

Course Outcomes Guide

Directions: Please complete this form to document your progress toward improving student learning. For each item, indicate your progress and your anticipated next steps. Thank you!

Course/Program Title: POL-101 American Government

Date: Spring 2011

Course/Program Team: Loretta Thornhill and Spring Ward

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the theoretical and historical underpinnings of our constitution.
2. Articulate a basic understanding of the principles and theories of American Constitutional Law.
3. Critically examine the structures, processes, and functions of government institutions.
4. Appreciate the knowledge and civic responsibilities required for effective participation in political life.
5. Assess the various ways our government impacts its citizens.
6. Develop a cosmopolitan perspective of government and the impact of governmental policy.

Assessment (How do or will students demonstrate achievement of each outcome?)

We are continuing to use pre and post tests based upon the U.S. Citizenship Test. In addition, each of us created a secondary assessment tool to reinforce and enhance our outcomes. While the individual projects differ, we are in agreement that each assessment is an appropriate “hands-on” project.

Spring does a project entitled “We the People” which is a culminating unit exercise that gives the students the opportunity to review and re-evaluate the governmental information learned throughout the course study. The students are expected to apply that knowledge through analysis and as a result, create their own “new and improved” constitution which will be shared through class discussion, a PowerPoint presentation and a cited written defense incorporated within a group portfolio.

Loretta does a news journal. Generally, this requires the students to select a news topic and follow it throughout the entire semester. They are required to collect two articles each week, write about each article and then produce a summary which has specific requirements. This activity measures the outcome of the course by demonstrating in writing an awareness of current events in politics and government.

Through different paths, each of the two aforementioned projects assesses what the students have learned about the stated learning outcomes (common to all sections):

1. Demonstrate understanding of the theoretical and historical underpinnings of our Constitution
2. Critically examine the structures, processes, and function of our government institutions
3. Assess the various ways our government impacts its citizens
4. Illustrate how individuals can make a difference politically both locally and in the nation

Validation (What methods have you used or will you use to validate your assessment?)

Pre-test and post-test questions come directly from the citizenship test given by the US government.

Results (What do your assessment data show? If you have not yet assessed student achievement of your learning outcomes, when is assessment planned?)

Mean scores over time (per semester) from the pre and post tests are available for review. There is a continued pattern of improvement since our last report of Spring 08. End of the course grades often correlate closely with the post test scores. We still perceive that some students are academically under-prepared and, in regards to politics, many do not normally follow current events.

Follow-up (How have you used or how will you use the data to improve student learning?)

Of additional concern in our 2008 report was a slightly lower mean score of post test results for the students who are taking the course online. In attempt to close the loop, Spring almost double the writing requirement for the 15-week offerings and indeed the scores improved. There was, however, an unfortunate consequence. Many of the online students suffered writer's weariness as the end of the semester neared. This problem was compounded by the fact that much of the student writing takes place within group discussion boards where the need for interaction is critical.

Spring will continue to evaluate and modify the online course requirements. Also, in our traditional face-to-face classes, we will strive to improve the students' awareness of current events through such activities as Loretta's news journal and other creative methods. We will continue to use the pre and post tests as our data-driven assessment tool.

Budget Justification (What resources are necessary to improve student learning?)

Not Applicable