

# Social and Applied Sciences

## Unit-Level Assessment

### Spring 2020

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## Introduction

The more vigorously citizens participate in it, the more democratic a political system becomes, according to Alexis de Tocqueville. With democracy today undergoing a major stress test in the United States and the world at large, the question is whether citizens are motivated and equipped enough to rise to the challenge. What role does education play in this scenario? And more narrowly put, do students taking courses in the Harold Washington College Social and Applied Sciences Department (SAS) have opportunities to develop and demonstrate their political awareness and participation?

The objective of a liberal arts education not only is to expose students to a diversity of thought and perspectives but to trigger their active involvement in society. Students ought to realize that they are stakeholders in the future of their country, and that they have a role to play in the maintenance and furthering of our democratic system of government.

The Harold Washington College mission, at heart, promotes an empowering and action-oriented education, and its SAS summarizes these goals as students being able to:

- **Value Diversity:** Distinguish broad aspects of human and systemic diversity to value change and continuity within individuals, cultures and societies so that this can contribute to a just and equitable life.
- **Utilize Methodological and Technological skills:** Evaluate and practice problem-solving skills that can be applied to the self, to others, and to social issues and phenomena of the past, present and future. Support ideas, decisions and actions with logically structured research through oral and written communications.
- **Validate Community:** Interact and work together in ways that demonstrate the importance of numerous communities and actors. Collaborate within school and in the wider world in ways that value connectivity, responsibility, and activism.

With this project, I am seeking to hone in on how we, SAS, via our extensive, varied course offerings and teaching methods, contribute to how students take part in and shape the political decisions affecting their lives.

Generally, this project seeks to enrich the SAS program offerings, which are continually evolving. In the area of political science, we plan to activate the Comparative Politics course, making a National Government course hybrid, and assisting adjunct faculty with remote teaching. I will also assist with the assessment and development of the other 14 department programs.

## Department buy-in and outcome definition

This assessment project builds on the groundwork laid in the 2017-2019 Civic Participation assessment by my colleague Dr. Domenico Ferri. In the course of his project, Dr. Ferri found that “[i]n essence, all of our colleagues prioritize civic engagement as a key course component in both the short and long-term sense.” (Ferri, 2018).

While Professor Ferri’s project shows that civic engagement plays a “chief role” in students’ learning experience in the SAS department (Ferri 2019), my assessment asks how much of this engagement translates into the political realm. In other words, does this

overwhelmingly positive engagement have an impact on political behavior and ultimately on the well-being of our democracy (which, by definition, relies on an active civil society)?

Political participation is here defined as “any activity “that has the intent or effect of influencing either regional, national or supranational governance, either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of individuals who make that policy” (Barrett).

Discussions with my department colleagues since I started the project in late January 2020 revealed a great degree of interest; many are waiting in the wings to offer their advice and expertise as this assessment develops. Thus far, they have submitted their course SLOs for analysis and selection, and they have verbally conveyed experiences with anecdotal student comments as they shared their relationship to political activism. I have encountered nothing but support from my department, most notably from the co-chairs Dr. Ferri and Dr. Heathfield.

This project also considers the findings of the Harold Washington College Assessment Committee’s (HWCAC) [Civic Engagement Report](#) (2020) in ways that will be developed over the course of the next weeks and months.

## Assessment research and design

Amid the HWC Assessment Committee General Education Report on [Civic Engagement](#), some college-wide data was compiled which allows for some initial, general political participation data. 45% of respondents, for example, “strongly agreed” that “If eligible, I will vote in an election.” It is interesting that only 13% of respondents strongly agreed that “[m]y experiences at CCC/HWC have led me to participate in advocacy or political action,” and only 16% strongly agreed that “[m]y experiences as a CCC/HWC student have prepared me to advocate to community leaders about a community issue.” (Assessment Committee, HWC). The wording of these questions merit further interpretation.

Do SAS students - who would be expected to score higher on these issues given our department’s mission and shared general student learning outcomes (SLOs) - mirror these mixed results? (Ferri, 2019). What share of these findings are attributable to SAS and, most importantly, what is or should SAS be doing to inject greater urgency in our students when it comes to perceiving themselves as active citizens?

In an effort to start answering some of these questions, I set out to analyze and itemize the SLOs of 34 SAS courses that contain, explicitly or implicitly, an active political participation component. These courses, selected from among the more than 60 different topic areas SAS offers on a semesterly basis, were preselected by Dr. Ferri for the civic participation project. I adapted, perused and itemized them for their political participation goals (see the list and itemization in Appendix A).

Keeping the three main types of student learning in mind - 1) content, knowledge, comprehension, 2) abilities, skills, competencies, and 3) values, dispositions, attitudes - the following research questions crystallized and guided the itemization:

*How do the theoretical foundations of our Constitution shape lived experience?*

*How do various political institutions function?*

*When groups/individuals organize and get engaged, what can be achieved?*

*What are my personal values and evaluations?*

*How do governmental policies affect us?*

As Appendix A discloses, our SAS courses overwhelmingly offer broad access to knowledge about our country's political systems. Encouraged by this finding, and in discussion with colleagues, I decided to focus on the third type of student learning exclusively for my assessment work (values, dispositions, attitudes), and with it in mind created basic project SLOs:

Generally, our SAS courses lead students to:

1. Define political participation and cite concrete examples of it.
2. Examine how past and current policies affect them directly (i.e. congressional acts, executive orders, Supreme Court rulings).
3. Recognize and express their personal values by analyzing policy and organizational preferences.
4. Explicate the instances and the ways in which active engagement in politics leads to positive change.

These four project specific and general department learning outcomes materialized, completing a draft of Stage 1 - Outcome Definition, and beginning Stage 2 - Assessment Research and Design - of our Assessment Committee's 6-Stages assessment process.

## Pilot assessment tools and processes

Clipped by the complications of coronavirus, necessary discussions with Assessment members as to appropriate measurement tools and their administration were postponed. Stage 2 of the assessment process is partially developed.

For the first two weeks of the fall 2020 semester, I will research and discuss various direct and indirect assessment methods, and I will develop a set of survey questions to administer to a pilot group.

## Administer specific assessment

Originally, my idea was to have a pilot assessment ready to go in the third week of March. I would have liked to administer it to my students right after the Illinois primary elections to gauge how actively students participated in it and whether SAS courses had an impact on it. However, by the time the primary election took place (March 17, 2020), the college had

already gone into remote learning, and the electoral participation was likely significantly impacted by the pandemic, thus not an ideal time to measure political participation.

I will work on a Plan B for the fall 2020 semester, in the first few weeks of which I will develop the methodology and the measuring tool. By the end of September 2020, I will survey the students initially, and then again after the presidential elections in November. I think that a before/after elections survey comparison may yield some insight into how well our course work instigates students to participate in politics by tuning in, clarifying their political choices, and voting. Here are some of the survey questions I am working on (in no particular order):

As a result of taking SAS courses, I:

1. follow political news more frequently
2. am more confident in my political opinions
3. will vote in the upcoming election (if eligible)
4. consider joining a club, pressure group, or movement that represents my interests
5. can better discern my own political candidate preferences

I will also add questions as to students' absolute involvement - to what degree they participate, regardless of how they attribute the causes of that participation.

## Data analysis

Results from the pilot surveys will be discussed with the committee's research analysts. The survey will then be revised for potential shortcomings and blind spots before it is administered to the wider SAS community. This stage 3 of the assessment process will involve the input of SAS colleagues in our continuing discussions of this project and how to take what we've learned to improve student learning.

## Supporting evidence-based change

One change I will be working toward is to review and revise political science course SLOs to include more of a political participation dimension. As I was sorting and itemizing our department course SLOs for this project, I noticed to my surprise that our political science courses do not have outcomes that articulate the expectation that students demonstrate political and/or civic engagement. This is an issue I will bring up at the next discipline meeting in the fall where I shall solicit my colleagues' input and hopefully start a working group for course SLO revision through the PACC process.

## Appendix A

Itemizing Departmental SLOs as they pertain to political participation based on these questions:

*How do the theoretical foundations of our Constitution shape lived experience?*

*How do various political institutions function?*

*When groups/individuals organize and get engaged, what can be achieved?*

*What are my personal values and evaluations?*

*How do governmental policies affect us?*

### African American Studies 101

- Discuss the language of *The Declaration of Independence*, the *Constitution of the United States*, and the *Emancipation Proclamation* in relation to Black Americans
- Explain some of the social and political gains of Black Americans during Reconstruction
- Contextualize and synthesize the collective efforts of the participants, as well as outcomes of the Civil Rights movements
- Juxtapose current political, legal, and governmental policies and practices with those of previous eras in Black American/American history
- Contextualize and synthesize the collective efforts of African-Americans to define themselves

### Anthropology 202

- Analyze and discuss contemporary multicultural, global, and international questions in a diverse setting
- Identify and respect that there are various ways of thinking, communicating, and interacting, for example by working with culturally diverse groups towards a larger goal
- Evaluate diverse moral and intellectual perspectives, principles, systems, and structures
- Articulate the value of cross cultural campus and community activities and their impact on the lives of others.
- Assess global trends of sociocultural change in the areas of economic and social development
- Critically analyze global issues and the links between Latino cultures in the U.S. and other Latin American countries with minority groups in the United States
- Identify and analyze major issues as they relate to Latinos and Latin Americans (historical and contemporary)
- Articulate ideas concerning cultural diversity and promote the acceptance and understanding of the Latin American and Latino cultures globally and in the U.S.
- Reflect on their own personal values and cultural origins with regards to the anthropological understandings of culture and action

- Work in group settings by using classmates/peers as resources in students' growth and development by sharing experiences, understanding, new ideas and special abilities.

### Child Development 107

- Explain the Mandated Reporter Act, and describe the consequences of stress and trauma on children and their families
- Identify appropriate affective responses that build relationships and positive interactions among children and adults
- Determine a course of action according to state standards/center policies, and appropriate procedures used in response to childhood accidents, illnesses, and infections
- Identify community, state and national resources, as well as licensing standards, center policies and practices which support positive health, safety and nutritional practices. Then, consider discrepancies between standards and daily practices of staff in the areas of health, safety, and nutrition
- Using the state and national standards, design developmentally appropriate activities that reflect an understanding of cultural influences on health, safety, and nutrition and that promote resilience and wellness of young children and their families

### Child Development 120

- Compare various early childhood programs, settings, funding options, and career opportunities in both the public and private sectors.
- Examine contemporary and historical approaches to curriculum and practices and identify appropriate roles and skills utilized by early childhood professionals.
- Apply cross-cultural understanding and communication skills recognizing the impact of culture on child development.
- Examine state standards, NAEYC Standards, the Code of Ethical Conduct and other important guidelines in the field of Early Childhood Education (Obj. 4).
- Justify the importance of involving families and communities in their children's development and learning

### Criminal Justice 102

- Provide basic information about operation of the agencies of criminal justice systems
- Examine the functions of each subsystem of criminal justice
- Distinguish between criminal behavior theories
- Analyze relationships characterized by complexity and among agencies
- Interpret constitutional protections for adults and juveniles.

### Criminal Justice 104

- Explain the need for the rule of law
- Analyze the importance of dispute resolution methods in solving disputes;
- Describe the basic organization of the state and federal court system
- Describe the operation of the criminal justice system from investigation to release
- Analyze constitutional protections for adults and juveniles.

### Criminal Justice 114

- Examine the functions of each subsystem of juvenile justice
- Distinguish between criminal behavior theories
- Analyze relationships characterized by complexity and among agencies
- Interpret constitutional protections for juveniles.

### Criminal Justice 202

- Identify strategies used to encourage partnerships between community and the criminal justice system
- Examine research used to generate answers to questions used to understand crime and criminal justice in the twenty first century;
- Distinguish between governmental funding agencies in the criminal justice system
- Analyze relationships characterized by complexity among agencies locally, nationally and internationally.

### Criminal Justice 234

- To provide basic information about the history of criminal law;
- To examine the functions of each subsystem of criminal justice;
- Describe and distinguish between criminal behavior concepts and theories;
- Process of how to define the elements of criminal statutes
- How to read and analyze U.S. Supreme Court Cases.

### Economics 201

- Calculate and interpret statistical measures of the economy.
- Work with graphs to illustrate economic principles
- Explain and critique traditional macroeconomic theories.
- Explain the effects of economic phenomena and government policy on the economy and society.

### Education 101

- Critique public school historical and current practices
- Assess Education Reform Movements
- Positively engage in a self-reflective process regarding their own teaching and learning
- Develop and articulate their person philosophy of education
- Advocate for consumers of education
- Create developmentally relevant, standards based lesson plans for various ages
- and abilities of children

### Education 102

- Articulate appropriate terminology related to computer operations and capabilities, both in oral and written formats



- Operate a multimedia computer system to develop and design assignments appropriate for elementary and secondary classrooms
- Access, generate and manipulate data
- Use technology to communicate and collaborate with colleagues, conduct research and solve problems
- Integrate the use of technology into standard elementary and secondary curriculum content areas.

### Geography 101

- Explain the importance of geography in everyday life
- Identify significant political, economic, and cultural characteristics of each of the twelve world realms
- Compare and contrast the twelve world realms
- Formulate responses to questions about current political, economic, and social issues that are impacting one or more of the twelve world realms

### Geography 102

- Apply core geographic concepts to the organization of economic processes.
- Explain broad patterns of economic thought in global terms.
- Compare and contrast capitalism and socialism in terms of state economic systems and apply each spatially.
- Illustrate a working knowledge of natural commodities and the risk states have in developing economic systems that use those commodities.
- Consider the nature of the global labor market and apply that to the production of material goods
- Investigate the role of global capital and the global financial markets on local economic decisions.
- Describe the methods via which materials become available to him/her as a consumer.
- Explain how technology has changed and might change production processes and distribution.
- Question the role of transnational corporations in our global economy.
- Consider the role of herself/himself as a consumer and the nature of her/his retail activities.

### Geography 201

- Classify climatological and meteorological phenomena by frequency, characteristic, intensity and location.
- Assess human relationship with the natural environment
- Investigate the economic and social impact of meteorological, climatological and geomorphological processes.
- Predict patterns related to global climate change.
- Describe global landform features and their effect on global atmospheric, lithospheric and oceanographic systems.

- Compare global climatological, meteorological, fluvial, glacial, and geographical units from region to region.
- Assess the application of physical geographic principles into your own geographic environment.

### History 111

- Critically assess cultural trends that have contributed to the development of an American identity
- Identify trends, events, peoples, groups, cultures, and institutions
- Communicate orally and in writing about the content
- Demonstrate that they can analyze secondary sources and recognize differences in historical interpretation
- Identify the perspective of primary sources
- Construct historical narratives by identifying patterns of continuity and change and referring to specific primary and secondary sources, maps, and/or artifacts
- Demonstrate the ability to select and apply contemporary forms of technology to solve problems or compile information

### History 112

- Identify historical issues and explain the way those issues are interpreted
- Cite knowledge of the American past and understand how it relates to the economic conditions and political climate of the 21st century
- Describe the cultural values of the U.S.
- Think more critically about the role of the United States in the world
- Evaluate the relevance of historical websites.
- Produce a thorough critique of a political, economic, or cultural issue unique to the United States from 1865 to present by way of completing a compare/contrast essay.
- Conduct primary and/or secondary research in conjunction with the essay assignment.
- Analyze primary and secondary historical texts throughout the semester.
- Assess and recognize the geographic layout of the United States and related nations from 1865 to present.
- Compare and contrast the varieties of American culture.
- Articulate political and philosophical positions with respect to American History.
- Differentiate between legitimate and abusive use of institutional power.
- Review and retrieve current events/issues in light of their historical contexts.
- Evaluate different models of citizenship.

### History 114

- Identify the Geographical Characteristics of Africa
- The Significance of West Africa and its important in African American History
- The Meaning of Freedom and how it pertains to the African American Experience

## History 115

- List the objective of the following movements in the history of African Americans in America: a. Civil Rights Movement b. Black Power Movement, and c. The Black Studies Movement.
- Cite several examples of agency exhibited by Africans in each of the following historical periods a. Reconstruction, b. Jim Crow; c. The Black Power Era d. The Harlem Renaissance, etc.
- Explain four basic objectives of the Black Arts Movement

## History 117

- Analyze primary and secondary sources.
- Describe the general factors that contributed to Chicago's explosive growth and distinctiveness.
- Quantify and qualify the role that innovative urban planning played in Chicago's rise to urban preeminence.
- Identify the geographic layout and demographic composition of Chicago's major neighborhoods.
- Differentiate between legitimate political power and flagrant abuses of it.
- Critically evaluate the daily news, scholarly texts, and the activity of leadership in Chicago and beyond.
- Discover new possibilities for civic participation in one's neighborhood and beyond.
- Complete weekly course readings, associated questionnaires, and discuss them in class.
- Write a critical, research-based essay focused on an exhibit featured at the Chicago History Museum or similar venue.
- Write an analytical essay on a selected piece of Chicago-related media.
- On exams, demonstrate familiarity with major political, economic, social, cultural, and intellectual issues unique to Chicago's History.

## History 141

- Identify important forces for change that shaped and continue to influence today's cultures and civilizations and recognize the characteristics of mainstream world cultures, thereby acquiring the different people of the world.
- Identify the characteristics of the early civilizations of the world, the early empire builders, and the smaller civilizations that had a major impact on world history.
- Describe the attributes of classical society and the legacy of the Greco-Roman World.
- Relate the reasons for the spread of Christianity, the issues of the early Church, and the traditions, teachings, and impact of Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Islam.
- Trace the major developments in the evolution of civilization in the Medieval West, the Islamic core, eastern and southern Asia, and Africa and the Americas prior to 1500 B.C.E.

## History 142

- Identify trends, events, peoples, groups, cultures, and institutions in world history from 1500 to the present.

- Use library resources for historical research;
- Demonstrate that they can analyze secondary sources and recognize differences in historical interpretation
- Identify the perspective of primary sources
- Construct historical narratives by identifying patterns of continuity and change and referring to specific primary and secondary sources, maps, and/or artifacts;
- Demonstrate the ability to select and apply contemporary forms of technology to solve problems or compile information
- Summarize the importance of human experience in the historical process
- Analyze primary historical documents;
- Interpret primary sources to illuminate patterns in the historical past
- Distinguish between facts, opinions, and inferences
- Draw conclusions so as to understand the historical process; and
- Compare and contrast different historical periods to help understand present day society.

### History 215

- Understand global relationships between developed and developing countries.
- Recognize the connection between contemporary society and colonial structures.
- Appreciate diversity among peoples and cultures located in the same geographic region.
- Understand the effects of US foreign policy on a global scale.
- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources and critically evaluate them.
- Present ideas in a clear, organized manner.

### History 216

- Understand U.S. Latino history in relation to the larger field of United States History.
- Appreciate the diversity of U.S. Latinos and identify the similarities and differences between them.
- Recognize the connection between U.S.-Latin America relations and U.S. Latino communities.
- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources and critically evaluate them.
- Present ideas in a clear, organized manner.

### Political Science 201

- Complete a comparative summary of the major American political ideologies.
- List the horizontal and vertical powers of the American government and describe how they check and balance each other
- Define the function of major U.S. governmental institutions and assess major influences on them such as public opinion, campaigns, lobbying, and media coverage
- Identify key political and economic concepts correctly and define them in a few sentences
- Explicate the pro and con arguments for various current political debate topics
- Demonstrate quality writing, listening, and speaking skills in a respectful manner

## Political Science 204

- Demonstrate comprehension of theories of international relations including realism, idealism/liberalism, neoliberalism, economic structuralism, ecologism, feminism
- Tell exact locations of major countries on a world map and explain what problems they are facing
- Define the most important actors in international relations and the challenges they face
- Identify key political and economic concepts correctly and define them in a few sentences
- Explain the most important reasons for various major past and present global conflicts
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills through writing and discussion

## Political Science 207

- Identify key political concepts correctly and define them in a few sentences.
- Complete a comparative summary of the major American political ideologies.
- Define function of major City and State governmental institutions and evaluate influences on it.
- Explicate the pro and con arguments for various current political debate topics.
- Demonstrate quality writing, reading, listening, speaking, and thinking skills in a respectful manner.

## Psychology 201

- Analyze and critique theoretical explanations of behavior and mental processes.
- Explain how psychological methodology offers a way to investigate, modify, and analyze behavior and mental processes. Recognize the limitations of the methods of modern psychological inquiry and critically evaluate specified current formulations within psychology.
- Summarize research-based knowledge concerning the application of psychological principles to understanding and respecting human diversity.
- Evaluate the ethical practice of psychology and relate such understanding to their own values and those of others.
- Develop insight into the behaviors and mental processes of oneself and others and translate this knowledge into improved personal, social and community living.

## Psychology 203

- Identify a general knowledge of the field of psychology
- Apply basic psychological concepts to everyday experiences
- Analyze theories of human development and the development of women throughout the lifespan
- Apply psychological concepts to gender attitudes, identification, and moral reasoning
- Examine general issues relevant to sexuality and gender difference
- Review general mental health issues among girls and adult women
- Determine how violence against Women occurs and is maintained
- Plan how to get help for self and/or others

## Psychology 206

- Know the historical foundation of I/O and its impact on the individual employee and the organization.
- Understand the development of human resources including selection, recruitment, fair employment practices, interviews and job analysis.
- Be able to discuss the challenges of managing across cultures and identify individual differences in personality, attitudes, abilities and emotions and how these affect the work environment.
- Have increased skills in managing conflict and negotiating effectively. Demonstrate how to manage change in a learning environment.

## Psychology 207

- Reliably demonstrate the ability to understand and integrate a comprehensive perspective of children across all areas and levels of development.
- Apply knowledge learned to further educational and professional endeavors in the areas of child research, teaching, and psychology

## Psychology 211

- By the end of the course students will be expected to demonstrate skills and/or knowledge relating to Social Psychology, including:
  - o The description of the basic psychological theories that help to explain such Social Psychology concepts as attitude formation, social cognition, perception and decision making, conformity, group behaviors, prejudice, and pro-social behavior.
  - o How current and past research in Social Psychology lends itself to situations in everyday life, including the understanding of interpersonal relationships.
  - o Explaining how human behavior is influenced by such social factors as authority figures, groups and in-group bias, gender roles, and cognitive dissonance.
  - o Predicting the outcomes of various social situations through application of Social Psychology theories and concepts (for example, how groupthink has contributed to corporate boards and governments making bad and unethical decisions).
  - o The history of Social Psychology and the importance of the Scientific Method to the understanding of behavior.

## Sociology 201

- Relate the facts and major theories of Sociology in a way that makes each more immediate, meaningful and useful.
- Apply the theories and findings of Sociology to situations and problems in your everyday academic, commercial, social and personal life.
- Apply the theories and findings of Sociology to the goal of increasing your personal insights and self-understanding.
- Explore new ideas by using the theories and vocabulary of Sociology in group discussions and class presentations.

- Clarify and communicate past experience and new self-understanding by using concepts and terminology of Sociology in written paper format and class discussions and class presentations.
- Test and evaluate the theories and findings of Sociology against your own experience, values and beliefs.
- Use your classmates as resources in your own growth and development by sharing experiences, understanding, new ideas and special abilities.

Of the 108 SLOs that apply to this project, here is the tally and their percentages:

*How do the theoretical foundations of our Constitution shape lived experience?* (7 = 6.48%)

*How do various political institutions function?* (21 = 19.44%)

*When groups/individuals organize and get engaged, what can be achieved?* (13 = 12.04%)

*What are my personal values and evaluations?* (47 = 43.52%)

*How do governmental policies affect us?* (20 = 18.52%)

## Appendix B

### References:

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