

	JJ	FW	JJ	FW	JJ	FW	JJ	FW
Outcome	1		2		3		4	
Federalism and the Endangered Species Act (2 students)	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3
A Case Study on the Economic and Agricultural Implications of the California Water Crisis (2 students)	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	4
OPPOSING NEOLIBERALISM: The cases of VENEZUELA, BRAZIL, & BOLIVIA (3 students)	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	4
The Benefits of Drug Courts in the State of Montana (3 students)	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Scoring average (JJ+FW/8)	2.375		2.75		2.75		2.75	

Four papers representing the collaborative work of 11 students (in groups of 2-3) were assessed. All papers were case studies and case studies do not lend themselves well to an assessment of Outcome 1, although alternative explanations should be identified and discussed. All papers demonstrated this in the minimum range of fair with only one “good” by both members of the committee. As case studies, emphasis is on assembling empirical evidence relevant to analyzing competing explanations for the outcome or policy trajectory of the case (Outcome 2). The two committee members were more divergent on their assessment of this Outcome, in agreement on two papers and between “fair” to “good” on the remaining two. The same divergence is apparent on their assessment of Outcome 3, “Making reasoned conclusions from evidence,” however this may also reflect differences in their assessment of how thorough, relevant, and diverse the paper made use of empirical evidence. Both committee members assessed one paper as “excellent” in achieving this outcome. Finally, the members agreed in their

assessment of Outcome 4, “Able to communicate orally and written work effectively, credit and cite sources.” Below are comments from committee members:

(JJ) My overall assessment is that these are not the best example of what a capstone should be in my view (that is another discussion). At this point the writing should be crisp, to the point, not awkward, precise. The sources should be unbiased and some thought given to which ones to use rather than what is convenient (as was clearly the case in one paper). The paper should not communicate a clear bias from the start – as a couple of these do. One very positive thing I will say is that the range of topics is interesting as are the topics themselves. This reflects some good thought into what they wanted to work on – rather than some highly traditional topic they could have chosen.

(FW) These four papers show a range of accomplishments with respect to the Outcomes identified by the department as objectives of the capstone course and project. One paper is good to excellent in achieving all outcomes. The other three in different ways appear to be hampered by a lack (or low level) of mastery of methodological and analytical skills, although none are “poor” and all lean toward “good” on the “fair to good” portion of the scale. Although not all students will demonstrate excellence, overall these papers reflect, in my view, deficiencies in matching skills (methodological and analytical) throughout the curriculum pre-capstone with the department’s state outcomes as well as in the structure of the course. Additionally, a high quality capstone directed experience is difficult to delivered by one instructor to 36 students. Either the instructor will not be able to effectively supervise 36 individual research projects, or students must be grouped, with larger groups being less reflective of the outcome achievement of individual students.

Using a simple averaging of the rankings given by two faculty members assessing the papers and outcomes, all four are in the “fair” to “good” range overall, with one being closer to “fair” and three closer to “good.” None are poor. There’s clearly room for improvement and the faculty is currently engaged in a process of curriculum revision, including specifically focusing on strengthening methodological preparation. We should see improvement overall, and ideally, a bump that would put at least some of the outcomes in the “good to excellent” range and others closer to “good” than “fair.”