

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
Political Science Core Competencies
Critical Thinking

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 AAC&U 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 of Context	Student's Position	Conclusions
Spring 2024	9	3.56	3.11	3.11	3.17	3.22
Spring 2025	15	3.50	3.33	3.30	3.30	3.43
Spring 2026	18	3.52	3.41	3.27	3.38	3.20

HPS: CC Data – Political Science, 2025-26

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

Our HPS students have historically performed well with regard to this learning outcome.

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 political science Program (modeled after AAC&U Critical Thinking Assessment Rubric)

Rubric Used**PS_PLO2_Critical Thinking Assessment Rubric for Political Science**

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
Political Science Core Competencies
Written Communication

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

	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%	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 and Purpose	Argument	Genre/Discipline Conventions	Sources and Evidence	Grammar & Mechanics
Spring 2024	9	3.78	3.17	3.39	3.50	3.44
Spring 2025	15	3.70	3.33	3.33	3.13	3.40
Spring 2026	18	3.64	3.11	3.29	3.44	3.44

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

Our political science students have strong written communication skills, though we will continue to monitor this criterion, given some of the data from 2020-23.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

Continue to spend additional intentional time on writing skills in POL2070, offer more feedback on written assignments, and continue to monitor the data.

Rubric Used: PS PLO4_ Written Communication Assessment Rubric for political science (based on AAC&U Written Communication Value Rubric)

Rubric Used

PS_PLO4_ Written Communication Assessment Rubric for Political Science

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 political science</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 political science and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible and relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within political science and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for political science 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
Political Science Core Competencies
Quantitative Reasoning

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

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
ETS Proficiency Profile Level 2 Math	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/Analysis	Communication
Spring 2026	18	3.12	3.22	2.86	3.01

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

Our PS students have historically struggled to meet the benchmark, but our nine year average (71.5%) is satisfactory. The new measurement tool implemented this year suggests the students are meeting the benchmarks currently.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

We will continue to closely monitor the longitudinal data. We will also encourage our students to utilize more quantitative research methods in their projects.

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

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
Political Science Core Competencies
Oral Communication
2023-24

Learning Outcome:

Oral Communication: Students who complete the program in political science will be able to demonstrate oral communication abilities, particularly to convey complex ideas, recognize diverse viewpoints, and offer empirical evidence of an argument. Political Science PLO #5 aligns with oral communication core competency.

Outcome Measure:

In 2017, 2018, and 2020 assessment was completed on video résumés submitted by senior political science students. In 2014 and 2019, assessment was completed on presentations by senior political science students. Since 2021, we have been assessing the video résumés submitted by all political science seniors in the spring 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:

Oral Communication Value Rubric - Average Student Scores:

Semester	N	Organization	Language	Delivery	Complexity	Diverse Viewpoints	Empirical Evidence	Central Message
Fall 2014		2.8	3.3	3.2	NA	NA	3.3	3.0
Spring 2017		4.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	NA	4.0	4.0
Spring 2018		4.0	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.3
Spring 2019		4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0
Spring 2020		3.67	3.67	3.39	3.56	3.61	3.78	3.33
Spring 2021	13	3.54	3.38	3.33	3.50	3.58	3.58	3.54
Spring 2022	8	3.19	3.21	2.92	2.83	3.02	3.51	3.00
Spring 2023	8	3.88	3.69	3.25	3.44	3.38	3.31	3.38
Spring 2024	9	3.61	3.72	3.28	3.67	3.50	3.67	3.83
Spring 2025	15	3.73	3.80	3.60	3.60	3.33	3.97	3.90
Spring 2026	14	3.61	3.81	3.22	3.12	3.40	3.88	3.73

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

This was the sixth year that we assigned this task as part of the Senior Seminar class, which means that there was a larger sample size and students did not “opt in” as in earlier years, so recent scores are more representative of the communication skills of our graduating political science students.

The scores are strong, indicating that our students leave PLNU with strong oral communication skills, which aligns with what we hear from employers and internship providers.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

Have in-person discussions with our students about the “why” behind a video résumé and the importance of being concise, engaging, and confident. Otherwise, no changes at this time, other than to collect and monitor the longitudinal data.

Rubric Used: PS_PLO5_Oral Communication Assessment Rubric for Political Science (based on AAC&U Oral Communication Value Rubric)

HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
Political Science Core Competencies
Information Literacy

Learning Outcome:

Information literacy: Political science PLO 4. Students who complete the program in political science will be able to demonstrate social scientific information literacy. Political Science PLO 4 aligns with Information Literacy Core Competency.

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.

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:

Semester	N	Determine Extent of Information Needed	Access Needed Information	Evaluate Information & Sources	Use Information for a Purpose	Access/Use Ethically & Legally
Spr 2015		3.2	3.0	3.2	3.0	3.6
Spr 2016		3.2	3.3	2.8	3.2	3.7
Spr 2017		3.3	3.3	2.7	2.3	3.7
Spr 2018		2.8	2.8	3.4	3.4	3.3
Spr 2019		3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	4.0
Spr 2020		3.33	3.11	3.28	3.44	3.83
Spr 2021	13	3.5	3.53	3.11	3.46	3.73
Spr 2022	8	2.88	2.88	3.17	3.33	3.54
Spr 2023	8	3.44	3.25	3.06	3.06	3.75
Spr 2024	9	3.44	3.39	3.17	3.22	3.78
Spr 2025	15	3.43	3.23	3.27	3.33	3.57
Spr 2026	18	3.37	3.11	3.13	3.09	3.44

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

Our students are performing well but we'll continue to work with them in this area, especially with regard to moving them away from an overreliance on Internet sources to more academic, peer-reviewed sources.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

We will encourage them 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). Finally, we would like to work with them more in the area of evaluation, so that they go beyond just obtaining the academic work and really use it to deepen their answering of their research question (e.g. with a really robust and insightful literature review section in their papers).

Rubric Used: AAC&U Information Literacy Value Rubric.