

Annual Assessment School of Social and Behavioral Sciences University of Arkansas at Monticello 2011-2012

Major Programs of Study

There are five major programs of study within the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Two culminate in a Bachelor of Arts degree:

- History
- Political Science

Two culminate in a Bachelor of Science:

- Criminal Justice
- Psychology

One culminates in a Bachelor of Social Work:

• Social Work (Accredited Professional Degree)

Minors are offered in all of these disciplines, as well as two others in human services and sociology. Course work only is offered in anthropology and geography.

The program submitted for a detailed review this year is Political Science.

Mission

The mission of the <u>School of Social and Behavioral Sciences</u> is to develop competent professionals, leaders, and socially responsible graduates who can effectively interact with diverse populations, function in multi-disciplinary and technologically advance work environments in their chosen occupations and professions, and serve the citizens of the state the nation and the global community.

1. What are the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for your unit? How do you inform the public and other stakeholders (students, potential students, and the community) about your SLOs?

A student who graduates with a Bachelor of Arts in *Political Science* degree from the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SSBS) should be able to engage in or have:

- (1) **Research**: Develop comprehensive research skills (both qualitative and quantitative) related to the study of social and behavioral sciences, including the use of appropriate technologies and methodologies to gather, analyze, and communicate research data and results.
- (2) **Critical Thinking**: Develop and use critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge of major arguments, assumptions, and evidence from the social and behavioral sciences.
- (3) **Grounded Knowledge**: Develop a knowledge and understanding of the major arguments, assumptions, and evidence from the social and behavioral sciences.
- (4) **Presentation Skills**: Develop the skills needed to evaluate and manage information for presentation in academic and professional settings, i.e. to present findings in front of groups of faculty and peers in a comprehensive and convincing manner.
- (5) **Self-Awareness**: Develop an understanding of self and the world by examining the content and processes used in social and behavioral sciences, including participating in Horizon Program events that take students to visit different locations not only within Arkansas, but throughout the United States and in Europe and Africa.
- (6) **Preparedness for the Workforce**: Be prepared to enter the workforce with the communication and leadership skills needed for success in careers in the social sciences, government and/or teaching, as well as preparation for graduate and professional studies.

Student learning outcomes are presented on the syllabi for individual courses as they are included in that specific course. Additionally, they are publicly displayed on the SSBS website. Specifically, the Student Learning Outcomes can be accessed at: http://www.uamont.edu/Social_and_Behavioral/.

The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences communicates the SSBS Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and expectations (both by and for the student) to **prospective students** for all SSBS majors (including Political Science) in the following ways:

- Prospective students, including those interested in majoring in Political Science, are contacted by the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences by **letter** in response to recruitment lists provided by the University and/or students attending orientation sessions hosted by the university. These individuals are encouraged to visit with faculty during office hours, sit in on lectures and/or attend orientation meetings hosted by the department at the beginning of the fall semester.
- For those students that have already designated their interest in majoring in Political Science, the SSBS sends out **recruitment letters** addressing a specific interest in the field of Political Science and how UAM prepares them for their future.
- Direct contact is made to prospective students through **departmental displays** manned by representatives of SSBS at UAM campus-wide events connected with Homecoming, Parents Day, Weevil Welcome Days, etc, whereby students are offered informational material related to studying Political Science in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences.
- Additionally, the SBSS produces **brochures** (displayed on bulletin boards throughout the MCB building, and **fact sheets** about careers in the field of Political Science. These are available in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences main office, on request. See Appendices 1 and 2.

Once in the major, students are primarily concerned about the SLOs associated with their individual courses. While all Political Science courses adhere to the general SLOs outlined in Question 1, each class has specialized goals and objectives associated with the course structure of individual courses. These course-specific SLOs are communicated to current students in the following ways:

• Upon entering the SSBS, new students are advised of the expected learning outcomes by their faculty advisors and/or by the dean during their initial **registration** and often during subsequent preregistration cycles verbally. Additionally, students are issued a Political Science-based **8-semester plan** (see Appendix 3), which outlines the required courses needed to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. These tactics, when combined, are designed to ensure that students understand what is expected of them and are able to track their progress while studying at UAM.

Students and the general public can view SSBS SLOs by accessing previously posted Assessment Reports at http://www.uamont.edu/Social_and_Behavioral/

2. Demonstrate how your unit's specific student learning outcomes (goals) are linked to the mission of UAM. Please use your enumerated list from Question 1 to complete the section to the right.

UAM MISSION STATEMENT	SLO's from Question 1
The mission the University of Arkansas at Monticello shares with universities is the commitment to search for truth understanding throu scholastic endeavor.	,
The University seeks to enhance and share knowledge to preserve a promote the intellectual content of society and to educate people for critic thought.	
The University provides learning experiences that enable students synthesize knowledge, communicate effectively use knowledge and technolo with intelligence and responsibility and act creatively within their own and oth cultures.	gy
The University strives for excellence in all its endeavors. Education opportunities encompass the liberal arts basic and applied sciences select professions and vocational/ technical preparation. These opportunities a founded in a strong program of general education and are fulfilled throu contemporary disciplinary curricula certification programs a	ed re
vocational/technical education or workforce training. The University assure opportunities in higher education for both traditional and non-traditional studen and strives to provide an environment that fosters individual achievement a personal development.	nts

3. Provide an analysis of the student learning data from your unit. How are these data used as evidence of learning?

The Political Science faculty strives to help Political Science majors achieve the SSBS SLOs set for them. To this end, they have created a curriculum that leads students through a series of specific classes that sequentially develops information bases and skills needed to meet SLOs. When taken in sequence, students progress logically through skill sets that help them improve their research and critical thinking skills, which in turn translate into a grounded knowledge of Political Science, an enhanced potential for graduate study and preparedness for the workforce.

Political Science majors develop SLOs through a range of activities, both inside and outside of the classroom. Skills related to the development of the student's research, writing and critical thinking capabilities come with experience and the completion of writing assignments adhering to strict referencing policies, analytical research encompassing the most recent findings, and comprehensive exams. The essential vocabulary and basic concepts of Political Science are gained in the required (core) introductory courses. Writing and research skills, as well as the ability to interpret the type of data that historians encounter and work with are developed as part of the Research Course (PSCI 2283-Research Methods in Social Sciences). There is also the opportunity for students to pursue independent study of Political Science under the tutelage of one of the faculty members. This course is used extensively in Political Science where a substantial number of students have both the demonstrated abilities and the interest in writing research papers for presentations and conferences. A product of these activities is usually a scholarly research paper. Students are encouraged to present their papers to Political Science on papers at conferences and Association meetings.

When completed, the Political Science curriculum is meant to provide students with:

- Comprehensive and Accurate Research Skills
- Efficiency in Oral Presentations
- Grounded knowledge
- Preparedness for the Workforce/Graduate School

Pre/Post Tests

In Political Science, the assessment process is specific to the individual courses taken and is outlined on the respective syllabus handed out on the first day of class. Given the nature of Political Science curricula in general, there is no unitary content to be assessed pre- or post-completion except within an individual course. With only two faculty members teaching the entire course curriculum with some cross-listing and adjunct support, and given that they work with the same student group semester after semester, it is possible to monitor the general academic achievement of individual students over the course of their degree program and make decisions accordingly.

Capstone Courses

Capstone course are not used in the Political Science department. This does not mean that Political Science majors are not encouraged to produce research projects similar to those found in capstone courses. With regard to the core philosophy underpinning the department's curriculum standards, the Political Science department offers a changing compendium of factual information which is necessary to be a proficient in the field. But the major objective is to inculcate in our students a way of thinking about Political Science and political events that is both creative and logical. These critical thinking skills are applied in every course in the curriculum, but are most evident in the Research, Seminars and Independent study courses.

The intention is that students will use the skills they acquire in these classes to write better papers in for presentation and publication. This productivity almost invariably leads to student research papers that are worthy of submission to meetings and conferences for presentation to scholars in the field at the highest level. Although we only have undergraduate students in political Science, they have presented to groups that are composed of presenters from graduate programs and faculty from prestigious universities. Not only is this experience tantamount to a capstone experience it is noteworthy enough to receive national and international reconition for the UAM Political Science students and the program.

Graduation Rates

Graduation rates also serve as one of the Unit's evidence of whether students have achieved the School's SLOs. Table 1 reports the number of students who graduated with a baccalaureate degree in Political Science between the academic years of August 2009 through May 2012.

Table 1Baccalaureate Degrees Awarded in Political ScienceAugust 2009 – May 2012

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Political Science	7	8	4

Table 2Honor Graduates by MajorFive-Year Profile2009-2012

	2008-09	2010-11	2011-12
Political Science			
Cum Laude	1	2	0
Magna Cum Laude	2	0	1
Summa Cum Laude	0	0	1
Total	3	2	2

4. Based on your analysis of student learning data in Question 3, include an explanation of what seems to be improving student learning and what should be revised.

Most of the objective assessments for the Political Science program are global in nature and have the dichotomous nature of being accomplished, or not, without gradations. Students either graduate or not and their papers/presentations are either accepted at conferences or not. More subtle identification of SLO accomplishment occurs at the course level. Professors report that writing skills have improved for the average and above average students as a consequence of increased emphasis in that area. Ironically, those students who are struggling the most academically show less improvement from instruction regarding research and writing. This has led to a change or revision in the feedback for students in their demonstrated areas of weakness. More time is being spent with weaker students giving specific remediation in writing and research skills.

5. Other than course level/grades, describe/analyze other data and other sources of data whose results assist your unit to improve student learning.

Surveys

Social and Behavioral Sciences surveys students each semester to assess the level of perceived critical thinking and the changes in knowledge related to the discipline. In 2011-12, the following results were obtained:

Question / Topic	Percent Improving
Improved ability to analyze and evaluate new information (critical thinking)	86%
New knowledge of the field of Political Science	93%
Increase understanding of concepts	83%

In addition to these survey data, we have begun focus groups for the purpose of further identifying the meeting of SLO's but the initial attempts in were done in Psychology and although they seemed fruitful they don't currently apply to Political Science. During 2012-2103 the focus group concept will be applied to all SSBS degree programs and the results will be included in the next year's SSBS Assessment report.

Teacher Made Tests and Research Papers

In the Political Science department, the assessment process is specific to the courses, since no pre-post testing is used. Curricular evaluation has always been done on a course by course basis where student learning outcomes are assessed against the criteria set forth for the course by the instructor. Passing each course suggests proficiency with the material presented in that course and thereby prepares them for their upper-division courses. Writing is extensively used as a way to assess not only content knowledge but also the ability to think and compose those thoughts coherently. Writing is included in both exams and papers which are required for Political Science courses.

Changes Related to Student Performance

Based on feedback from the course assessment elements, especially the written components, the Political Science faculty has begun to provide definitions and examples of plagiarism along with an explanation of the problem with this behavior. This emphasis on academic ethics has resulted in a decrease in plagiarism over the past two years.

6. As a result of the review of your student learning data in previous questions, explain what efforts your unit will make to improve student learning over the next assessment period. Be specific indicating when, how often, how much, and by whom these improvements will take place.

Based on the previous assessment of SLO's for SSBS, including Political Science, we have specifically increased the writing component for upper level courses. Also, Political Science is offering an Advanced Research Methods course to increase the number of students who receive more intensive training in the area that seems most productive in meeting or exceeding SLO's. This course is currently being offered as a seminar but, if shown to be effective, will be added to the catalog as a new course.

Informal Meetings with Students

The Dean of SSBS is in daily contact with students who have questions or concerns about such issues as changes in curriculum, opportunities post-graduation, faculty availability, etc. Discussions are underway to find ways to formalize this type of student interaction and feedback, i.e. through public meetings and official letters sent from the SSBS. One step has already been taken in this direction. During the 2009 spring semester, students that made the Chancellor/Dean's list were sent letters asking them to consider serving as a mentor for incoming freshman and sophomores in the SSBS. The intention is two-fold. First, these volunteers (who will each earn a certificate of service at the end of the academic year to put in their resumes) will help orient new students into the program. Secondly, it will help with student recruitment and retention, since each incoming group of students will become aware of the opportunities in the school, will become involved and will ultimately serve as the mentors of future incoming freshman/sophomores.

Senior/Alumni Surveys

The Senior/Alumni surveys are being revised again in an attempt to garner information about the last three of the SLO's. They will also include a section designed to assess critical thinking and problem solving skills derived from the current psychometric literature in those two areas.

Faculty Meetings

Faculty members of each division frequently meet for **impromptu divisional meetings**, both formally and informally, to discuss student performance on measures such as teacher made tests, textbook adoption and other course assignments. **Departmental meetings** are held approximately once a month and allow the entire school to meet and discuss issues that impact all SSBS students and faculty, including student retention, undergraduate research initiatives, conference participation, registrar deadlines and conference reports. Each fall, one of these meetings is held jointly with the Provost and Chancellor in attendance. They ask and answer questions in an open way so that any issues regarding the program can be discussed. This has led to several changes in program implementation.

7. What new tactics to improve student learning has your unit considered, experimented with, researched, reviewed or put into practice over the past year?

The Political Science program has been very involved in travel- learning experiences for several years. Based on student feedback the availability of travel/study programs has been increased. This year student trips with Political Science faculty accompaniment were taken to Hawaii; London, England; Boston; Washington, D.C. and Berlin, Germany. This increase in opportunities for broadening their horizons increases students' openness to new ideas which of course, in turn, enhances the students' ability to benefit from almost all of their coursework.

8. How do you ensure shared responsibility for student learning and assessment among students, faculty and other stakeholders?

While this assessment report is focused specifically on the Political Science department, this discipline is a part of the SSBS and as such, Political Science students are able to participate in all of the following:

- **Student Evaluations** of faculty are distributed electronically to students in all classes towards the middle-to-end of each semester. These evaluations are anonymous and ask the student to provide both qualitative and quantitative analysis of their instructor and the specific course taken during that semester. This information is returned to the individual faculty member after final grades for that semester have been finalized and after being perused by the Dean. Both quantitative and qualitative questions are used in these surveys ranging from study habits to questions related to the overall effectiveness of the professor, including his/her concern for the student, his/her capacity to lead class discussions and the type of feedback provided on the assignments when the assignments are returned to the student. At the end of the survey, students are given the opportunity to write individual comments about any aspect of the course. This information is then used by the individual faculty member to continually improve his/her course syllabi and expectations to better meet the needs of the student without compromising the objectives held for class assignments/tests.
- Students are included in the assessment of the departmental decisions at the time when new faculty is interviewed and hired. During the interview process, each candidate must give a **lecture** to a class in the department that they will be teaching, if hired. At the end of the lecture, students can ask questions about the lecture that they just heard, or alternatively about the way that the person being interviewed envisions their role as a university professor. A new tactic has been to organize actual question and answer sessions with students, to give some of the better students in the school the chance to have input into the type of professors that are hired to teach the courses that they will need to graduate.

9. Describe and provide evidence of efforts your unit is making to recruit/retain/graduate students in your unit/at the University. (A generalized statement such as "we take a personal interest in our students" is not evidence.)

The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences is engaged in several programs/methods to help retain students in Political Science specifically, and SSBS more generally. These include:

- Academic honor societies, specifically for this report, the Political Science National Honor Society have been established and reorganized this year to help build a social cohesion to our student body and to help retain our high achieving students.
- The establishment (2009) of an **SSBS mentoring program**, where our upper-division majors will meet with the new recruits and give them advice about how to succeed in the department and work to their best potential throughout their academic career. For this, they will receive a *Certificate of Service to the Department* before graduation.
- Students can pursue **Independent Undergraduate Research Projects** under the supervision of a number of SSBS faculty members. The majority of these projects have been presented at state, regional and national conferences, in both undergraduate and professional settings.
- The **Annual Awards Banquet**, where outstanding seniors (and a limited number of other students that have gone above and beyond what is expected of them) are brought together and honored for their academic achievements and/or their service to the school
- Academic Achievement Letters are currently being drafted to be sent in future semesters to students that excel academically, whether they make the Chancellor or Dean's lists or they present a paper at a conference. These letters can then be put into their portfolios and used to promote themselves for jobs, graduate school or law school.
- The SSBS *Horizons* **Program** offer students more travel/study opportunities than previously, which helps personally engage them in their studies and expands their knowledge of the world. The confidence and knowledge that they gain on these trips has been found to help retain students toward graduation, but also to prepare them for their careers after graduation.
- **Graduate/Professional School Forum** gives students the chance to interact with professors and professionals in various fields to discuss the choosing of schools, the application process, GRE/LSAT test tips and study guides and the study within and survival skills necessary for successful graduate studies. Students from every classification (freshman-senior) may attend. This forum provides a way for students to understand that the faculty and staff in the SSBS care to see them succeed to the point of graduation and beyond.

Conclusion

The Political Science department is staffed with two very qualified and gifted teachers in the Political Science program both with Ph.D. degrees from outstanding Doctoral Programs (the University of Melbourne and the University of Southern California). Each of these individuals has been recognized for his/her excellence in Political Science. Dr. Carol Strong has mentored numerous students and accompanied them to international meetings (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, Conference on Law and Society) and countless national and regional conferences. She served as mentor for a Political Science student who was accepted into the most prestigious Political Science graduate program in the region (and nation) at the Clinton School for Public Service. Dr. Chris Wright consults with the F.B. I. as an advisor on terrorist activities and is one of the co-founders of the Horizons travel/study programs which takes students to the United Kingdom (England, Ireland and Scotland). In conclusion, the strength of the faculty especially as expressed through student successes is thoroughly achieving the SLO's outlined for Political Science and SSBS.





Our Degrees

The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences offers the Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and Political Science as well as the Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice and Psychology, and Bachelor of Social Work.

History

As a history major, you will study both world and American history, from the beginnings of civilization through modern times. Our faculty are nationally recognized scholars in Arkansas history as well as the history of the Civil War, colonial America, Great Britain, and Africa.

Political Science/Pre-Law

Political Science is the study of government, politics, and the law from both an American and global viewpoint. Students who choose this major will have career opportunities in law, public administration, or politics.

Criminal Justice

One of the hottest degrees in the field of social science, a degree in criminal justice opens a wide choice of career opportunities, including law enforcement, corrections, probation and parole, human services, and the courts. Criminal Justice majors may also apply to law school or other graduate programs.





Social Work

Much like criminal justice, social work is a high growth field filled with career opportunities. A social work degree may lead to a career with state agencies such as the Department of Human Services as well as jobs in schools, hospitals, mental health centers, and homes for aging. The field is wide open for licensed social workers, and should you decide to obtain a mater's degree, your opportunities will only expand.

Psychology

Psychology is the always fascinating, sometimes surprising, study of human behavior. You may study early psychology and the lifespan of human development or physiological psychology, including the workings of the human brain and how people learn. A degree in psychology will open career opportunities in social services or health-related fields or in law enforcement, private industry, and government

APPENDIX 2

Departmental Fact Sheets, Psychology

Majors/Minors Offered



Programs Offered

Majors

- Criminal Justice
- History
- History and Social Studies (teaching related)
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Social Work (accredited)

Minors

- Criminal Justice
- History
- Human Services
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sociology

Course work available in Anthropology, Geography and Sociology

School Highlights

- University recognition for faculty excellence in teaching
- Multiple opportunities for student and faculty interaction
- Small class size
- National field study opportunities
- Internships for selected majors
- Rapid growth of criminal justice and social work majors
- CSWE accredited Social Work Program
- Student organizations include Psychology Club, Social Work Club (M.A.D.) Phi Alpha National Social Work Honor Society, and American Criminal Justice Association-Lambda Alpha Epsilon.

Graduates from the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences will gain the following student learning outcomes:

- (1) **Research**: Develop comprehensive research skills (both qualitative and quantitative) related to the study of social and behavioral sciences, including the use of appropriate technologies and methodologies to gather, analyze, and communicate research data and results.
- (2) **Critical Thinking**: Develop and use critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge of major arguments, assumptions, and evidence from the social and behavioral sciences.
- (3) **Grounded Knowledge**: Develop a knowledge and understanding of the major arguments, assumptions, and evidence from the social and behavioral sciences.
- (4) **Presentation Skills**: Develop the skills needed to evaluate and manage information for presentation in academic and professional settings, i.e. to present findings in front of groups of faculty and peers in a comprehensive and convincing manner.
- (5) **Self-Awareness**: Develop an understanding of self and the world by examining the content and processes used in social and behavioral sciences, including participating in Horizon Program events that take students to visit different locations not only within Arkansas, but throughout the United States and in the United Kingdom.
- (6) **Preparedness for the Workforce**: Be prepared to enter the workforce with the communication and leadership skills needed for success in careers in the social sciences,

For More Information

P.O. Box 3619 Monticello, AR 71656 (870) 460-1047 Webpage: http://www.uamont.edu/Social_and_Behavioral/

		Political	Science	
Eight-S	emester Plan (as	required by Act	1014 Arkansas 85 th	General Assembly)

First Semester Fall (15 credit hours)	SCH	Second Semester Spring (15 credit hours)	SCH
PSCI 2213 American National Gov.	3	PSCI 2233 Comparative Politics	3
(ACTS Equivalent # PLSC 2003)	-	HIST 1013 Survey of Civilization I	-
ENGL 1013 Composition I	3	(ACTS Equivalent # HIST 1113) or	
(ACTS Equivalent # ENGL 1013)	-	HIST 1023 Survey of Civilization II	3
HIST 2213 American History I or		(ACTS Equivalent # HIST 1123)	-
(ACTS Equivalent # HIST 1113)		ENGL 1023 Composition II	3
HIST 2223 American History II	3	(ACTS Equivalent # ENGL 1023)	
(ACTS Equivalent # HIST 1113)		(ACTS Equivalent # BIOL 1004)	
MATH 1003 Survey of Mathematics		COMM 2283 Bus. And Prof. Speech or	
(ACTS Equivalent # MATH 1003) or		COMM 2203 Interpersonal Comm or	
MATH 1043 College Algebra	3	COMM 1023 Public Speaking	3
(ACTS Equivalent # MATH 1043)		(ACTS Equivalent # SPCH 1003)	
SOC 2213 Introduction to Sociology or		Elective or Minor	3
(ACTS Equivalent # SOCI 1013)			
PSY 1013 Introduction to Psychology	3		
(ACTS Equivalent # PSYC 1103)			
Third Semester Fall (16 credit hours)	SCH	Fourth Semester Spring (16 credit hours)	SCH
PSCI 2283 Research Methods	3	ART 1053 Art Appreciation	
PSCI 4683 Western Political Theory	3	(ACTS Equivalent # ARTA 1003) or	
ENGL 2283 World Literature I		MUS 1113 Music Appreciation	3
(ACTS Equivalent # ENGL 2113) or		(ACTS Equivalent # MUSC 1003)	
ENGL 2293 World Literature II	3	Science Course with Lab*** (see below)	4
(ACTS Equivalent # ENGL 2123)		Humanities Elective	3
Science Course with Lab*** (see below)	4	Social Science Elective	3
Elective or Minor	3	Elective or Minor	3
Fifth Semester Fall (15 credit hours)	SCH	Sixth Semester Spring (15 credit hours)	SCH
PSCI 3313 Statistical Methods	3	PSCI Elective (3000 level or higher)	3
PSCI Elective (3000 level or higher)	3	PSCI Elective (3000 level or higher)	3
Foreign Language	3	Foreign Language	3
Elective or Minor	3	Elective or Minor	6
Elective (Math/Science/Technology)	3		
Seventh Semester Fall (15 credit hours)	SCH	Eighth Semester Spring (13 credit hours)	SCH
PSCI Elective (3000 level or higher)	3	PSCI Elective (3000 level or higher)	3
PSCI Elective (3000 level or higher)	3	PSCI Elective (3000 level or higher)	3
B.A. Identity Requirement	3	B.A. Identity Requirement	3
Elective (3000 level or higher)	3	Elective (3000 level or higher)	3
Elective or Minor	3	Elective or Minor	1
		Total SC	H = 120