

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
International Studies Core Competencies
Critical Thinking
2025-2026

Learning Outcome:

Critical Thinking: Students will be able to examine, critique and synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions.

Outcome Measure:

Research paper written during the student's final two years at PLNU (must be from an upper-division course). This paper is then edited, revised, and reworked in the Senior Seminar course in the student's senior year.

Formerly used: ETS Proficiency Profile Exam (2014-23)

Criteria for Success:

Minimum average of 2.75 (out of 4) for each criteria of rubric

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas (circle one or more but not all five):

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning, and
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

Percentage of Students Marginal or Proficient

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
ETS Proficiency Profile Level 2 Critical Thinking	88.9%	80.0%	78.9%	90.9%	57.1%	84.2%	78.9%	95.2%	78.6%

As of 2023-24, ETS data is no longer used to measure this core competency.

Semester	N	Explanation of Issues	Evidence	Influence	Position	Conclusions
Spring 2024	12	3.67	3.42	3.50	3.46	3.58
Spring 2025	7	3.57	3.86	3.29	3.64	3.50
Spring 2026	2	2.75	3.50	3.00	4.00	3.25

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

Our IS students have historically performed well with regard to this learning outcome. The students continue to exceed the criteria for success in each category.

***2025-26: because there were only two students in the cohort this year, no major conclusions can be reached.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

None at this time, other than to monitor the longitudinal data.

Rubric Used: PLO 2_Critical Thinking Assessment Rubric for International Studies Program (modeled after AAC&U Critical Thinking Assessment Rubric)

Rubric Used**IS_PLO2_Critical Thinking Assessment Rubric for International Studies**

Students who complete the program in political science will be able to: **Understand and critically assess the processes, theories, and outcomes of global institutions and systems.** This PLO #2 aligns with core competency #4 (Critical Thinking).

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestones (3)	Milestones (2)	Benchmark (1)
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence <i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i>	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis /hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
International Studies Core Competencies
Written Communication
2025-2026

Learning Outcome:

Written: Students will be able to effectively express ideas and information to others through written communication.

Outcome Measure:

Research paper written during the student's final two years at PLNU (must be from an upper-division course). This paper is then edited, revised, and reworked in the Senior Seminar course in the student's senior year.

Formerly used: ETS Proficiency Profile Exam (2013-24)

Criteria for Success:

Minimum average of 2.75 (out of 4) for each criteria of rubric

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas (circle one or more but not all five):

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning, and
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

Percentage of Students Marginal or Proficient

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
ETS Proficiency Profile Level 2 Writing	100.0%	100.0%	80.0%	84.2%	81.8%	78.6%	84.2%	57.9%	76.2%	78.6%

As of 2023-24, ETS data is no longer used to measure this core competency.

Semester	N	Context & Purpose	Argument Development	Genre/Discipline Conventions	Sources and Evidence	Syntax and Mechanics
Spring 2024	12	3.67	3.71	3.29	3.67	3.92
Spring 2025	7	3.93	3.36	3.50	3.64	3.57
Spring 2026	2	3.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	3.00

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

The students continue to exceed the criteria for success in each category.

***2025-26: because there were only two students in the cohort this year, no major conclusions can be reached.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

Spend additional intentional time on writing skills in POL2070 and continue to monitor the data.

Rubric Used: IS PLO4_ Written Communication Assessment Rubric for International Studies (based on AAC&U Written Communication Value Rubric)

Rubric Used

IS_PLO4_ Written Communication Assessment Rubric for International Studies

Students who complete the program in political science will be able to: **Develop and express ideas in written communication in an effective and scholarly manner.** This PLO #4 aligns with core competency #1 (Written communication).

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestones (3)	Milestones (2)	Benchmark (1)
Context of and Purpose for Writing <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, whether or not they did the assignment as asked in the prompt, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</i>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Argument Development	Offers a sophisticated, relevant, and compelling argument to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's deep understanding	Offers a sophisticated, relevant, and compelling argument that explores ideas within the subject matter	Offers an appropriate and relevant argument	Offers an appropriate but simple argument
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions <i>Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in international studies</i>	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to political science, including organization, content, presentation, formatting, proper citation, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to political science, including organization, content, presentation, citation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to political science, including basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high- quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for international studies and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible and relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within international studies and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for international studies and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax, Grammar, and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
International Studies Core Competencies
Quantitative Reasoning
2025-2026

Learning Outcome:

Quantitative Reasoning: Students will be able to solve problems that are quantitative in nature.

Outcome Measure:

A series of questions involving interpreting graphs, statistics, and hypotheses relevant to social science research was given like a quiz during the Senior Seminar course. Students' answers were evaluated based on the PS_PLO1_Quantitative Reasoning Assessment Rubric for Political Science found [here](#).

Formerly used: ETS Proficiency Profile Exam (2013-24)

Criteria for Success (how do you judge if the students have met your standards):

Minimum average of 2.75 (out of 4) for each criteria of rubric

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas (circle one or more but not all five):

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning, and
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

Percentage of Students Marginal or Proficient

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
ETS Proficiency Profile Level 2 Math	100.0 %	66.7%	80.0%	57.9%	90.9%	67.3%	68.4%	63.2%	66.7%	82.1%

*As of 2023-24, ETS data is no longer used to measure this core competency.

** No data was collected from 2023-25.

Semester	N	Interpretation	Representation	Application/Analyses	Communication
Spring 2026	2	3.00	2.75	2.00	2.50

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

***2025-26: because there were only two students in the cohort this year, no major conclusions can be reached.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

HPS: CC Data – International Studies, 2025-26

Because of the lack of data, see analysis for Political Science data.

Rubric Used: Students' answers were evaluated based on the PS_PLO1_Quantitative Reasoning Assessment Rubric for Political Science found [here](#).

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
International Studies Core Competencies
Oral Communication
2025-2026

Learning Outcome:

IS PLO 5 aligns with oral communication core competency.

PLO 5. Students who complete the program in International Studies will be able to demonstrate oral communication abilities, particularly to convey complex ideas, recognize diverse viewpoints, and offer empirical evidence of an argument.

Outcome Measure:

In 2017, 2018, and 2020, assessment was completed on video résumés submitted by senior international studies students. In 2019, assessment was based on observations from the oral presentation students give in POL435 Global Governance (Fall 2018). Since 2021, we have been assessing the video resumes submitted by all International Studies seniors in the Senior Seminar course.

Criteria for Success:

Minimum average of 2.75 (out of 4) for each criteria of rubric

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas (highlight one or more):

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad and Integrative Knowledge
3. Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

International Studies PLO 5 Oral Communication Assessment Rubric – Average Student Scores:

			Orga nizat ion	Lang uage	Deliv ery	Co mpl exit y	Div erse Vie wpo ints	Emp irica l Evid enc e	Cen tral Mes sag e	Avera ge Score
Course	Semester	N								
IS Senior	Spr 2017	1	3.00	4.00	3.00	Na	Na	3.00	2.00	3.00
IS Senior	Spr 2018	2	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.60	3.67
IS Senior	Spr 2020	2	3.83	4.00	3.33	3.17	4.00	3.83	4.00	3.74
IS Senior	Spr 2021	6	3.47	3.38	3.4	3.21	4.00	3.63	3.55	3.52
IS Senior	Spr 2022	11	3.33	3.49	3.24	2.94	3.06	3.36	3.13	3.14
IS Senior	Spr 2023	14	3.64	3.82	3.39	3.61	3.61	3.75	3.61	3.63
IS Senior	Spr 2024	11	3.34	3.31	3.31	3.43	3.56	3.57	3.37	3.43
IS Senior	Spr 2025	7	4.00	3.83	3.58	3.67	3.75	3.92	4.00	3.82
IS Senior	Spr 2026	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

***2025-26: there were only two students in the cohort this year and neither completed the assignment used to do the assessment for this core competency.

This was the fifth year that students completed this assessment as part of the Senior Seminar course. Students are still meeting and exceeding the benchmarks in all categories. There was a decline in 2022 on several datapoints likely because I did not do an adequate job making clear the expectations of the assignment I gave them this year in the Seminar course. The students continue to exceed the criteria for success in each category.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

The professor of the Senior Seminar course (me) needs to continue to be clear about the expectations regarding this assignment. Rather than just giving the students the assignment, I will continue to walk them through the details. Continue to have in-person discussions with our students about the “why” behind a video résumé. Otherwise, no changes at this time, other than to collect and monitor the longitudinal data.

Rubric Used: IS PLO5_ Oral Communication Assessment Rubric for International Studies (based on AAC&U Oral Communication Value Rubric)

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
International Studies Core Competencies
Information Literacy
2025-2026

Learning Outcome:

IS PLO 3 aligns with Information Literacy Core Competency.

International Studies PLO 3. Students who complete the program in International Studies will be able to demonstrate social scientific information literacy.

Outcome Measure:

Research paper written during the student's final year at PLNU (must be from an upper-division course).

Criteria for Success:

Minimum average of 2.75 (out of 4) for each criteria of rubric

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas (highlight one or more):

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad and Integrative Knowledge
3. Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

International Studies PLO 3_ Information Literacy Assessment Rubric – Average Student Scores:

Course	Semester	N	Determine Extent of Information	Access Needed Information	Evaluate Information & Sources	Use Information for a Purpose	Average
IS Senior	Spring 2018	6	3.17	2.50	3.17	2.83	2.92
IS Senior	Spring 2019	3	3.33	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.58
IS Senior	Spring 2020	2	3.67	3.33	3.50	4.00	3.63
IS Senior	Spring 2021	6	3.58	3.25	3.50	3.67	3.50
IS Senior	Spring 2022	11	3.39	3.36	3.27	3.36	3.35
IS Senior	Spring 2023	14	3.32	3.11	3.39	3.25	3.27
IS Senior	Spring 2024	12	3.75	3.29	3.38	3.46	3.47
IS Senior	Spring 2025	7	3.86	3.79	3.71	3.86	3.81
IS Senior	Spring 2026	2	3.00	3.50	2.75	3.00	3.06

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

Our students are generally performing well but we'll continue to work with them in this area, especially the "Access Needed Information" category. While students continue to be satisfactory in this category, there is still an overreliance on questionable Internet sources as opposed to more academic, peer-

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reviewed sources. There has been a vast improvement this year in this category, but this may be due to an unusually stellar cohort, so we will continue to monitor. The students continue to exceed the criteria for success in each category.

***2025-26: because there were only two students in the cohort this year, no major conclusions can be reached.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

We will encourage students to consult with our Ryan Library liaison, utilize interlibrary loan, and visit the UCSD and SDSU libraries as a way to broaden the scope of their academic research. We also need to look for better tools to provide the students about how to use sources in all classes (rather than just the Scope and Methods course).

Rubric Used:

IS PLO3_ Information Literacy Assessment Rubric for International Studies (based on AAC&U Information Literacy Value Rubric)

Rubric Used

IS_PLO3_ Information Literacy Assessment Rubric for International Studies

Students who complete the program in political science will be able to: **Demonstrate Social Scientific Information Literacy.** This PLO #3 aligns with core competency #3 (Information Literacy).

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestones (3)	Milestones (2)	Benchmark (1)
Determine the Extent of Information Needed	Effectively defines the scope of the research question or thesis. Effectively determines key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected directly relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis completely. Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis incompletely (parts are missing, remains too broad or too narrow, etc.). Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected partially relate to concepts or answer research question.	Has difficulty defining the scope of the research question or thesis. Has difficulty determining key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected do not relate to concepts or answer research question.
Access the Needed Information	Accesses information using effective, well-designed search strategies and most appropriate information sources.	Accesses information using variety of search strategies and some relevant information sources. Demonstrates ability to refine search.	Accesses information using simple search strategies, retrieves information from limited and similar sources.	Accesses information randomly, retrieves information that lacks relevance and quality.
Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources. Intended purpose is achieved.	Communicates and organizes information from sources. The information is not yet synthesized, so the intended purpose is not fully achieved.	Communicates information from sources. The information is fragmented and/or used inappropriately (misquoted, taken out of context, or incorrectly paraphrased, etc.), so the intended purpose is not achieved.
Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally	Students use correctly all of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrate a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published,	Students use correctly three of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published,	Students use correctly two of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical	Students use correctly one of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.

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	confidential, and/or proprietary information.	confidential, and/or proprietary information.	and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	
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