

Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Politics
On-Campus Programs
Master of Arts in Politics
Doctor of Philosophy in Politics

Assessment Measures

The Department of Politics uses the following measures to assess learning in its Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degree programs:

- Capstone courses
- Comprehensive Examinations
- Number of degrees granted
- Publications of graduate students
- Job Placement/career advancement

Assessment Findings

Capstone Course Discussion (Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

The Department of Politics analyzed the grades and enrollment totals in the capstone courses in the on-campus M.A. and Ph.D. programs over a five year period (Academic Year 2002/03 to Academic Year 2006/07). There are five capstone courses in the three subfields of Politics: American, Theory and World. M.A. students must take at least two of the five capstone courses, and Ph.D. students must take at least three of the capstone courses as follows:

Politics 651: Political Theory I. This course is required of all M.A. students in the fields of American Government and Political Theory and of all Ph.D. students regardless of their subfield specialization. The Department believes that a broad background in political theory is essential to any doctoral student in Politics. Hence, this course is a major gateway course for doctoral students. Over the five year time frame (2002-2007) the Politics 651 course has averaged an enrollment of 14 students. The average of grades for the course over this period has ranged between 3.18 in one class to 3.58 in another. 95% of students have received satisfactory grades (between B- and A). Only three percent of students have received grades of C (unsatisfactory), with one percent withdrawing from the course and one percent auditing the course. The data derived for this course indicates that the department is meeting its student learning goals in the M.A. and Doctoral programs.

Politics 652: Political Theory II. This course is required of all M.A. students in the fields of American Government and Political Theory and of all Ph.D. students regardless of their subfield specialization. This course builds on the foundation in early political thought gained in Political Theory I to broaden understanding of political theory up through the modern period. Like Political Theory I, this course is a major gateway course for doctoral students. Over the five year time frame (2002-2007) the Politics 652 course has sustained an average enrollment

of 14 students. The average of course grades over this period has ranged between 3.38 in the Spring of 2003 to a high of 3.68 during the spring of 2006. Since the same instructor normally teaches Political Theory I and Political Theory II, the higher grades in Political Theory II indicate improvement of graduate student skills between the first and second semesters of graduate study. This improvement is reflected in the fact that 100% of graduate students have received satisfactory grades (between B- and A) over the five year period of comparison (versus 95% for Political Theory I). The data derived from this course indicates that the department is meeting its student learning goals in the M.A. and Doctoral programs.

Politics 625: Graduate Introduction to American Government. This course is required of all M.A. and Ph.D. students who select American Government as their major field of study. It also is required of any doctoral student who designates American Government as their minor field of study. Over the five year time frame of our study, an average of 9 students enrolled in Politics 625 each year. The average course grades for Politics 625 range from a low of 3.57 in 2003 to a high of 3.75 in 2004 and 2006. 40 of 43 graduate students (93%) achieved satisfactory grades (between B- and A). Three students (7%) withdrew from the course. The data suggest that the department is meeting its student learning goals in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, though more information is needed on why there were three withdrawals from the course over the five year period.

Politics 606: Graduate Introduction to International Affairs. This course is required of all M.A. and Ph.D. students who select World Politics as their major field of study. It also is required of any doctoral student who designates World Politics as their minor field of study. Over the five year time frame (2002-2007) an average of 17 students enrolled in Politics 606 each year. The average grades for Politics 606 varied from 3.25 in 2007 to a high of 3.79 in 2006. 95% of graduate students achieved satisfactory grades (between B- and A) in the course. 2 students (2%) audited the course, and 2 students (2%) received grades of C (unsatisfactory) in the course. The data suggest that the department is meeting its student learning goals in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs.

Politics 607: Graduate Introduction to Comparative Politics. This course is required of all M.A. and Ph.D. students who select World Politics as their major field of study. It also is a required course for any doctoral student who designates World Politics as their minor field of study. Over the recent five year period, an average of 19.6 students enrolled in Politics 607 each year. Average grades for the course ranged from a low of 3.07 in 2006 to a high of 3.88 in 2007. This discrepancy in grades as well as the high percentage of withdrawals from the course (5%), indicates possible problems in consistency of instruction. In addition, there has been a precipitous decline in enrollment in Politics 607 from 26 and 21 students in 2004 and 2005 respectively, to 11 and 9 students in 2006 and 2007 respectively. These issues are addressed in the Curricular Improvements section below.

M.A. and Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations in Politics (Appendix 6)

In terms of progress toward the degree, the cohort data in Appendix 6, shows that between the years 2000 and 2005, 103 of 156 M.A. students (66%) passed their comprehensive examinations within three years of admission to the program. Since completion of the M.A.

comprehensive examination normally marks the completion of the M.A. degree, the data suggests timely and successful completion of the program by 66% of the students admitted. During the same time frame (2000-2005), 39 out of 58 doctoral students (67%) passed their Ph.D. comps within four years of admission to the program. Completion of the Ph.D. degree is more problematic in that many students opt out of the program because of a lack of funding. Also, many Ph.D. students serve full-time in the military and because of war-time assignments have been delayed in completing their degrees. These points are addressed in the Curricular Improvements section below.

Graduate Degrees Awarded (Appendix 7)

The Department of Politics analyzed the number of graduates in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs over a five year period (2002/03 academic year to 2006/07 academic year). During this period, the Department awarded 134 M.A. degrees and 23 Ph.D. degrees (Appendix 7). The department has granted an average of 26.8 M.A. degrees per year and 4.6 Ph.Ds per year. The 23 Ph.D. degrees in Politics account for 14% of all doctorates awarded in the School of Arts and Sciences during the five year period.

Assessment of Effectiveness: Graduate Student Publications (Appendix 8)

The Department of Politics has informally monitored the job placement and career advancement of its M.A. and Ph.D. recipients. Anecdotal evidence indicates a high level of success in job placement and publications by CUA Politics students. One clear indication of the success of the Ph.D. program is the publication of at least ten dissertations completed since 1996 by university and commercial presses. Appendix 8 provides details concerning the publication of revised dissertations completed in the Politics Department. Briefly, recent dissertations have been published by the University Press of Kansas, the University of Missouri Press, the State University of New York Press, Northern Illinois University Press, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, and others.

Assessment of Effectiveness: Job Placement/Career Advancement

The Department continues to have great success in placing its PhDs in academic positions. One recent graduate was appointed Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn in 2008. Another recent PhD from the Politics Department entered the second year of his tenure track position at Hawaii Pacific University. A PhD graduate from a few years back recently won an outstanding teaching award at Rochester Institute of Technology. The newly appointed Chair of the Department of Political Science at Hope College in Michigan is also a CUA Ph.D. in Politics. A Ph.D. recipient from the class of 2008 accepted a tenure track appointment at York College in Pennsylvania. Another recent Ph.D. serves as the Director of the Washington Semester Program at American University. Other recent PhDs from the Department of Politics have held or hold appointments at St. John's University, the National Defense University, the Army War College, the United

States Naval Academy, Mercyhurst College, New Mexico State University, and several other colleges and universities.

Currently there are at least four high ranking military officers in the Ph.D. program, including an Air Force Lt. Colonel, a Lt. Commander in the Navy as well as a Captain in the Navy, and a Lt. Colonel in the Army. The department has a long tradition of attracting officers who wish to advance their careers by completing a doctorate in Politics.

At least three senior congressional staffers are among the many government employees who are completing their M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the Department of Politics including the legislative director in Senator Jeff Sessions' office, a staff member of the House International Relations subcommittee on oversight, and a staff member of the Bipartisan Intern Committee.

Curricular Improvements

The likely explanation for the inconsistencies in student achievement and the decline in enrollment in the capstone course, Politics 607, stems from the fact that the Department of Politics has lost two of its four comparative politics faculty members over the past three years—one to retirement and a second to another university. To remedy this situation, the Department hired a new World Politics faculty member in the fall of 2008, Dr. Andrew Yeo, who helps meet graduate student needs in Comparative Politics and International Relations. In addition, the Dean of Arts and Sciences authorized an immediate search to fill the vacancy left by the departure of the comparative politics specialist who accepted a position at another university. There is no question that the addition of Assistant Professor Yeo (Ph.D. Cornell) and the addition of a strong comparativist in a tenure track position in fall of 2009 will reverse the short-term declines in the Politics 607 course.

Anecdotal information indicates that the Department of Politics needs to tighten up the advising, registration, and dissertation guidance procedures for Politics Ph.D. students. Since the vast majority of doctoral students in the Department of Politics are part-time, and many are military officers deployed to other nations, more attention must be devoted to the advisement of students to keep them on track in completing their dissertation proposals and in completing dissertation research and writing in a timely manner.

Instead of relying on one Graduate Coordinator to keep track of approximately 60 doctoral students, it would seem prudent to designate an area coordinator for each subfield: World, American, and Theory, so that the task of advising is divided into smaller groups of advisees. Even so, contacting students in Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Korea, where several of our students have been stationed in recent years, makes dissertation oversight a real challenge. The department must take steps to meet this challenge over the next few years.

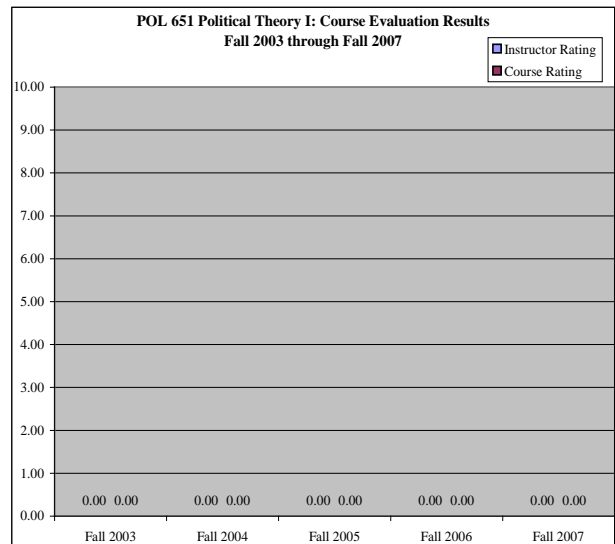
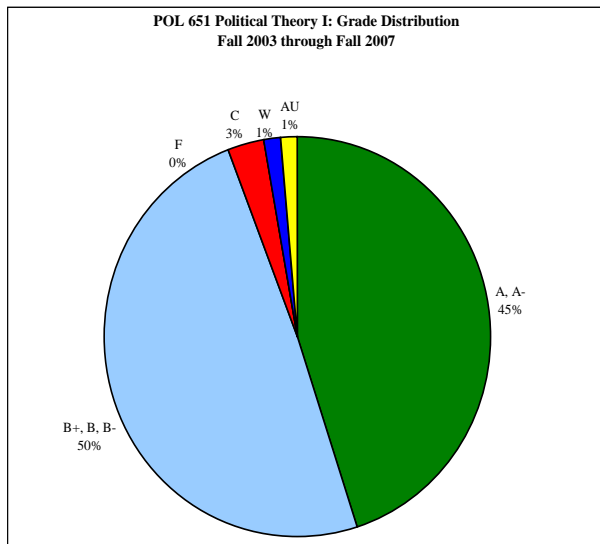
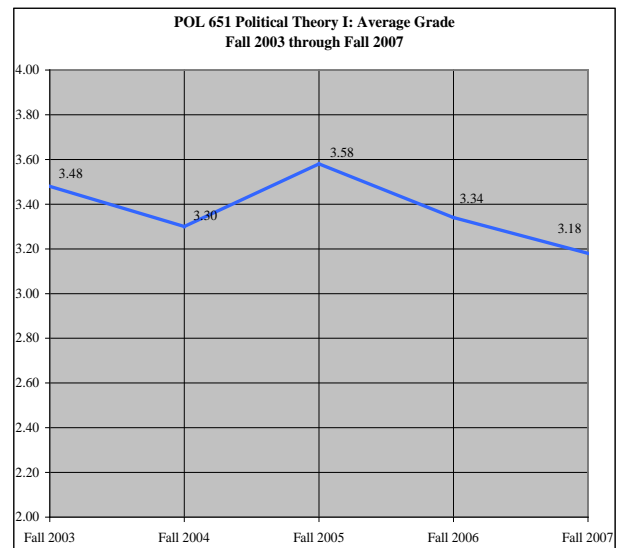
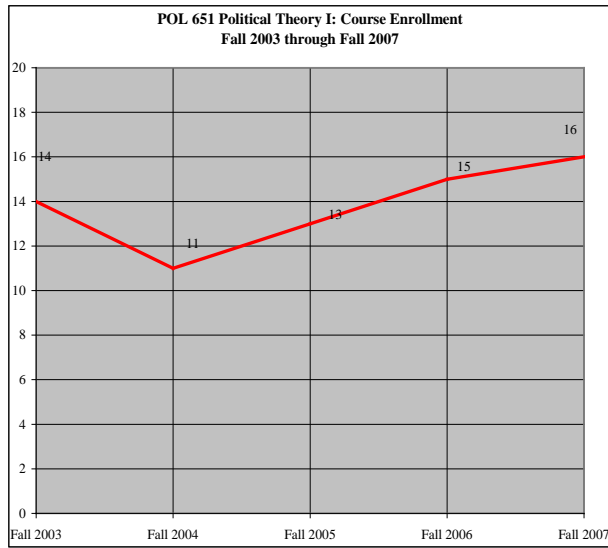
Retention of graduate students in the doctoral program is often related to financial assistance. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students with Teaching Assistantships have much greater success than part-time unfunded students in completing the Ph.D. The addition of two Teaching Assistantships, which are customarily awarded for four years, would undoubtedly help ensure a higher degree completion rate in the future.

Attachment 1

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Institutional Assessment

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS POL 651 Political Theory I

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades						Course Evaluation Results						
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	F	W	AU	Course Eval. #	Course Eval. %	Instructor Rating Avg.	Instructor Rating StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	Course Rating StDev.	
Fall 2003	14	3.48	0.43	7	7							0.00%				
Fall 2004	11	3.30	0.61	4	6	1						0.00%				
Fall 2005	13	3.58	0.40	7	6							0.00%				
Fall 2006	15	3.34	0.50	5	9				1			0.00%				
Fall 2007	16	3.18	1.06	8	6	1		1				0.00%				

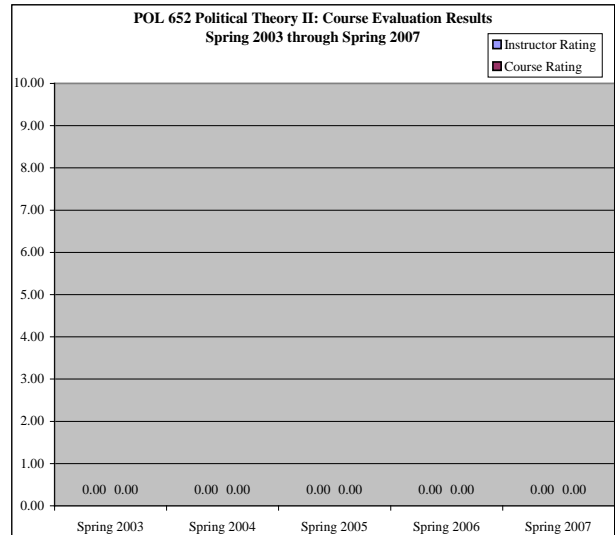
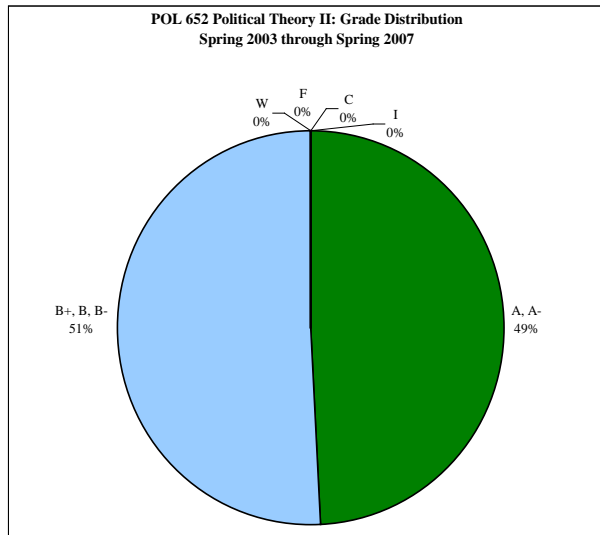
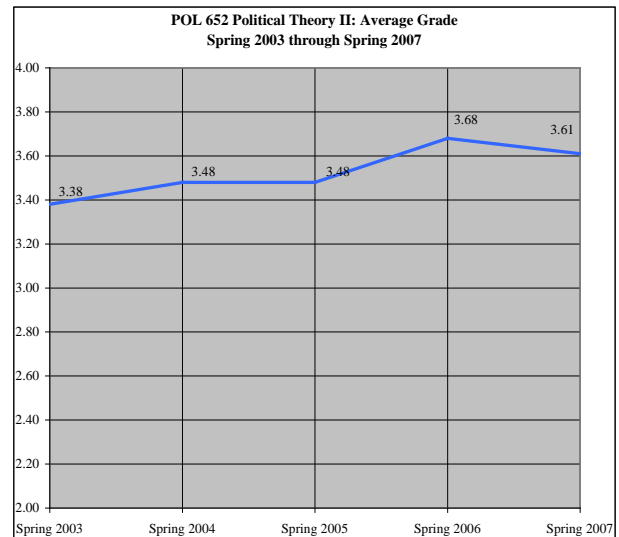
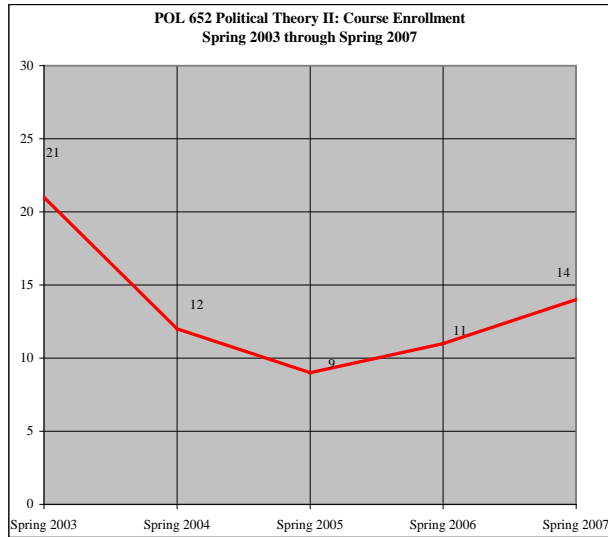


Attachment 2

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Institutional Assessment

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS POL 652 Political Theory II

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades					Course Evaluation Results						
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	F	W	I	#	%	Instructor Rating Avg.	StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	StDev.
Spring 2003	21	3.38	0.34	7	14						0.00%				
Spring 2004	12	3.48	0.48	6	6						0.00%				
Spring 2005	9	3.48	0.50	4	5						0.00%				
Spring 2006	11	3.68	0.22	9	2						0.00%				
Spring 2007	14	3.61	0.38	7	7						0.00%				

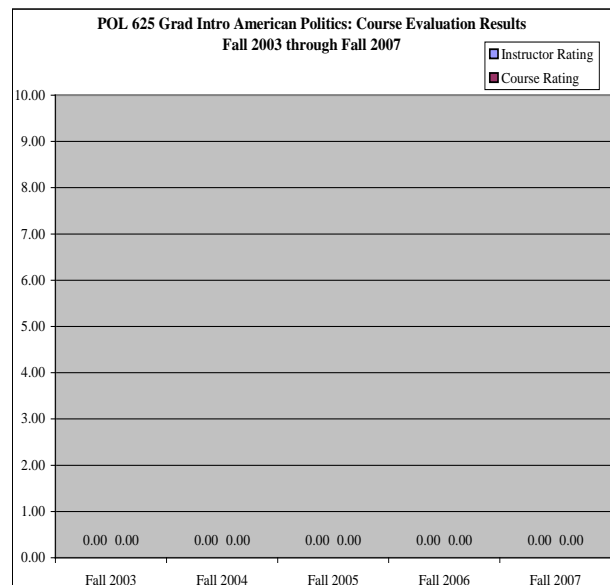
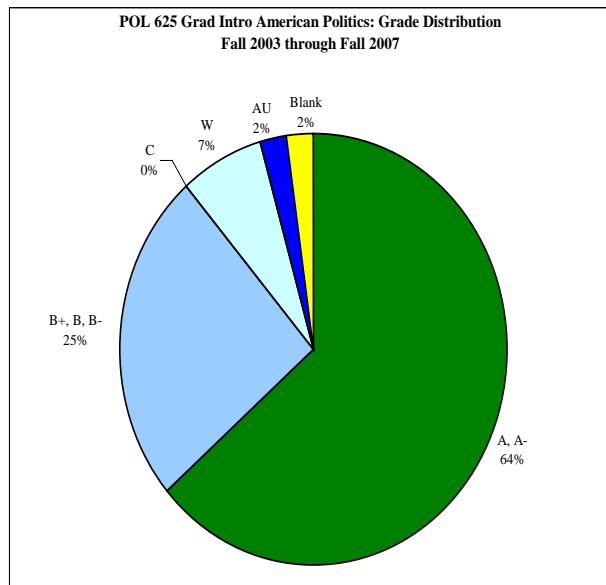
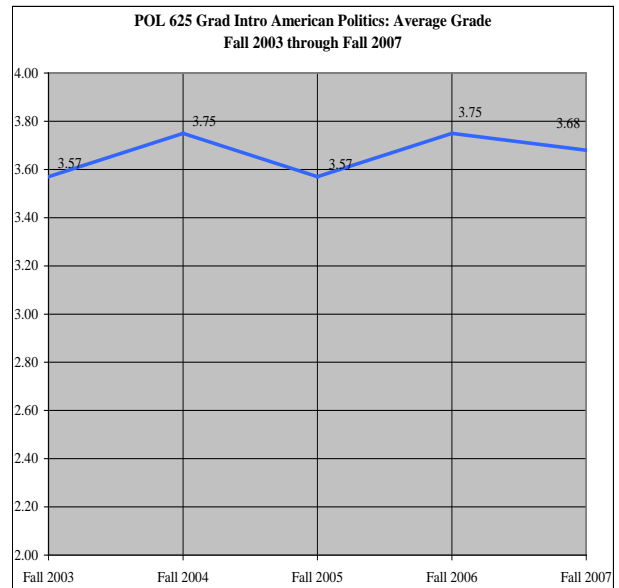
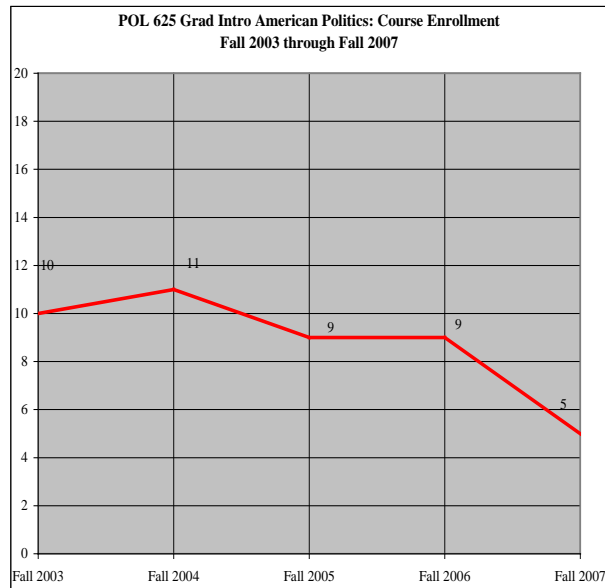


Attachment 3

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Institutional Assessment

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS POL 625 Grad Intro American Politics

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades Grade Distribution						Course Evaluation Results					
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	W	AU	Blank	Course Eval. #	Course Eval. %	Instructor Rating Avg.	Instructor Rating StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	Course Rating StDev.
Fall 2003	10	3.57	0.44	6	3			1			0.00%				
Fall 2004	11	3.75	0.31	6	2		2			1	0.00%				
Fall 2005	9	3.57	0.44	6	3						0.00%				
Fall 2006	9	3.75	0.31	6	2		1				0.00%				
Fall 2007	5	3.68	0.41	4	1						0.00%				

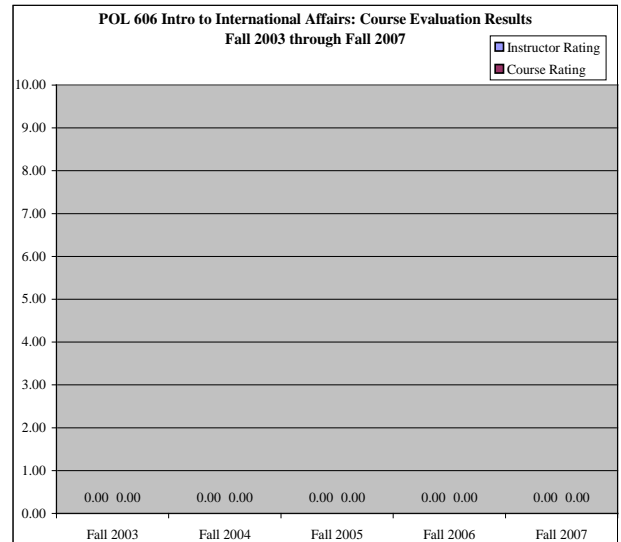
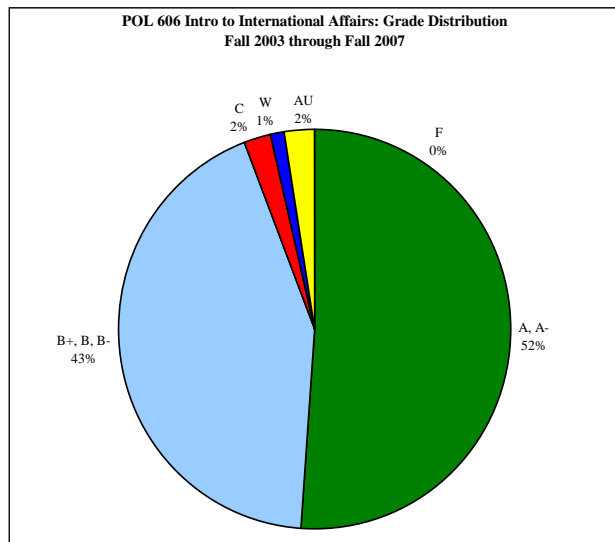
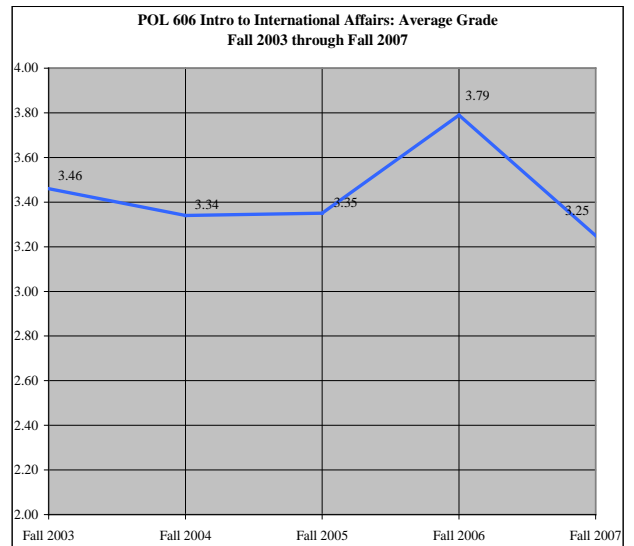
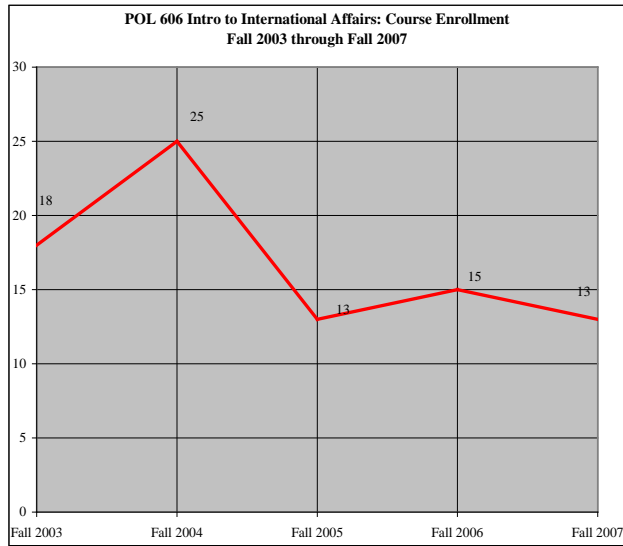


Attachment 4

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Institutional Assessment

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS POL 606 Intro to International Affairs

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade Avg. StDev.		Course Grades						Course Evaluation Results						
				Grade Distribution						Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating		
				A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	F	W	AU	#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.	
Fall 2003	18	3.46	0.42	8	10							0.00%				
Fall 2004	25	3.34	0.44	9	15						1	0.00%				
Fall 2005	13	3.35	0.69	6	5	2						0.00%				
Fall 2006	15	3.79	0.35	13	2							0.00%				
Fall 2007	13	3.25	1.14	7	4				1	1		0.00%				



Attachment 5

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Institutional Assessment

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS POL 607 Grad Intro Comparative Poltics

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades							Course Evaluation Results						
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	F	W	I	AU	#	%	Instructor Rating Avg.	Instructor Rating StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	Course Rating StDev.	
Spring 2003	31	3.56	0.44	15	13			3									
Spring 2004	26	3.52	0.37	16	9			1									
Spring 2005	21	3.74	0.30	16	4			1									
Spring 2006	11	3.07	1.16	4	5		1				1						
Spring 2007	9	3.88	0.25	7	1				1								

