

EWU Programmatic SLO Assessment
AY 2013-14 and “Closing the Loop” for AY 2012-13

Degree/Certificate: **Bachelor of Arts**
Major/Option: **International Affairs**
Submitted by: **Kristin Edquist, IA Program Director**
Date: **1 October 2014**

Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2013-14

Part I – for the 2013-14 academic year

1. Student Learning Outcome:

International Affairs Program, **Student Learning Outcome #2:**

Demonstrate mastery of and apply accurately key analytic concepts of the social sciences, to cases, states, and regions around the world. (For example, apply accurately the concept of “dependency” in international relations as it concerns relations between Europe or the United States and Latin American states.)

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’ case studies (drafts one and two) and their final papers submitted in the GOVT 326 course on European Politics, during Spring 2014. Particular attention was given to instructor comments on those assignments regarding the use of the course concepts of *democratization* and *integration*.

This method of assessment was used because it is only through reading students’ written essay-like work that one can do a systematic analysis of students’ attainment of goals. The method also allowed analysis over time of students’ progress, as the two case study assignments and the final paper assignment were all sequential (they built on each other) and related and thus all required students to apply and re-apply at least one of the concepts.

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

a. Findings:

Students’ applications of the concept of integration were more consistently accurate than was their use of the concept of democratization. Students also were able to focus on a smaller case more efficiently than a large research paper would allow. Nonetheless, they were somewhat confused when choosing their case studies as to what a case study was and how the case study assignments fit into the larger themes of the course.

b. Analysis of findings:

As compared to the results of the previous assessment, which assessed research papers rather than case studies, it seems clear that the case-study approach works better for students. This is because it gives them a more coherent, smaller data set to work with, and it provides them with a stronger understanding of how a smaller dynamic can reveal important dynamics in a larger process (of European integration, in this course).

The two-stage writing process also helped, as it gave students who were confused about what a case study is the opportunity to see formal, graded feedback on their work before they submitted a final case study. Some students moved from writing a report to writing a more argumentative case study that applied concepts – such as democratization or integration – in a more masterly fashion.

Based on the confusion about the term democratization – which was defined in a specific set of readings – it seems clear that this reading is too complex for this class.

Regarding the confusion about the purpose of the assignment was and how it fit into the course, it seems this has to do with the difficulty of providing a coherent theme for the course. To students' minds the course – European Politics – really is only about a geographic region, whereas in many ways European politics is about a process – of integration.

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).

The reading that defines democratization will be eliminated or pared down significantly (although even this approach has already been taken).

The course will be redesigned to give more emphasis to the role of the European Union in changing countries' makeup, to ensure that students see this important process/theme for the course, earlier in the course.

A new textbook with an opening chapter on the European Union probably should be adopted. Reordering the schedule of readings and of lectures will also provide this stronger thematic cohesion. Additionally, an example case study of a new EU member state's experiences with joining and adhering to EU policies is recommended.

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

Fall 2014: new textbooks identified and assessed

Winter 2014: new textbook adopted

Spring 2014: reorganization of course reading assignments and lectures, to present European integration processes earlier and to allow that process to serve as the cohesive theme for the course.

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 itself works quite well as it allows a window into students' thinking at three points in the course.

PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP
FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2012-13 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed for AY2011-12*

Introduction

*There was no SLO assessment submitted for AY2011-2012; thus, the 2012-13 assessment could not include a “closing the loop” element. The last SLO report that was done for the International Affairs Program was the 2011-12 report. Thus, in this report, I will discuss closing the loop from that year’s assessment.

Below are the findings from the AY2011-12 assessment:

AY 2011-12 Assessment

1. Student learning outcome

International Affairs Program Assessment, **SLO #2:** Demonstrate mastery of and apply accurately key analytic concepts of the social sciences, to cases, states, and regions around the world. (For example, apply accurately the concept of “dependency” in international relations as it concerns relations between Europe or the US and Latin America.)

1. Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:

 X *SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming*

- (1.) In research papers, students were writing more often and more effectively about social processes than about political or economic processes.
- (2.) student papers varied significantly in the amount of research data presented.

A plan was outlined that included these two steps:

Revamp paper proposal, paper presentation, and paper assignments.

Strategies implemented during 2013-14 to improve student learning, based on the **2011-12** assessment.

To address the second problem noted above (variance in amount of data students found in their research), in GOVT 326, Spring 2014, students were assigned *case studies* rather than larger research papers. Additionally, the case studies were broken up into two parts: a first draft that included initial research on an *event or process* in a European Union member state and that event/process’s relationship to the processes of European integration, and a second draft that included more data about that event/process.

Students were also given the opportunity (not advertised ahead of time) to rewrite their first case studies if they found the initial grade unsatisfactory.

The variance in quality of discussion of political, economic, and social factors was not addressed explicitly through any pedagogical or curricular changes.

2. Summary of results

The case-study approach works better for students: It gives them a more coherent, smaller data set to work with, and it provides them with a stronger understanding of how a smaller dynamic can reveal important dynamics in a larger process (of European integration, in this course).

The two-stage writing process also helped, as it gave students who were confused about what a case study is the opportunity to see formal, graded feedback on their work before they submitted a final case study. Some students moved from writing a report to writing a more argumentative case study that applied concepts – such as democratization or integration – in a more masterly fashion.

2. Projected changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.

A new text with an opening chapter on the European Union probably should be adopted. Reordering the schedule of readings and of lectures will also provide this stronger thematic cohesion. Additionally, an example case study of a new EU member state's experiences with joining and adhering to EU policies is recommended.

Regarding the entire International Affairs major, no curricular changes are recommended.