

5/8/17

To: Drs. Kevane and Eitle

From: Linda Young

RE: Dept of Political Science Assessment for 2017 Academic Year

According to our departmental assessment plan, we have used a random sample of our spring 2017 capstone papers to assess achievement of our learning objectives. Please note that while there were 27 students in the class that students worked in groups of four on their capstone project for a total of 7 projects, plus two independent study capstones for a total of 9. Using a random number generator, we chose 5 projects to evaluate.

The learning objectives are:

1. Evaluate conflicting arguments;
2. Assemble empirical evidence and analyze normative concepts;
3. Make reasoned conclusions from evidence;
4. Communicate orally and written effectively, credit and cite sources.

Two faculty members, David Parker and Linda Young, evaluated the capstone papers using the following scale: Excellent (4), Good (3), Fair (2), or Poor (1), (more detail on the rubric at the end of the document).

The following table summarizes the results of this assessment. Evaluator scores are similar and indicate that the learning objectives are being met.

Outcome	1: Evaluate conflicting arguments		2: assemble empirical evidence and analyze normative concepts		3: make reasoned conclusions from evidence		4: effective written communication, credit and cite sources	
	DP	LY	DP	LY	DP	LY	DP	LY
Name of capstone	DP	LY	DP	LY	DP	LY	DP	LY
Public Lands	4	3.5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Outrage	3.5	3.5	4	4	3.75	4	4	4
Federal Weaponization	3	3.5	3.25	3.5	3	4	3.25	3.5
Oversight/Scottish Parliament	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Racial Threat	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

General Comments: In general, the strongest components of the capstones are the writing and assembling of evidence to test hypotheses. Students are less strong on evaluating conflicting arguments and making reasoned conclusions from evidence—this is a

deficiency which should be addressed in our new research capstone. The Federal Weaponization project demonstrates student shortcomings the most in these areas.

Outcome 1: Evaluate conflicting arguments

- a) Poor means that the students did not demonstrate an ability to evaluate conflicting arguments. Conflicting arguments may have been identified, but the evaluation component was absent, confusing, or too superficial to convey any intellectually meaning evaluation.
- b) Fair means that the student identified conflicting arguments and made a cogent argument for and against each one. The paper may have some grammatical or spelling errors.
- c) Good means that the student identified conflicting arguments, made cogent arguments for and against and the content of the arguments demonstrated some intellectual depth. Few or no grammatical or spelling errors.
- d) Excellent means that the student identified conflicting arguments, made cogent arguments for and against, demonstrated intellectual depth as well as some innovative or original thinking. No grammatical or spelling errors.

Outcome 2: Assemble empirical evidence and analyze normative concepts

- a) Poor means that the student did not demonstrate an ability to assemble evidence and analyze normative concepts. Assembled evidence was incomplete or was not effectively evaluated and/or the normative concept was poorly explained.
- b) Fair means that the student assembled relevant evidence, proposed the relevant normative concept, and cogently analyzed the evidence vis vis the concept.
- c) Good means that the student assembled relevant evidence, proposed the relevant normative concept, and analyzed the evidence vis-à-vis the concept, demonstrating some intellectual depth. Few or no grammatical or spelling errors.
- d) Excellent means that the student assembled relevant evidence, proposed the relevant normative concept, and analyzed the evidence vis-à-vis the concept, discussing with intellectual depth the extent to which the evidence supports the concept and demonstrating innovative or original thinking. No grammatical or spelling errors.

Outcome 3: Make reasoned conclusions from evidence

- a) Poor means that of the three elements – thesis statement, evidence, and conclusion linking the two – some or all of these elements are absent or too weak to achieve the outcome.
- b) Fair means that all three elements are present, the thesis is clear, there is adequate evidence pertaining to the thesis statement, and the conclusion effectively links the evidence and thesis statement together.
- c) Good means that the thesis statement is clear, sharp, and focused; adequate and appropriate evidence is marshaled to evaluate the thesis, and the conclusion links the two. The paper overall reflects a high degree of intellectual depth and substance.
- d) Excellent means that all three elements are outstanding or exceptional and the paper reflects not only intellectual depth, but also innovative or original thinking.

Outcome 4: Communicate orally and written effectively, credit and cite sources

- a) Poor means that the student's performance on written and oral work does not demonstrate the level of competence expected from a college-educated individual. Thinking is superficial, intellectually shallow, and/or unclear or confused. Sources are improperly credit and cited.
- b) Fair means the student's performance on written and oral work demonstrates a minimum level of competence; the work is structured in a logical manner, moving from thesis to conclusion, presentation is clear and sources are properly credited and cited.
- c) Good means that the student's performance on written and oral work is competent (as described for "fair"), intellectually engaging, and substantive. Sources are properly credited and cited. There should be very few and only minor grammatical or spelling errors.
- d) Excellent means that the student's performance on written and oral work is outstanding; including competence as described above, demonstrates intellectual substance, and shows evidence of original or innovative thinking. Sources are properly credited and cited. There are no grammatical or spelling errors.