SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY.

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: International Studies	Department: Political Science
Degree or Certificate Level: BA	College/School: Arts and Sciences
Date (Month/Year): June/2020	Primary Assessment Contact: Professor Nori Katagiri
In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? AY2019-2020	
In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? AY2018	

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

This year, we assessed learning outcome 4: Students will be able to assess analytical arguments.

2. Assessment Methods: Student Artifacts

Which student artifacts were used to determine if students achieved this outcome? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Data were collected in an International Studies (ISTD) course POLS 1600 Introduction to International Politics. Instructors both in St. Louis and in Madrid were invited to submit information. Six instructors submitted information, all for POLS 1600, and two of them taught the course in both fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters. POLS 1600 is required of all ISTD students, but the majority of students in the course are not ISTD majors.

The department collected data through a Qualtrics survey of instructors. Instructors answered the following questions:

1. How did your class contribute to the goal of assessing analytical arguments?
2. Which of these instruments did you use to assess student learning for this report? (check all that apply)
    a. One or more essays
    b. One or more exam or test questions
    c. A final project
    d. Other; describe
    e. In-class assignment; describe
3. By the end of class, (did) students in my class assess analytical arguments(?)
4. How well could students assess analytical arguments? What could they do well in this regard? What could they do less well?
5. Were International Studies majors more likely than nonmajors to be able to assess analytical arguments?
6. What tactics were effective in enhancing students' ability to assess analytical arguments?
7. Do you have suggestions for changing the International Studies BA curriculum or approaches in individual courses in order to make sure that students will be able to assess analytical arguments?
8. Is there anything you want to add about your students' learning?
9. Do you have any comments to improve this reporting process?

Instructors reported that they based their assessment of student learning on essays (1 instructor), exam or test questions (4), in-class assignments (3), Oral presentations supported by power point or video (1), and a total of seven pop quizzes (1).

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the student artifacts, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

Program director Nori Katagiri analyzed the data. The data were provided in a Qualtrics questionnaire by instructors

who taught POLS 1600.

4. Data/Results
What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcomes? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

Generally, the data show a high level of satisfaction with student learning by the instructors, who in turn seem to have taught these courses quite well while paying attention to the need for future improvements and changing teaching environments brought about by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared to the previous assessment cycle, a higher percentage of students in both classes either met or exceeded expectations in these matters. Across sections, 5 of 6 instructors reported that 75-99 percent of students met or exceeded the objective and 1 instructor reported that 50-74 percent of students met or exceeded the objective. Although faculty answered a slightly different set of questions this year, these numbers in fact reflect an improvement in overall achievement.

Instructors pointed out some challenges caused by the sudden need to shift to online instruction during the pandemic, but they have adapted fairly well to the new educational environment. One instructor wrote, for instance, "Spring 2020 was an exceptional semester … I was nicely surprised: despite the difficulties students presented very good or excellent presentations which showed a good combination of study and analytical work." In the meantime, there seems to be little difference of opinion among faculty members on the two campuses in terms of preference for face-to-face instruction.

Instructors reported that students were good at:

- Presenting two sides of an argument
- Using relevant concepts to explain political phenomena
- Picking out shortfalls and logical inconsistencies of their peers' arguments in debates
- Recognizing logical shortcomings in complex arguments
- Applying general theories to real-world cases
- Distinguishing different theoretical frameworks and using them to simplify complex international events

Some of the student weaknesses that instructors reported are (1) presenting one-sided arguments, (2) seeing inconsistencies on their own views when they do see inconsistencies of others', (3) difficulties comprehending challenging essays like Fukuyama's "end of history."

Instructors then suggested the following tactics as a means of improving student learning.

- In-class lectures and online notes
- Debates after the lectures, short questions sent before the lecture, and oral presentations by students
- Conducting multiple debates with a round of substantial feedback in between led to more rigorous counterarguments in the second debate.
- Looking at arguments from several angles and seeing if students can understand the logic behind each angle.
- Class discussion in which students exchange ideas how to assess and compare IR theories as analytical tools.
- Leveraging enough theoretical focus in a class or curriculum to be able to get the analytical content needed, both methodologically and theoretically.

In the near future it would be helpful for ISTD faculty to discuss merits and demerits of teaching in online and face-to-face environments as they need to be prepared for both scenarios in the fall 2020 semester and possibly beyond. It is especially so because ISTD faculty have found the use of classroom discussion and debate an effective means of instruction.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions
What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

This is the second year that the revised ISTD BA had students, so it is the second year that assessment occurred for this revised major. Hence, it is still early for analysis to inform change. I would advise us to collect assessment data over the next few years before making a set of recommendations for large-scale changes.

However, two things are clear at this point. First, ISTD faculty generally believe that students have achieved the outcome goal of assessing analytical arguments. One faculty wrote, for instance, that "I was generally pleased with students' abilities to pick out the most obvious shortfalls and logical inconsistencies of their peers' arguments in the debates." Another wrote, "Overall, I was very impressed by the majority of students in this class in their ability to assess analytical arguments." Second, it is fair to note that both faculty and students have adapted quite well to the coronavirus crisis to minimize the negative impact of a rapid change in teaching environments and still generate a successful instructional outcome. This provides comfort and confidence that faculty members are well-positioned to both teach normal courses and do well in crisis settings.

The Faculty Advisory Board of the International Studies program met in the fall 2019 semester to discuss results from the assessment cycle last year. Some of the issues we went over included the merits and demerits of various instructional approaches:

- Small group discussions
- Guided class discussions
- Student reading notes that required prepared discussion questions before class
- Reflection papers
- Class presentations
- Independent research projects
- Case studies
- In-class simulation
- Interactive exercises
- Integrating current events
- Assigning readings that explored issues relevant to the learning objectives
- Reading in depth ethnographies
- Independent fieldwork projects

as well as possible program changes:

- Greater coordination of activities across multiple sections of a course
- Selecting appropriate readings
- More class discussions in which students were tasked with identifying the differences among cultural, economic, political, and social aspects
- Students might need more support in their writing skills, at least in regard to the complex task of analyzing culture
- Some students struggle with the historic and geographic scope of the Cultural Anthropology course, though they nonetheless learn a lot about how to conceptualize and analyze cultural differences
- Since political, economic, social and cultural aspects are deeply intertwined, it would be helpful to have a discussion among International Studies faculty about how these aspects are being taught to students in various classes.
- In the form of keeping the current foreign language requirement at the 3000-level for ISTD minor (based on a recommendation provided after the last year's assessment was completed).

After discussion, we found it not necessary to implement any program changes at this time. It is in part because (1) some ISTD faculty have already adopted some of the measures (such as coordination of activities between sections and selection of appropriate readings) in their own courses and (2) it was the first faculty board meeting since the ISTD program moved to our department in 2018 and we need more time to make a meaningful and realistic decision on the need for specific recommendations to improve the program.

6. **Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings**
   A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?
   We will convene a faculty board meeting, likely virtual, to discuss the assessment findings in fall 2020. Some of

the recommendations pointed out this year have already been implemented by other faculty. So the most relevant recommendations to be discussed at the meeting would include

- Debates after the lectures, short questions sent before the lecture, and oral presentations by students

- Conducting multiple debates with a round of substantial feedback.

- Organizing students into groups of 3-4 in which at least 1 person indicated that they already felt comfortable with a particular analytic argument, then asking them to explain the argument to each other. We then reconvened to discuss as a class to ensure there were no misunderstandings. Before each in-class debate, I provided students with a list of potential sources on both sides of each policy argument.

- Student discussion on how to assess and compare IR theories as analytical tools.

Instructor comments indicate that an integral teaching method involving instructors closely in student discussion generates a good educational environment where students will find themselves more motivated to learn new things. We will work with instructors to examine the effectiveness of this method.

B. How specifically have you decided to use findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies	• Course content	• Course sequence
	• Teaching techniques	• New courses
	• Improvements in technology	• Deletion of courses
	• Prerequisites	• Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings
Changes to the Assessment Plan	• Student learning outcomes	• Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
	• Student artifacts collected	• Data collection methods
	• Evaluation process	• Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of the findings.

Given that we are only in the second year of assessment of the new major, it is too early to have implemented program changes.

Our assessment director initiated earlier direct contact with all faculty members whose classes were included in the assessment process this year to make sure that they knew what kind of data to collect. We also changed some of the questions on the Qualtrics survey, based on difficulties that faculty had answering earlier versions of the survey and changes in the University assessment report format.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

n/a

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes
A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

This entire curriculum for this major was substantially revised two years ago. Since that revision, we have only been able to assess outcomes in freshmen classes. It is too early for any program changes.

Faculty appear to have had less difficulty answering the revised questions on the assessment questionnaire.

At the faculty board meeting, we discussed some of the items suggested for program change, but most were suggestions about teaching methods, not changes to the program.

B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

n/a

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

n/a

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

For the AY2020-2021, I plan to have ISTD faculty assess changes needed to maximize student learning in on-line courses in case the pandemic lasts long and to assess the pluses and minuses of face-to-face and on-line teaching methods in order to make a set of meaningful recommendations for the program.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.

The instructors answered the following questions for this assessment in a Qualtrics survey.

- For which semester are you providing information?
- What is your name?
- This year, we agreed to examine this learning outcome: **Students will be able to assess analytical arguments.** You can determine whether or not students achieved this outcome according to the goals. How did your class contribute to this goal? (open-ended response)
- Which of these instruments did you use to assess student learning for this report? (choose from types of assignments)
- By the end of class, students in my class could **assess analytical arguments**. (*This is the new question. I hope this is an easier way to report this information than we have asked you to do in the past.*)

  - All students met or exceeded the objective
  - 75-99 percent of students met or exceeded the objective
  - 50-74 percent of students met or exceeded the objective
  - Some, but less than 50 percent of students met the objective
  - No students met the objective

- How well could students **assess analytical arguments**? What could they do well in this regard? What could they do less well? (open-ended response)
- Were International Studies majors more likely than nonmajors to be able to **assess analytical arguments** (*also a revised question, hopefully easier to answer)*
- What tactics were effective in enhancing students' ability to **assess analytical arguments**? (open-ended response)
- Do you have suggestions for changing the BA curriculum or approaches in individual courses in order to make sure that students will be able to **assess analytical arguments**? (open-ended response)
- Is there anything you want to add about your students' learning? (open-ended response)
- Do you have any comments to improve this reporting process? (open-ended response)