

## **Institutional Effectiveness Report 2020-21**

**Program:** Political Science BS

**College and Department:** College of Arts & Sciences – Department of Political Science

**Contact:** Loretta Maxwell

**Mission:** Within the context of the University's mission, the mission of the Department is to provide students with a quality liberal arts education that prepares them for a rapidly changing world and a variety of work environments and post-graduate educational possibilities.

The Department of Sociology and Political Science has the primary mission of offering strong academic programs in sociology, criminology and criminal justice, social work and political science. It provides students with a quality liberal arts education that prepares them for a rapidly changing world and a variety of work environments and postgraduate educational possibilities. Students are educated to not only master a diverse body of knowledge but also to think critically, analyze data, and clearly communicate what they know and discover. Recognizing that we live in an increasingly technological and diverse world, we seek to incorporate technological expertise and appreciation of human diversity into our courses. The Department also strives to serve the wider university, the Upper Cumberland region, and the nation through research and public service.

### **Program Goal:**

PG 1: The Program of Political Science will recruit a sufficient number of students to sustain a strong educational program and promote lifelong learning in support of the strategic plan (Strategic Goal Two: Tactics [www.tntech.edu/strategic](http://www.tntech.edu/strategic)) .

PG 2: Students will judge that a sufficient number of curricular and co-curricular activities were offered by the program as reported by our students.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)s**

SLO 1: Students will acquire the critical thinking skills to be prepared for employment and graduate/law school. (See Strategic Plan Education for Life/ Tactics B ii: "...promote analytical thinking and problem solving in every discipline." [www.tntech.edu/strategic](http://www.tntech.edu/strategic))

SLO 2: Students will demonstrate appropriate knowledge of their concentration by their senior year.

A departmentally developed curriculum map can be found in Appendix 1 that shows the connections between courses and student learning outcomes.

## **Assessment Methods:**

*PG 1: The Program of Sociology will recruit a sufficient number of students to sustain a strong educational program and promote lifelong learning in support of the strategic plan.*

1. The Program will monitor enrollment and graduation rates.
2. The Program is dedicated to remaining involved in recruitment initiatives including TTU Fall Preview Day and Spring Showcase during which we give out TTU “swag” to prospective students.

*PG 2: Students will judge that a sufficient number of curricular and co-curricular activities were offered by the program as reported by our students.*

1. Departmentally-designed Qualtrics student satisfaction survey.
2. Student Assessment of Curricular Effectiveness: Completed by student majors
3. Co-Curricular Options (“Expand and improve academic and co-curricular programs to enhance global understanding, experience, and education” [www.tntech.edu/strategic](http://www.tntech.edu/strategic)):

*SLO 1: Students will acquire the critical thinking skills to be prepared for employment and graduate/law school.*

1. The California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) is a senior exit exam taken by all graduate seniors at Tennessee Tech University. Political Science majors will score within 10% of the TTU average on the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST).
2. Educational Testing Services (ETS) major field examination is administered each fall and spring semester to all enrolled majors with senior classification. The ETS exam measures Analytical and Critical Thinking, Methodology, and Political Thought.
3. Departmentally-designed Qualtrics student satisfaction survey.

*SLO 2: Students will demonstrate appropriate knowledge of their concentration by their senior year.*

1. Students in the General Education POLS 1030 American Government course will demonstrate gains in the post-test mean from the pre-test mean.
2. Educational Testing Services (ETS) major field examination is administered each fall and spring semester to all enrolled majors with senior classification. The ETS exam outlines content questions related to Comparative Government and Politics, International Relations, and United States Government and Politics.
3. Departmentally-designed Qualtrics student satisfaction survey.

**Results:**

*PG 1: The Program of Sociology will recruit a sufficient number of students to sustain a strong educational program and promote lifelong learning in support of the strategic plan.*

1. The Program will monitor enrollment and graduation rates.

Year	Number of POLS General Track	Number of POLS Legal Studies	Number of Total POLS Majors
2020	43	42	85
2020	41	44	85
2019	52	34	86
2018	48	36	84
2017	62	32	94
2016	48	31	79

Graduation: Fall 2014 cohort: 61.5% graduated within 6 years from Tennessee Tech (2020).

2. The Program is dedicated to remaining involved in recruitment initiatives including TTU Fall Preview Day and Spring Showcase during which we give out TTU “swag” to prospective students.

**Threshold of Acceptability:** The enrollment threshold for Political Science is 75 students; if our number of majors fall below that threshold we will increase our recruitment initiatives.

*PG 2: Majors in Political Science will have sufficient curricular and co-curricular options.*

1. Departmentally-designed Qualtrics student satisfaction survey (Full results in Appendix 2).

**Thinking about the entire political science curriculum, please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements: (N=25) 2019-2020 POLS Major Survey**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The political science curriculum exposes me to a broad range of content in the field of political science.	1 4.0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 12.0%	12 48.0%	9 36.0%
The courses have been intellectually stimulating.	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 8.0%	11 44.0%	12 48.0%
The courses have been academically rigorous.	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 8.0%	13 52%	10 40.0%
The courses have utilized a variety of teaching methods to enhance my learning	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 4.0%	1 4.0%	14 56.0%	9 36.0%

2. Student Assessment of Curricular Effectiveness: Completed by student majors, the full table provided in Appendix 3. Student evaluation of both required courses and legal studies courses indicates strong student support that courses provide proficiency in the program concentration knowledge and the development of oral and written communication.
3. Co-Curricular Options (“Expand and improve academic and co-curricular programs to enhance global understanding, experience, and education” [www.tntech.edu/strategic](http://www.tntech.edu/strategic)):
  - 1) Competition courses: Moot Court and Model UN (not an option due to COVID 2020)
  - 2) Experiential Learning Course: Mock Trial
  - 3) Internships: Federal; State; Local
  - 4) Internships: Legal Studies
  - 5) Service Learning: Habitat for Humanity; Cooking on the Quad
  - 6) Pi Sigma Alpha (Political Science Honor Society)
  - 7) Pre-Law Club: UTK and University of Memphis recruited students in 2020
  - 8) Constitution Day: POLS Student Majors serve on the Committee
  - 9) YAL: Young Americans for Liberty Libertarian Student Group
  - 10) Guest Speakers: Elected Officials; Law Student Alumni

**Threshold of Acceptability:**

1. Any question where the combined level of agreement is below 50% will initiate action by the program.
2. Any course where the combined level of agreement is below 50% will initiate action by the program.

*SLO 1: Students will acquire the critical thinking skills to be prepared for employment and graduate/law school.*

1. California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST).

2020 CCTST Scores	Mean	N
POLS	75.3	8
TTU	74.4	1445
TTU CAS	74.5	105
CCTST National	74	n/a

2. Educational Testing Services (ETS) major field examination

	ETS Assessment Indicators: FY2021			
	N	TTU Mean	SD	National Mean
Analytical and Critical Thinking	12	51.2	8.2	59.9
Methodology	12	43.0	10.2	51.9
Political Thought	12	46.3	8.7	51.8

3. Departmentally-designed Qualtrics student satisfaction survey (Full results in Appendix 2).

**Thinking about the entire political science curriculum, please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements: (N=25) 2019-2020 POLS Major Survey**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The political science curriculum has improved my ability to think critically.	1 4.0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 16.0%	1 4.00%	9 36%
The political science curriculum is preparing me well for graduate school or law school.	1 4.0%	0 0%	2 8.0%	7 28.00%	6 24.00%	9 36.00%

**Threshold of Acceptability:**

1. POLS majors are expected to score within 10% of the TTU CCTST average. Scores below a 10% deviation from the TTU CCTST average will constitute an immediate action by the program.
2. Performance at a level above or comparable to the national mean on the ETS Major Field Examination is defined as Tech students having a mean score no lower than 1.644 standard errors below the national mean, the level at which a difference would become statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
3. Any question where the combined level of agreement is below 50% will initiate action by the program.

*SLO 2: Students will demonstrate appropriate knowledge of their concentration by their senior year.*

1. Students in the General Education POLS 1030 American Government course will demonstrate gains in the post-test mean from the pre-test mean.

Gen Ed Pre-Test/ Post-Test POLS 1030			
	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average	Gains
Fall 2019	58.83 %	77.66%	18.83
Fall 2020	62.65 %	88.14 %	25.49
Spring 2021	64.89 %	90.49 %	25.60

2. Educational Testing Services (ETS) major field examination

Total ETS Scores:

	TTU Data			National Data		
	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	N
Spring 2021	149	14	5	152.3	13.9	4190
Fall 2020	145	14	7	152.3	13.9	4190
Spring 2020	149.6	14.8	14	152.3	13.9	4190
Fall 2019	140.4	17.2	8	130.9	152.2	3536
Spring 2019	149.6	14.3	14	152.2	13.9	3536
Fall 2018	139	1	2	152.4	14	2268
Spring 2018	155	7	9	152.4	13.7	226.8
Fall 2017	153.2	14	7	142	8	1065
Spring 2017	147	13	19	152	13.8	6691
Fall 2016	142	9	29	148.3	12.4	4998

ETS Sub-Scores:

	FY2020		FY2021			
	N	TTU Mean	N	TTU Mean	S.D.	National Mean
US Government and Politics	22	47.6	12	50.4	12.0	54.0
Comparative Government and Politics	22	45.7	12	49.3	14.7	54.0
International Relations	22	45.8	12	42.8	11.8	54.0

3. Departmentally-designed Qualtrics student satisfaction survey (Full results in Appendix 2).

**Thinking about the entire political science curriculum, please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements: (N=25) 2019-2020 POLS Major Survey**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The political science curriculum exposes me to a broad range of content in the field of political science.	1 4.0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 12.0%	12 48.0%	9 36.0%

**Threshold of Acceptability:**

1. Failure to achieve gains in the POLS 1030 course post-test would require a meeting with the Instructor to see if the General Education content is being taught.
2. Performance at a level above or comparable to the national mean on the ETS Major Field Examination is defined as Tech students having a mean score no lower than 1.644 standard errors below the national mean, the level at which a difference would become statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
3. Any question where the combined level of agreement is below 50% will initiate action by the program.

**Modifications for Improvement:**

POLS faculty met in 2020 to revise the program's Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methods. More specifically, the faculty seek to strengthen rigor in three key areas as further discussed below:

1. Faculty seek to emphasize student critical thinking gains through use of the California Critical Thinking Test as a component of SLO 1 (see below). Specifically, students must score 90% of TTU's mean score on the CCTST.
2. Faculty seek to reflect student gains in their concentrations, as reflected in SLO 2 (see below). Thus, in both Sociology and Political Science, faculty asked Tennessee Tech's Office of the Provost to partner with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) in requesting permission to incorporate a pilot Local Field Test to accompany the ETS Major Field Tests in Sociology- Criminology Criminal Justice and Political Science- Legal Studies, respectively. We have begun developing these tests in a pre-Pilot. It is expected that the student cohorts will pass these tests each semester with a 75% passage rate.
3. Faculty seek to reflect the required methodological rigor of both Sociology and Political Science as both programs require a minimum of three statistics courses. As a result, both programs now require all students to pass at the 80% rate the CITI Research Ethics Training and CITI PI/Co-PI Research Ethics Training Certification in coordination with the Office of Research (see below).

*SLO 1: Students will acquire the critical thinking skills to be prepared for employment and graduate/law school.*

The California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) was added as a new measure of critical thinking. The CCTST is a senior exit exam taken by all graduate seniors at Tennessee Tech University. Sociology expects program scores to be above a 90% threshold in comparison to the TTU institutional score with the goal of 100%. The CCTST will be supplementing the ETS Major Field Test in future IE reports.

*SLO 2: Students will demonstrate appropriate knowledge of their concentration by their senior year.*

POLS faculty met in 2020 and decided to begin requiring in 2021 of all student majors (in partnership with the Office of Research):

1. CITI Research Ethics Training: Responsible Conduct in Research Module for Social/Behavioral Researchers for Undergraduates.
2. CITI PI/Co-PI Research Ethics Training.

CITI Research Ethics Training and CITI PI/Co-PI Training: POLS-LS Majors are required to pass at 80% or higher and receive Certification. They may re-take the test until they achieve this score.

**Appendices:**

1. Curriculum Map
2. POLS Major Survey
3. Student Assessment of Curricular Effectiveness



**Appendix 1: Curriculum Map**

REQUIRED COURSES AND EXPERIENCES	LEARNING OUTCOMES - Political Science Majors	
	1-Students will acquire the critical thinking skills to be prepared for employment and graduate/law school.	2-Students will demonstrate appropriate knowledge of their concentration by their senior year.
POLS 1030		X
POLS 1100		X
POLS 2250		
POLS 3000	X	
POLS 3102	X	
POLS 3110	X	
POLS 3120	X	
POLS 3130	X	
POLS 3200	X	
POLS 3300	X	
POLS 3310	X	
POLS 3320	X	
POLS 3330	X	
POLS 3400	X	
POLS 3500	X	
POLS 3610	X	
POLS 3650	X	
POLS 3670	X	
POLS 3700	X	
POLS 3710	X	
POLS 3810	X	X
POLS 4100	X	X
POLS 4210	X	
POLS 4220	X	

POLS 4230	X	
POLS 4250	X	
POLS 4310	X	X
POLS 4320	X	X
POLS 4400	X	
POLS 4410	X	
POLS 4420	X	
POLS 4430	X	
POLS 4510	X	
POLS 4520	X	
POLS 4610	X	
POLS 4700	X	
POLS 4730	X	
POLS 4900		
POLS 4910	X	X
POLS 4911	X	X
POLS 4920	X	
POLS 4950	X	X
POLS 4960	X	
POLS 4990	X	

## Appendix 2: POLS Major Survey

**Thinking about the entire political science curriculum, please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements: (N=25)**

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The political science curriculum has improved my oral and written skills.	1 4.0%	0 0%	1 4.0%	2 8.0%	14 56.00%	7 28.00%
The political science curriculum is preparing me well for graduate school or law school.	1 4.0%	0 0%	2 8.0%	7 28.00%	6 24.00%	9 36.00%
The courses have been intellectually stimulating.	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 8.0%	11 44.0%	12 48.0%
The courses have been academically rigorous.	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 8.0%	13 52%	10 40.0%
The courses have utilized a variety of teaching methods to enhance my learning	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 4.0%	1 4.0%	14 56.0%	9 36.0%

**Appendix 3: Student Assessment of Curricular Effectiveness**

<b>COURSES: Required; POLS-LS; POLS-IRCG (withdrawn and on a teach-out plan but has 1 remaining student)</b>		Capable of effective oral and written communication.	Demonstrate proficiencies in the program concentration(s).
POLS 1030	American Government	Yes	Yes
POLS 1100	Intro to Political Science	Yes	Yes
POLS 2250	Mock Trial	Yes	Yes
POLS 3000	Data Analysis	Yes	Yes
POLS 3100	Model United Nations I	Yes	Yes
POLS 3101	Model United Nations II	Yes	Yes
POLS 3110	Intro to Legal Reasoning and Analysis	Yes	Yes
POLS 3120	Legal Research and Writing	Yes	Yes
POLS 3130	Moot Court	Yes	Yes
POLS 3200	American Political Thought	Yes	Yes
POLS 3300	Intro to Latin American Politics	Yes	No
POLS 3310	Politics of Developing Nations	Yes	Yes
POLS 3320	U.S. Policy Toward Latin America	Yes	No
POLS 3330	State and Local Government	Yes	Yes
POLS 3400	Gender and Politics	Yes	Yes
POLS 3500	Political Conspiracy Theories	Yes	Yes
POLS 3610	International Politics	Yes	Yes
POLS 3650	International Organizations	Yes	Yes
POLS 3670	Foreign Policy	Yes	Yes

POLS 3700	The Legislative Process	Yes	Yes
POLS 3710	The American Executive	Yes	Yes
POLS 3810	Judicial Process	Yes	Yes
POLS 4100	International Law	Yes	Yes
POLS 4210	American Political Parties	Yes	Yes
POLS 4220	Campaigns and Elections	Yes	Yes
POLS 4230	Scandal and Corruption in US Politics	Yes	Yes
POLS 4250	Political Communications	Yes	Yes
POLS 4310	CON LAW I: Struggle for Federal Powers and Accountability	Yes	Yes
POLS 4320	CON LAW II: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	Yes	Yes
POLS 4400	Political Satire	Yes	Yes
POLS 4410	Political Theory: Ancient and Medieval	Yes	Yes
POLS 4420	Political Theory: Early Modern	Yes	Yes
POLS 4430	Power and Privilege on the Screen	Yes	Yes
POLS 4510	Comparative Government: Europe	Yes	Yes
POLS 4520	Comparative Political Behavior	Yes	Yes
POLS 4610	Public Administration & Public Policies	Yes	Yes
POLS 4700	Tennessee Trial Practices	Yes	Yes
POLS 4730	First Amendment Law and Analysis	Yes	Yes
POLS 4910	Seminar in Public Law	Yes	Yes
POLS 4911	Special Projects	Yes	Yes
POLS 4920	Seminar in Comparative Politics	Yes	Yes
POLS 4950	Political Participation Internship	Yes	Yes