Introduction: Political Science and General, Liberal Education

Political Science has been taught at Wittenberg for over 100 years, the subject having been established by Benjamin Prince. The chief justification for a separate study of politics derives from the liberal arts tradition: it addresses the need to know and discern intelligible patterns of politics in the often confusing rush of current events and to attempt to place those patterns in a coherent theoretical framework. As such, political science is also firmly a part of the social sciences.

Within the context of Wittenberg, the Political Science Department (hereafter referred to as the department) endeavors to contribute to the General Education Program, including meeting the foundational goals of speaking, research, computing, and diversity. In addition, it also contributes to realizing the math reasoning goal (Z) within General Education. Not only does the department faculty believe that its classes satisfy the General Education and math reasoning goals, but the Program Assessment Survey of graduating seniors over the last four years demonstrates that in overwhelming numbers students agree or strongly agree that the department’s courses help to meet those goals.

- Speaking: the student should be able to speak effectively within and before groups. Many classes at the 200-level and all classes at the 300-level in the department’s curriculum require students to prepare and give oral presentations in front of the class. Many break down class sessions into group discussion units, in which students are expected to participate. Normally, the presentations in front of class concern either individual or group research in which the student has been involved. Additionally, the senior comprehensive exam requires each senior major to give an oral presentation on a topic of the student’s choosing, to present a senior portfolio, and to defend the presentation and answer questions about the portfolio before a panel of two professors. The Methodology class (Poli 260Z) presents their research in a poster session in Hollenbeck. Finally, students who qualify to write honors theses must defend the thesis before a committee of professors and follow it with a presentation at a colloquium attended by political science faculty and majors. Thus, all majors and many others who take department courses will be exposed to the demands of oral presentation.

The student assessment surveys of 2008-2011 (N = 109) show that 90% strongly agree or agree that this goal has been met. Seven percent were neutral and 3% disagree while none strongly disagree. Many students derive satisfaction from presenting papers—and some even ask for more presentations. One student from 2010 notes that, “Everyone should take a Bin Yu class and do foreign policy panels every day for weeks.” Other students report similar impressions from specific classes.
- **Research:** the student should be able to use the library to acquire information and to explore ideas and should understand the role of technology in the collection, analysis and dissemination of information. The department is proud of the accomplishments of its students in this area, as many have presented their works at conferences, some even winning awards for their work. All political science majors are asked to write significant research papers, based mostly on intensive work in the library and on the internet, during the course of their studies. Many begin this work in 200-level courses, which typically require short, research papers. Political Science Methodology (Poli 260Z), a required, writing-intensive class for majors, asks students to research and compose a lengthy paper based upon quantitative analysis. There is a special section of the course that deals with the library and the new technologies used to search for and retrieve materials. All classes at the 300-level demand research papers and are writing-intensive. Thus, all majors in the course of their studies receive significant experience in research. Some go on to present papers at conferences or to write honors theses.

A whopping 97% of those surveyed (N = 110) either agreed or strongly agreed that the department met this General Education goal, with almost 72% in the “strongly agree” category. Three percent were neutral while no students disagreed or strongly disagreed. A common response was that all of their political science courses exposed them to this. One student from 2011 stated, “Every class requires outside research and the use of the resources above.”

- **Computing:** the student should be able to use a computer to help perform a variety of learning activities and should understand the power and limits of computing. The above-cited Methodology class deals specifically with this General Education goal. Part of the class includes training in the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and part of it also expects students to use SPSS for conducting the analysis in their class papers. Since Methodology is required of all majors, everyone gets computing exposure. Some sections of Introduction to Comparative Politics (Poli 102S), the class on Urban Planning and Politics in Moscow (Poli 208S), the American Presidency (Poli 224S), International Political Economy (Poli 253S), and some 300-level classes also contain statistics-based computer applications in studying the topics at hand. All research papers are written with word processing; many class presentations make use of Power Point.

The 2008-2011 senior surveys (N=109) show that a large percentage, again, believe that the department is meeting this General Education goal. A total of 92% reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the department was doing well in exposing them to computing. Seven percent were neutral and less than one percent disagreed. Many different classes from the department curriculum were reported as meeting this goal, not simply Methodology. A good summary comment came from a 2011 student, who noted, “I spent a lot of time on a computer because of Poli Sci, especially Methodology and US Congress.”

- **Diversity:** students should gain an appreciation for and understanding of the role of human diversity in contemporary culture. The department curriculum strongly
reinforces the study of cultures other than the ones our students generally come from. The department demands the completion of Introduction to Comparative Politics (Poli 102S) as part of its major and minor requirements, for example. Furthermore, more specialized classes in specific countries or areas of the world are presented at the 200- and 300-levels under the rubrics of “Comparative Politics” and “International Relations.” The department is an active contributor to the East Asian Studies and Russian and Central Eurasian programs (the directors of both programs are department members) as well as International Studies. Thus department students are often exposed particularly to those areas of the world, although classes on Europe are also popular. A course on Black Politics (Poli 234S) also helps to sensitize students to the African-American experience in the United States. Other classes in American politics typically distinguish their topic from similar systems elsewhere. For example, while the Campaigns and Elections class primarily focuses on U.S. elections, it also contrasts that system with other models from industrialized democracies. Another important matter is the diversity of the department itself, which helps to expose students to professors from other backgrounds, who may have different perspectives on political issues. The Wittenberg Political Science faculty is composed of members from the following backgrounds: Anglo-Saxon, including a native Scot, Chinese, and African-American. It also has two women, one of whom chairs the department.

Students, again, are overwhelmingly in agreement that the department has satisfied this goal. Of the students responding (N=109), 94.5% either agreed or strongly agreed that diversity had been met. Five percent were neutral, and less than one percent disagreed. None strongly disagreed. Students list most of the department’s offerings as meeting this goal. The comparative and international relations courses are especially prominent, as are our political theory courses. We are also pleased to see that students are citing courses at all levels. Comparative Politics (Poli102S) is cited frequently. But so are the 200- and 300-level courses, especially the foreign policy courses. Moreover, the American politics classes fare well here, too. One student in 2011 said “All of Dr. Baker’s courses.” Finally, students particularly note off-campus experiences here: study abroad, Moscow Field Study, the Washington Program, and the Local Government Internship program.

- **Mathematics Reasoning**: students should achieve a level of competence in mathematics that provides the necessary foundation for subsequent college learning and should also strengthen problem-solving skills. The Political Science Methodology course (Poli 260Z) counts toward the “Z” (writing and math intensive) requirement. One of its purposes is to teach statistical applications to political science. A “Q” (quantitative reasoning) course in statistics is strongly recommended of all majors. In addition to statistics, students in Methodology also learn how to collect data (e.g., through survey research, though databases from the library or internet), how to use SPSS in analyzing data, and, more important, how to interpret their results. In the process, students come to understand both the power and limitations of statistical analysis. However, many
other political science courses also explore their topics through mathematical reasoning, even without the math credit.

For 2008-2011, of the students answering this question (N=108), 70% agreed or strongly agreed that they had achieved this goal. Twenty-seven percent were neutral and 3% disagreed or disagreed strongly. These results are not as strong as the previous questions, although they do not reflect much dissatisfaction with meeting the goal, as only 3% disagreed. Most students cite the Methodology course as helping them to achieve this goal. We are not surprised by this result given the course content and requirement that students complete their own data analysis project. But students also mention the Presidency course (Poli 224S), Comparative Politics (Poli 102S), Urban Politics (Poli 222S), Russian Politics (Poli 204H), Public Administration (Poli 320W), European Politics (Poli 305W), Public Policy (Poli 321W), International Political Economy (Poli 253S), North American Politics (Poli 302W), Congress (Poli 323W), and the Moscow Field Study (Poli 208S). So we believe students are exposed to mathematical reasoning in a variety of courses in ways that match the corresponding subject matter.

- **Summary and Comparison of Learning Goal Achievements.** In looking at the results of the last three assessments, the Political Science Department feels satisfied that it has done well to satisfy the general education foundational and learning goals. The following table presents these comparative results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Computing</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Math Reas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-03</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-07</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-11</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one can see, with the exception of mathematics reasoning, all the current scores hover around 90% or above—a portrayal that students are overwhelmingly satisfied that the university’s learning goals are being achieved through the department. The diversity goal has been the one to pick up dramatically, as noted above. We are living in a time of enormous change and globalization. Department members are delighted that the department seems to be meeting the goal of sensitizing students to diversity as it affects and results from national and international politics.

**General Assessment Questions about Political Science**

In examining other questions about assessing the department’s program, we take our guidance from the Assessment Committee to address matters related to the strengths and weaknesses of the program, meeting the educational needs of the students, discussing the department’s learning goals, whether the goals are satisfactory or not, how well the
students meet the goals, whether general education classes in the department successfully address General Education goals, how we are determining whether students meet the learning goals, and any ideas for other methods of assessment. Finally, we address a summary and interpretation of the findings for the committee.

- **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Department.**

  --**Strengths.** We find that the department is able to offer students a sufficiently varied course of study for the major and requires the proper classes. As the department curriculum list indicates, students are asked to take classes in four major areas (comparative politics, international relations, political theory and law, American politics) plus they are required to take four basic courses: Introduction to Comparative Politics, American National Government, Methodology, and a 200-level course in Political Theory. A curriculum revision in 2005 led to a nearly complete restructuring of political theory offerings and the addition of a theory class to the list of required coursework, improving the department curriculum significantly. As discussed above, no student can graduate with a political science major without having a serious grounding in all the General Education goals and in applications of mathematics. The department is squarely within the liberal arts tradition, as Wittenberg defines it, and within the social science disciplines. Based upon a study we completed of other college and university political science programs¹, our department’s curriculum shares significant similarities with those at other schools. The sub-fields are similar, with most schools dividing their curricula into American Politics, International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Political Theory. There was a fairly even distribution between those schools that required Methodology and those that did not. Feedback from past graduates that Methodology is the best way to teach research and cognitive skills in the discipline has helped to convince department members that Political Science Methodology is a worthwhile course to require of our students. Most other political science departments also require a distribution of classes taken from different sub-fields of political science, as do we. Thus, the basic curriculum both reflects strengths of the department and broadly conforms to the standards of other, high-quality colleges and universities.

  Another strength is the department’s faculty. Wittenberg has hired faculty from excellent graduate programs, who have come to teach, first and foremost, and to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their disciplines through research and publication. Two of the seven full-time members of the current department are recipients of the Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award (Hudson and Baker). The department has also won twice the Omicron Delta Kappa Award for Excellence in Teaching (Baker and Rhine). Dr. Hasecke just won the newly-created Collegium Award that recognizes innovation in the classroom. The department contributes one faculty member each year to the WittSem requirement and expects willingly to continue that service in the future. Furthermore, they are key contributors to

¹ These included Haverford, Kalamazoo, Willamette, Gustavus Adolphus, Trinity, St. Olaf, Carleton, Davidson, Grinnell, Central College, Drake, Cornell University, Swarthmore, Williams, and other NCAC schools.
university interdisciplinary programs, including East Asian Studies, International Studies, Russian and Central Eurasian Studies, Urban Studies, Africana Studies, American Studies, Environmental Studies, and Women’s Studies. One department member (Wright) has, through great effort, revivified the Pre-Law Program and provides knowledgeable counseling to students intending to go to law school. Faculty direct internships off campus, including those offered through the Washington Semester Program (the director of which is a department member, Hasecke). Rob Baker (with Jeff Ankrom) takes students every summer for his Local Government Management Program. Gerry Hudson has also organized for students research projects in Moscow, Russia. Overall, then, the teaching faculty excels both in and outside of the classroom.

Furthermore, the faculty have an active research agenda. Simple numbers of publications, paper presentations and other professional activities do not do justice to the high level of attainment of department members, but numbers will have to do here. Looking at the last three assessment periods the following table shows significant department productivity.

Table 2: Department Professional Activity  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Articles²</th>
<th>Paper Presentations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2007</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The political science faculty remain professionally engaged at the highest levels of the discipline. Some of the articles, books and papers have been published or presented in international forums in the Far East, Russia, Georgia, Israel and Europe.

In addition, members have published numerous opinion pieces in newspapers around the nation and world, published book reviews, and granted interviews to television and radio stations locally, nationally, and internationally. They also have served as outside reviewers for numerous texts and scholarly journals.

Two of the faculty earned Fulbright Awards for the 2010-2011 academic year. Professor Wright earned her award to Poland, during which she extended her research into Polish political thought. Professor Hudson earned his award to Georgia. He provided a series of public lectures and conducted interviews, including with Edward Shevardnadze.

These impressive facts demonstrate the faculty’s strong research commitment, which feeds back into the classroom both substantively and methodologically. The

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² These are articles and book chapters published in professional journals and scholarly books.
department strongly believes that those who teach must also have an active research agenda: to remain as effective teachers we must be effective researchers. We think the best way to teach students how to conduct research is if we also are doing it ourselves.

Finally, the faculty is very active in service to the Wittenberg and Springfield communities. Rob Baker is the President of the Board of Trustees for the Rocking Horse Center. He also has been the Acting Faculty Director for the Wittenberg Center for Civic and Urban Engagement. Over the last four years, faculty have held positions on many university-wide committees, including Personnel Board, East Asian Studies, Russian and Central Eurasian Studies, International Studies, Faculty Development Board, Diversity Task Force, Academic Computing Committee, Women’s Studies, Admissions and Financial Aid Committee, Board of Academic Standards, and many other groups. Faculty have contributed time to search committees for the VP for Marketing and the Chief Information Officer. They have served on numerous task forces, including the one that selected a new health care provider for Wittenberg.

--Weaknesses. It is difficult to find weaknesses in a department that offers such a wide range of strengths across all key areas. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some. First, Wittenberg’s department finds itself understaffed in comparison to other liberal arts colleges surveyed in the above-mentioned department study. The range extends from 4 faculty (Hiram) to 19 (Williams). Kenyon (17), Oberlin (17), Allegheny (9), Wooster (10), Denison (9) and Ohio Wesleyan (9) are NCAC colleges that have more political science faculty than Wittenberg. Earlham (7) has the same number as Wittenberg. Only Wabash (6) and Hiram (4) have fewer. Wittenberg, therefore, finds itself in the bottom portion of the NCAC schools regarding numbers of political science faculty.

As the department faces the retirement of Gerry Hudson, any reduction in staff would put the department well below the median of all the colleges studied as well as the NCAC schools. The result would be a weakening of political science offerings. Moreover, our service to other programs, especially the growing INTL, would be undermined by this loss.

- Meeting Educational Needs of Students. The department feels that it meets the educational needs of students for its majors, minors, and general education students.

--Majors. The current distribution of courses seems to produce students who are well-educated in the field. They are asked to distribute their work among the four listed fields of political science, as well as taking the required classes in American National Government (Poli 101S), Introduction to Comparative Politics (Poli 102S), Methodology (Poli 260Z), and a 200-level Political Theory course. Methodology, discussed above, is the most difficult of these classes for most students because it is a course about thinking about political science. Students must select a substantive research topic and write a coherent literature review in this area. But the class is also
conceptual, dealing with methods of research and quantitative analysis. Students must complete a quantitative analysis of their selected topic. Students enter the class apprehensive because of the analysis. Yet at the end of the class, many students evaluate it positively partly because they did not think they could really do it—especially writing a full-length research paper using quantitative methods. Political Science graduates, upon returning to campus, regularly cite Methodology as the class that taught them the most—no matter what they ended up doing for a living. They also believe it was useful for learning how to think rigorously.

The department continues to send students to law school. But our majors also fare well in other, specialized programs. A 2008 graduate is in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. Another graduate attended Virginia Tech for their Masters in Public Administration beginning in 2009. A current student is the recipient of the Boren Award for International Study. A 2011 graduate has been admitted to multiple graduate programs in the United States (Wisconsin, James Madison University) that operate programs in Europe in which the student plans to attend. Another graduate is in the John Glenn School at Ohio State. Thus our students and graduates seek out and perform well in numerous types of graduate programs.

--Minors. The department minor, of course, is significantly less demanding than the major, the main differences being in the number of credit-hours the students must take (20, as opposed to 36) and that Methodology is not required. The purposes of the minor are to give students credit for showing interest, rather than concentration, in the discipline and somewhat to structure the approach to ensure that students have basic introductory knowledge and a small specialization in an area. The minor as structured is sufficient to do this, as it requires American National Government and Introduction to Comparative Politics as base classes and then permits the student to take three more courses in consultation with his/her advisor to achieve a bit of specialization. One of those courses must be at the 300-level. The minor may or may not complement or supplement his/her major field. As in the major, the two required introductory classes ensure that students get exposure to various governmental structures around the world—an important goal for both majors and minors.

--General Education. Students who wish to take just one or a few classes in political science normally take 100- or 200-level courses. As discussed in the Introduction to the assessment, students are exposed to general education goals in these courses. They also, we hope, learn the substance of the classes as well. In examining the department curriculum it is plain that students may take American National Government and/or Introduction to Comparative Politics as broad, introductory classes or may choose to take classes, such as Chinese Politics (Poli 205C) or Public Opinion (Poli 232S), which are more demanding and more specialized, but still accessible to students who just want to sample a political science class or two. It sometimes happens that a non-minor or non-major takes a 300-level course without much preparation in the discipline, if he/she has preparation in a related area, such as
history or economics. Typically, East Asian or Russian and Central Eurasian studies students do this.

- **Department Learning Goals and Assessment of Those Goals.** The department learning goals are three in number (Understanding Politics, Analyzing Politics, and Critically Evaluating Politics) and have associated sub-goals attached to them that define each of the three overall goals. The goals are listed below, together with classes that relate to each of the sub-goals. The list of associated classes is not meant to imply that they are the only ones to satisfy the sub-goals, as many classes serve a multiplicity of goals. The department believes that each of the main goals and their associated sub-goals are satisfactory. It does not anticipate modifying them. As each sub-goal is introduced, we also present information from our Program Assessment Survey, 2008-2011, to examine whether graduating seniors believe that the sub-goals are being met. As is evident, students overwhelmingly agree that the sub-goals, and therefore the overall goals, have been satisfied.

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**Goal #1: Understanding Politics.**

1. A student should be able to describe the roles of citizens and/or subjects in different political systems. This is most easily satisfied with Introduction to Comparative Politics (Poli 102S) and any of the classes listed under the Comparative Politics or International Relations areas of the curriculum. The department believes that students should be aware of how different cultures deal with political issues, to understand why nations behave as they do.

   Student surveys demonstrate that students believe they have been able to do this. Of the respondents for the last four years (N = 110), 76% agree or strongly agree that this sub-goal has been satisfied. About 5% are neutral and 15% disagree while 5% strongly disagree. Our results are not as satisfactory in this assessment period as in the previous one. But for this and subsequent questions, the disgruntlement comes mostly from the 2008 graduates. The 2009-2011 results are overwhelmingly positive. As one student from 2009 remarks, “All of my classes met this requirement fairly well.”

2. A student should be able to describe political structures, institutions, processes and systems. This is satisfied by all of the department offerings, as every class relates to these fundamental political science issues.

   Not surprisingly, students surveyed (N=110) understand this point well and believe that they have met the sub-goal. Seventy-six percent either agree or strongly agree that they have satisfied the goal, whereas 5% are neutral and 20% either disagree or strongly disagree. One student from 2009 comments that, “All of the 200 & 300 courses helped me achieve this goal.”
(3) **A student should be able to identify and describe interdisciplinary linkages important to political science.** The Methodology class in particular tries to discuss political science within this context, in laying out the development of the field and discussing where some political science models come from—for example from economics or psychology. The International Relations course (Poli 251S) also draws the interdisciplinary relationships, as when it discusses game theory. International Political Economy (Poli 253S) draws from several disciplines. Most other classes from all four areas incorporate history, economics, psychology, philosophy, communication and sociology, even if not explicitly noting that this is what is being done. Perhaps it is the job of the department to make the linkages more explicit.

Gauging from student responses, many are making the connections. On that basis (N = 109), over 69% agree or strongly agree that sub-goal (3) is being satisfied, while 10% are neutral, 18% disagree and 3% strongly disagree. Because our courses are inherently interdisciplinary, we are disappointed the results are not better. Perhaps we do not reinforce these linkages because they are so obvious to us. Nonetheless, reflecting the dominant trend, one student from 2011 notes that, “Many of the professors show how other disciplines relate to the study of political science.”

(4) **A student should be able to describe different theories and methods of studying politics, and the role of theory in political analysis.** A number of courses would be particularly useful here, especially Methodology and all the Political Theory courses. All these classes deal with the theoretical context of politics. But all department courses raise theoretical questions of politics; it is simply a matter of the degree to which they do it.

The data from 2008-2011 (N=109) indicate that students strongly agree or agree in good proportions that the sub-goal has been satisfied. About 41% strongly agree while 27% agree, with about 11% being neutral and 21% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The department is concerned that the theory answer was not stronger, even though 68% agreed with it. We think this might be similar to the previous results. All courses include theory and analysis. Perhaps department members should be more explicit in mentioning the “theoretical content” of portions of their class—although it is not possible to imagine how it could be stronger than in the political theory classes. Reflective of student attitudes seems to be the comment from a 2010 graduate “The political science theory class more than adequately helped me achieve this goal.”

A comparison of the current assessment with the previous one demonstrates that political science senior majors continue to agree that the department is meeting its goals in understanding politics. But despite the overwhelmingly positive results, the percent agreeing has declined from the two previous assessment periods, except for the theories and methods question. One, we believe these declines are small given the
relative sample sizes. Two, we believe that most of the decline can be attributed to the graduating class of 2008. For each of these questions, that cohort was uniquely negative as compared to the subsequent graduates. We hope future graduates respond as the graduates of the last three years have done.

Table 3: Understanding Politics—Comparison of 2001-2011 Results
(Percentage Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Achieving the Sub-Goal Listed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Goal Listed</th>
<th>Describe Roles of Citizens</th>
<th>Describe Structures</th>
<th>Describe Interdis. Linkages</th>
<th>Describe Theories and Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-03</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-07</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2011</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

--Goal #2: Analyzing Politics.

(1) A student should be able to demonstrate an ability to utilize the comparative framework and theoretical models, for studying politics. Department members perceive that the comparative framework goes beyond just comparative politics and includes such areas as comparative American state legislatures. In fact, the comparative method is basic to most political science research. Its goal is to achieve results that can be applied across many different systems, such as nation-states. Theoretical models are discussed and applied in many different classes, such as International Relations (Poli 251S), International Organizations (Poli 252S), Political Parties and Interest Groups (Poli 332W), Public Administration (Poli 320W), and European Politics (Poli 305W), and all the Political Theory classes, among many others. Indeed, most political science classes are theory-directed in one way or another.

In responding to this sub-goal (N=110), over 66% of the students from the 2008-2011 surveys either agreed or strongly agreed that this goal was met satisfactorily. About 16% were neutral, and about slightly over 18% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Written comments indicate that theory and statistics, as practiced in Methodology, were what students were thinking of. The general level of abstraction of “theory” probably did not garner as many positive comments as we would have liked. Despite the heavy citation of Methodology, students listed a variety of other courses and assignments that satisfied this, especially simulations and upper-level writing assignments.

(2) A student should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the use of various tools of analysis, such as library research skills, computer skills, and data collection techniques. This goes to the heart of research and analysis. There can be little doubt but that Methodology (Poli 260Z) is the class that emphasizes these goals the most. But library research skills, use of the computer, and data collection begin right from the introductory classes in
political science. Introduction to Comparative Politics (Poli 102S), for instance, requires a data-based paper in many sections; Moscow: Politics and Planning (Poli 208S) utilizes Geographic Information Systems, a sophisticated mapping program with an underlying data base, and International Political Economy (Poli 253S) utilizes regression techniques; all 300-level and most 200-level classes require research papers of some sort. All 300-level classes are writing intensive, as well, as is Methodology. Thus students get extensive exposure to the library, the computer, and data throughout their major.

There is no surprise that students perceive widely that they are achieving the sub-goal. A full 74% of the respondents (N=109) over four years state that they agree or strongly agree (59% strongly agreed) that this goal is being met in their coursework. Eight percent are neutral, and 17% either disagree or strongly disagree. As one student from 2010 puts it, “I think this is the skill that the major helped develop the most.” The survey results are greatly satisfying to the department, as analytical skills are especially important to political science work.

(3) A student should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the presentation of information, particularly empirical data. This goal probes student achievement of quantitative methods, and is most easily seen in the Methodology (Poli 260Z) class requirements. But, as stated before, many classes, use quantitative techniques in them, starting from a data-based exercise in some sections of Introduction to Comparative Politics (Poli 102S). Courses on European politics, public opinion and public administration use empirical data in their work. Thus students should have received training in this area by the time of graduation.

Of the students responding to this question (N=110), 65% responded that they agreed or strongly agreed to meeting this sub-goal. About 15% were neutral and almost 21% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This result accords with the department emphasis on methodology and term-paper writing—students believe that they are meeting this goal successfully. One 2009 student noted with satisfaction that, “Many presentations in classes such as Methods and Public Administration helped.”

(4) A student should be able to demonstrate the ability to create a research design. Like the previous sub-goal, this one is also most directly satisfied with the Methodology course because it specifically examines the process of creating a research design and asks students to construct one prior to the composition of their research papers. But the department’s 300-level classes also reinforce the acquisition of this skill because they demand research papers, many of which presume the construction of research designs in consultation with the instructors. Examples of these include Public Administration (Poli 320W), Political Parties and Interest Groups (Poli 332W) and U.S. Congress (Poli 323W). Moscow: Political and Planning (Poli 208S) also considers research designs in preparation for the student papers.
Students (N=111) perceive that this sub-goal has been met through their courses. Over 68% of the respondents from 2008-2011 stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that their courses achieved this goal. About 14% were neutral in their judgements and 19% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they reached it. As one student from 2009 comments, “Again, this is critical in Methodology, but the strategy used here goes beyond just a Method’s project.” Students believe, then, that the department is helping to develop this key research skill.

With respect to the broader goal, Analyzing Politics, of which each of the four sub-goals is a part, students believe in overwhelming numbers that Methodology is the course that best satisfies Analyzing Politics. The Methodology paper (and the associated acquisition of SPSS skills) was the specific assignment mentioned most often as the one best meeting this broad goal. But papers from other classes were also listed, including from Russian Foreign Policy (Poli 352W), Presidency (Poli 224S), Media and Politics (Poli 236S) and European Politics (Poli 305W).

The next table demonstrates some continuity as well as some decline from the past assessment in student responses for the analyzing politics goal.

Table 4: Analyzing Politics—Comparison of 2001-2011
(Percentage Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Achieving the Sub-Goal Listed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Utilizing Comparison</th>
<th>Using Tools of Analysis</th>
<th>Presenting Information</th>
<th>Creating Research Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-03</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-07</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-11</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The department notes basic continuity in student perceptions of fulfilling the utilizing comparison sub-goal. The remaining three categories, while showing high levels of agreement, also show declines from the earlier periods. As noted earlier, some of this stems from our 2008 results. Nevertheless, the department will look closely at this learning goal. We believe this is one of our strengths. We will consider whether we need to more intentionally label what we do in class and in our assignments.

--Goal #3: Critically Evaluating Politics

This broad goal has only one sub-goal attached to it: A student should be able to make reasoned judgement about the differences and relative merits of various political institutions, processes, and behavior. All the department courses assist students in achieving this goal because they all discuss student opinions about what it is that they are studying.

Students (N=112) overwhelmingly agreed that they accomplished this goal. About 75% either agreed or strongly agreed that their courses helped them, whereas 4% were neutral and about 21% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Introduction to Comparative Politics (Poli 102S), interestingly, was the class either most mentioned or was tied for
most mentions in meeting the goal for three of the four years surveyed. This is probably because the class is the one that covers the most countries and helps students make the most judgements about similarities and differences. But many courses in the department we mentioned in this regard, especially International Organizations (Poli 252S), Russian Foreign Policy (Poli 352W), and North American Politics (Poli 302W).

Fulfillment of this goal is down slightly from the results from the two previous periods, where 86% reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they fulfilled this goal.

• **Addressing of General Education Goals.** It should be plain from the above that the classes offered for General Education, particularly American National Government and Introduction to Comparative Politics, do a good job in successfully addressing the general education goals. Many examples have been cited in the General Education section of this assessment, which testify to that and which are confirmed by student surveys. Speaking, research, computing and diversity are all covered in these two classes, but in others at the 200-level, as well. The department feels gratified in noting that the figure of 90% agreement (speaking) was the lowest score for student views in meeting the five General Education goals (the highest was 97%--for research).

• **Current Assessment Methods.** The department has multiple assessment methods:

  (1) Exams and papers. This is a standard method for determining whether students have met the university and department learning goals. Here, we can assess writing, reasoning, research, including library use, and the use of political science methods, including the use of statistics and the computer. Grades from the courses are used as summary measures of achievement, with the department more or less at a normal distribution of grades, compared to the rest of university departments (see the study done by Taylor et al., comparing university departments). A recent comparison, completed by Jeff Ankrom, places Political Science at the median in terms of grades.

  (2) Oral presentations, simulations and discussion in class. As another standard way of assessing students, department courses, as mentioned above, require presentations in front of class and participation in class as a whole and in small group discussions. This helps us evaluate the General Education goal of speaking, but it also is indicative of whether students are actually learning the material. Of note here is the recent institution of poster presentations as a standard part of the Methodology (Poli 260Z) class each semester, where students present their research paper results publicly in the foyer of Hollenbeck Hall. Dr. Hasecke runs simulations every year in his Congress class (Poli 323W). All classes require student input and discussion.

  (3) Course evaluations at the end of the semester. Wittenberg properly requires course evaluations for each class. Professors in the department take these instruments seriously and use them for course diagnostic purposes to assist in ensuring that the proper kind of learning is happening, that the course materials
are effective, and that the individual professor’s method and style of teaching is effective and appropriate for the class.

(4) The senior comprehensive examination. All seniors are required to take and pass the senior comprehensive exam, which consists of a thirty-minute oral examination over a question that the student chooses to present (from a list of about 12) orally before two professors and a discussion of how a portfolio of student papers helps to meet the learning goals that the department has laid out. Here professors are able to probe deeper into student knowledge about these subjects and are able also to evaluate how well the student speaks and thinks on his/her feet. Most students pass the comprehensive exam, with a few earning the highest grade, Pass with Distinction, but also with one or two failing (and then needing to take a written make-up).

(5) The annual Program Assessment Survey of graduating senior majors. We have cited the results of the survey repeatedly above. It covers student perceptions of whether students believe they have successfully met the university and department learning goals. The department argues that this instrument is an additional method of assessing the success of its program among majors and dovetails well with the evaluation of senior major portfolios.

In assessing general education students and political science minors the first three ways, above, are the normal methods of determining whether students have successfully met the university’s and department’s learning goals. In assessing majors, all five above-listed ways count in the evaluation.

- **Other Ideas for Assessment?** The department believes that its methods of assessment are thorough and has no plans for introducing any other assessment methods either department-wide or within specific courses. Our system seems to be working well.

- **Changes in Department as a Result of Assessment/Plans**

  As can be seen above, the department believes it has been successful in meeting the university-wide and department-specific learning goals. The department thinks that there is no significant work to be done to make changes in its educational program. There is no assessment from the student perspective that falls below 65% agreeing or strongly agreeing that learning goals have been met—which is good from the department’s perspective.

  As we hope to replace Gerry Hudson, the new hire may offer different courses with different emphases than what we currently provide. We assume the same high-level of teaching and student requirements. But the new person may use different techniques than current faculty. We will be alert to assure that the new offerings fit with our university and departmental goals. Moreover, the chance to offer different courses may stimulate a different set of questions. We will monitor this with our assessments.
Over the next four years, the department intends to continue administering the five main methods of assessment indicated above. Each year the department circulates and discusses the annual Program Assessment Survey administered to seniors. This has turned out to be an excellent way of keeping abreast of how we are meeting the goals we have set out.