

EWU Programmatic SLO Assessment
AY 2014-15 and “Closing the Loop” for AY 2013-14

Degree/Certificate: **Bachelor of Arts**
Major/Option: **Political Science**
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Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2014-15

Part I – for the 2014-15 academic year

1. Student Learning Outcome:

Government Department, Student Learning Outcome #6:

Possess effective communication skills including the verbal and writing skills needed to communicate clearly and effectively, make persuasive, professional presentations and convey information essential to the discipline and beyond in an orderly and understandable manner.

2. Overall evaluation of progress on outcome: Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;
 SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;
 SLO met without change required

3. Strategies and methods: Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

The method of assessment was systematic analysis of all students’ in class exams in Winter 2015, GOVT 335 US Congress. This was done through a content analysis of these students’ abilities to understand the historical and philosophical context bicameralism, pluralism, rationale self-interest and the public good through lectures and a close reading of the texts. These terms and ideas were chosen because they are accepted as the critical foundations of the legislative branch and are essential to know in communicating knowledge of the Congress and the goals of SLO #6 dovetail well with the rigors of this course.

This method of assessment was used because many of the concepts and ideas which are foundational and enduring to Congress of a complex enough of a nature that other forms of evaluations such as a survey instrument might not be subtle enough to capture much of the nuance and higher level thinking we hope to find. Furthermore, by using the students’ writing samples we are able to capture more readily their ability to identify all aspects of the SLO.

4. Observations gathered from data: Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.

a. Findings:

Students were able to develop a deeper understand of the needs, benefits and challenges of bicameralism in the United States Congress and communicate these ideas in very clear and precise written form. They were also more adept at appreciating the theoretical underpinnings of bicameralism as witnessed in their comments. Students also developed strong understanding of rationale self-interest and how political actors work to benefit their own electoral goals and showed many real world examples of this in their writing. However, students did have a harder time explaining the role of the public good in Congressional behavior.

b. Analysis of findings:

This analysis demonstrates many positives in meeting this SLO and a few things that need to be improved upon.

On the positive side, because students were asked to take in class written tests with no chance to review the prompts earlier, we see that students are very good at communicating very complex material in a very limited amount of time. They could easily and clearly cite examples of and the benefits and downfalls of the Congressional system

There were weaknesses in the findings when it came to communicating ideas of public good and examples of the public good. This could be because there are truly few events where they can find examples, which seems to be a critical aspect to their effective communication. Also, this is a difficult, abstract concept, especially compared to the very easy idea of a rationally motivated, self-interested actor. I believe the difficulty in this part of commutation is due to the difficulty in understanding the material.

5. What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?

- a) Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).

We will look for more theoretical work for the students to read, such as the works of Mills or Rousseau. I will also provide take home writing assignments to see if a different environment might assist in their endeavors.

- b) Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.

Fall 2015: identify other potential readings

Winter 2015: reorganize syllabus

Spring 2016: reorganize reading and lectures to allow for more time and discussion

6. Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.

The assessment process is optimal and evaluating writing appears to be the best way to understand student knowledge of the subject.

PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP
FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2013-14 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed for 2013-14

Introduction

The SLO assessment will be focusing on closing the loop from the 2013-2014 assessment which focused on SLO #6

Below are the findings from the AY 2013-2014 assessment

<u>AY 2013-14 Assessment</u>
1. Student learning outcome
Government Department Assessment, SLO #6: Demonstrate analytical and conceptual skills, reading skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills and be able to effectively apply those skills to political issues.
1. Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:
<i><u>X</u> SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming</i> Students were not learning about Antebellum America A plan was outlined that included these two steps: Discussions were to occur and a plan implemented
Strategies implemented during 2015-16 to improve student learning, based on the 2013-14 assessment.
The class was going to have a restructured reading focusing more on the writing that were appropriate for the time period. Including authors such as Sumner, Stanton, and Adams.
2. Summary of results
The class will not be taught until next Winter, but I have spent a large amount of time finding the appropriate readings and believe that this area will be improved upon.
2. Projected changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.
New textbooks are always being evaluated and additions and refinement to the technological aspect of the course will continue.