Class presentations are used as a method for measuring the attainment of the objectives of the various courses, particularly so in those courses with a model United Nations component. Here the focus is on learning how a particular state (country) stands on an question of international concern, defending that state’s position in class debate and learning on what aspects of a country’s position they may correctly compromise in order to attain agreement with the representatives of other states. This process is meant to enable the students to gain an understanding of the ebb and flow of international diplomacy and to come to appreciate the many complexities in reaching agreement in an international political environment in which sovereign states zealously defend their national interest.

**In the Political Theory and Social Justice Discipline**

The basic core of the methods used in this discipline revolves around the development of reading, writing, and public speaking skills of the students. In addition, the subject matter taught is aimed at the bringing forth of political philosophical and theoretical insight in our students. Accordingly, the instructor assigns a substantive amount of reading, assigns weekly writing assignments and a research paper, has the students make oral presentations in class, and uses a final examination as a method to bring together the various components of the learning experience to form a critically analytical whole.

Recently (in the last year), students have been assigned the writing of a journal (weekly entries are required) as the instructor has found that students tend, perhaps given the loosening of formal writing guidelines, to write more in a journal entry. They also tend to go more in depth and to offer what genuinely represents their own political point of view. Because they do the latter, students are more apt to develop arguments and reasons for the holding of a particular view, linking those arguments and reasons to the theoretical constructs presented to them and discussed in class. A consequence of this has been an enriching of class discussion as students have spent journal time refining their thought political claims.

In the past two years, some of the political theory courses have been co-taught with an adjunct who is an actor and playwright. This adjunct has encouraged students to perform in plays, to write plays, and to feel physically comfortable in presenting an argument or point of view. This method has been directed at addressing the unease and lack of confidence that many students seem to have when speaking in class. Students have thus been offered a means of “acting out” political problems and peaceful solutions.
In a world of frequently heated political language and the quick resort to the use of military force as opposed to patient diplomatic efforts, the use of such methods has been found better equip students to live what the classical Greek thinkers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, have always desired for us, i.e., the use of reason and dialogue when individuals engage in political matters.

Students pursuing a social justice minor degree are required to engage in the practical work of justice either through a service learning course or an urban fieldwork experience. Social justice students are now beginning to present their academic research at national and regional conferences adding an intellectually valuable element to their study of social justice and enhancing and enriching their academic course of study.

6. Analysis of results

The discussion of the analysis of results must properly distinguish between the processes of short-term and long-term analysis. The short-term analytical component, as it is conceived of by the faculty members of the department, relates to our individual assessments and the student evaluations of each course that we teach. We do discuss both our individual assessments and the student evaluations with each other at department meetings and more informally with each other in our offices. A department meeting focusing on this analysis process - how are we doing, what can we do better, courses that should be added to the curriculum because of student interest, changes to be considered in how we evaluate the students, etc. - is held annually. Because we are a small (four full-time faculty), tight knit department, a formal keeping of the minutes has not in the past been employed though in my role as the chairperson of the department I have taken notes at these meetings which are kept on file in my office and are available to the members of the faculty. As the chairperson of the department and thus ultimately responsible for the quality of the education offered in all of our courses, I am inclined to believe that our current analysis review process needs to be formalized so that we can make more effective use of the data that we collect on our results.

The department is also considering the creation of a student (majors) review body whose charge would be to articulate student needs and interests in the areas of course options, pedagogical strategies, advisement on course selection, and career planning. Currently inputs from the students in these areas is largely done on a one-on-one basis in discussions with department faculty members and in particular, with the department chairperson. While I think that most of our students feel at liberty to discuss their needs and interests with any member of the faculty, I believe that a more formalized and structured student input process would generate greater student input in the ongoing assessment process and enhance both the quality of the content they receive in their political science courses and the learning process that takes place in those courses. As chairperson, I am quite sure that our majors have questions that relate to why certain courses are taught as they are, why they are tested as they are, and why we offer the subject areas in political science that we do. Answers to those questions and frank and open discussion between our majors and members of the faculty could only serve to be beneficial to the students, the faculty, and the overall quality of the department.

As regards the long-term analysis of results process, there has been some discussion among the members of the faculty of the feasibility and the utility of having an external evaluator come in to conduct an assessment of the department's course offerings, pedagogical strengths and weaknesses, and to offer his/her suggestions for strengthening the overall quality of the department. This has previously been done by the department and the external evaluator did submit a report in which a number of observations and suggestions were presented and some of them adopted by the department. At this point in time, however, discussion of the use of this analysis strategy has been informal and sporadic and cannot be said to have either been agreed upon or rejected.

7. Procedures for using data to improve the Political Science major

As previously noted in #4 (Desired student objectives and outcomes as linked to specific courses) above, all of our course syllabi each include a statement that indicates what the course is about and what are the goals/objectives of the course. Currently some of these are quite brief and need to be more fully developed so that, to the extent possible, students enrolled in our courses may gain a fuller understanding not only of the subject matter to which they will be introduced but of the underlying scientific rigor of the study in which they will be engaging. It is important for our students to understand that the efforts of the faculty of the department are not directed to simply adding
another "voice" to the ones they are already exposed to in this information and media saturated world. The students must know that they are not solely being exposed to more information, but that they are being asked to think critically and analyze the subject matter presented to them in class and accompanying literature. Additionally, with respect to this issue, the current course descriptions presented in the College's course catalog, for a number of the courses offered by the department, be rewritten to more informative and discussions among the four full-time faculty have recognized this "need". As at the current time, the process for preparing the new 2008-2100 course catalog has gotten underway, this rewriting process will be actively engaged.

The department needs to ameliorate its procedures with regards to obtaining critical feedback from its recent graduates. Currently for both those graduates who go on to further study either to graduate school or to law school and those graduates who enter the workforce, procedures for gathering information as regards their evaluation of how the political science major has prepared them are primarily of an anecdotal quality, i.e., through conversations. A more formal and structured set of procedures need to be developed to more accurately assess the preparative quality of the major so that the faculty members of the department can, each in his/her own discipline and as a department, improve the teaching quality of our pedagogy in terms of addressing desired student outcomes and, as needed, add courses to the department's curriculum. The small size of the department -- four full-time faculty members -- may limit the number of course additions that can be made; but, the department does have a considerable list, i.e., about twenty, individuals who are interested in adjunct positions and a more efficacious use of those persons can be made, as necessary, to broaden the department's course offerings.

Within the department, the members of the faculty do meet formally and informally on a regular basis to, among other things:

(a) share ideas on the structure and material content of our courses;
(b) discuss emergent concerns with respect to the academic performance of a particular student and what can (or should) be done to address those concerns;
(c) inform each other of the appearance of either new or revised pedagogical approaches, including new course suggestions, the introduction of which might improve our own teaching;
(d) inform each other of new developments in instructional technology that can be incorporated into our classroom lectures and discussions; and
(e) plan extracurricular events (e.g., guest speakers, debate tournaments, internships, etc.) so that student attendance and/or participation in, those events can be maximized.

As noted in #6 above, with regards to the analysis of results, I believe that our current analysis review process needs to be formalized so that we can better use the data we collect on our results to revise, as needed, current course contents and, again as needed, redefine the student-centered learning objectives (goals) for the Political Science major and for each course offered by the department.

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