Department/Degree Plan for Integrating the Discipline-Specific Spoken, Visual and Written Communication Requirement into Undergraduate Curriculum

Date: March 14, 2005

Department: Political Science

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Submission of Plan includes:
1. A brief statement of departmental goals and objectives for an integrated approach to spoken, visual, and written communication.
2. A plan for developing and implementing a curriculum reflecting these goals and objectives, including an outline of phasing.
3. A plan for assessing outcomes.

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Department Representative: __________________________ Date: __________

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College Dean: __________________________ Date: __________

APPROVAL SIGNATURES
I. Goals and Objectives

The Department of Political Science is committed to producing a B.A. graduate who is prepared for employment in the public or private sectors, as well as for advanced study in the theoretical or applied social sciences. In addition, we seek to prepare students for active assumption of the duties and opportunities of citizenship. All of these require strong communication skills.

While all courses in the political science curriculum require significant amounts of writing, and most require spoken and visual skills as well, we seek to assure that students are given a solid grounding in these skills early in their academic careers. Accordingly, we propose to expand our current emphasis on writing, located in our required Writing Intensive course, PSCI 2024 (Research Methods) to include systematic education in spoken and visual skills.

Because PSCI 2024 is already a required course for all majors, phasing is not an issue. Implementation will consist of specifying the mandatory content of the course and assessment of student outcomes.

In terms of specific learning goals, we expect that a political science graduate will be able to:

**Visual:**
A) Present quantitative data graphically, i.e. through the creation of bar and line graphs, pie charts, etc., using statistical software where appropriate.
B) Present quantitative relationships through the creation of appropriately designed tables.
C) Interpret visual data presentations by identifying and explaining the strength and stability of empirical relationships and their relation to theory.
D) Select the most effective means of visually representing social science data, in light of the nature of the data themselves and the audience.

**Written:**
A) Write prose that conforms to Standard Written American English.
B) Write clearly, concisely, and coherently.
C) Demonstrate fluency in the accurate and appropriate use of the specialized vocabularies of political science and the social sciences generally.
D) Write effectively in a variety of formats, including research reports, critical essays, and summaries or briefs.

**Spoken:**
A) Present social scientific data and evaluative analyses clearly and concisely.
B) Respond constructively to the presentations of others.
C) Conduct effective group meetings.
D) Participate effectively in meetings conducted by others.
II. Plan for Implementation of Communication

A. Curriculum

We will locate the mandatory elements of visual, written, and spoken communication training in our Research Methods course, PSCI 2024. PSCI 2024 is taught in the large majority of cases by tenured or tenure-track faculty with the assistance of graduate teaching assistants. It is currently our writing-intensive (WI) course, and is required of all political science majors. It is thus taught several times every semester, and in the summer as well.

PSCI 2024 will not carry the entire burden, however. A survey of our most recent syllabi, conducted this fall, showed that every course offered in the department at the 2xxx or 3xxx level contains a significant writing component (beyond in-class testing), and that a significant (though probably variable) number of courses have significant spoken and/or visual requirements as well. While it is not useful to try to list all these courses (an entire curriculum), we are confident that any student proceeding through the major will encounter multiple opportunities to advance toward the learning goals specified above.

B. Staffing

PSCI 2024 is normally taught by regular faculty, including Profs. Richard Shingles and Craig Brians. The course is taught frequently enough for all of our 500-plus majors to gain access to it.

No resources from outside the Political Science Department will be needed.

C. Proposed Actions to Implement the Plan

Beginning in Fall 2005, all offerings of PSCI 2024 will explicitly incorporate assignments leading to the proficiencies described in the Goals, above. The course already conforms to the current WI guidelines, so no change in that area will be necessary.

In the area of spoken communication, each offering of PSCI 2024 will be required to include group projects, where students will have the opportunity to develop the group-related skills specified above. In addition, each offering of PSCI 2024 will require each student to make an oral presentation of research data to her or his peers.

In the area of visual communication, each offering of PSCI 2024 will be required to include a data analysis assignment, where students must both construct visual presentations of data and interpret visual presentations constructed by others.
III. Assessment Plan

We propose to assess the success of our students in achieving the goals for spoken, visual, and written communication in the following ways:

A) Student work in each course, including PSCI 2024, is graded to assess individual performance.
B) Graduating student exit interviews will ask specific questions concerning the communications requirement.
C) We will periodically survey our alumni, asking questions about the extent to which our program has met its goals and effectively prepared its graduates.
D) PSCI 2024 syllabi and course evaluations will be reviewed annually by the Department’s Teaching Evaluation Committee to ensure that all elements of the communications requirement are addressed.

Our current assessment process includes item A above, as well as B and C, albeit without the specific focus on communications. These will be expanded to accomplish that focus. We currently monitor PSCI 2024 syllabi for compliance with WI guidelines. We will add evaluation of spoken and visual components as well.