

**Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Politics
Undergraduate Program**

Assessment Measures

The Department of Politics utilizes the following measures to assess departmental learning outcomes:

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data
Capstone projects: senior papers and honors theses
Grades, course evaluations, and enrollment totals for gateway introductory
Courses in the Politics Major
Anecdotal Information through student feedback

Assessment Findings

NSSE National Survey Data

2013 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data (see Appendix 1) indicates that the Politics Department has several strengths that the department must continue to emphasize and develop. The Department of Politics is above the mean for Carnegie Peer institutions in the following categories: writing assignments; developing clear and effective writing skills; demonstrating knowledge of and respect for different cultures and religions, and enriching educational experiences through internships, study abroad, and classroom activities among majors. The NSSE data indicate that the Department of Politics is above the mean for Carnegie Peer institutions in the number of assigned papers and reports in all measured lengths, including “up to 5 pages,” “between 6 and 10 pages,” and “11 pages or more.” (See Appendix 1). More importantly, the NSSE data indicates that the Department of Politics is above the mean of Carnegie Peer Institutions in the development of clear and effective writing skills (See Appendix 1). The Department of Politics is on par with the Carnegie Peer institutions in the development of clear and effective speaking skills (See Appendix 1).

The department’s faculty will continue to emphasize the assignment of a broad array of reading materials, the development of writing skills through the assignment of multiple papers, and the continuation of oral reports and class discussion to refine speaking skills among our students. These will be points of emphases in our discussions.

Other Areas of Strength and continuous Improvement

Analytical Skills:

In addition to significant strengths in developing effective writing and speaking skills among Politics majors, the NSSE data indicates that Politics seniors match the mean for Carnegie Peers in having students “thinking critically and analytically,” and above the mean in “analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth,” and significantly above the mean of Carnegie Peer institutions in “evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source,” and in “forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information.” (See Appendix 1). The department will continue to foster keen analytical ability by requiring demonstration of the ability to analyze and think critically in the numerous papers required in junior and senior level courses, and in its Senior Paper requirement. The Department of Politics has strengthened the requirements for the “Senior Paper” that all Politics Majors must complete (see Appendix 3 of this report). The most significant revision in the senior paper requirement is the addition of a new two page section in all papers titled: “Interpretation and Analysis of the Literature and Findings.” This section will require students to succinctly summarize different interpretations concerning the subject that they are investigating, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence and arguments presented in the literature, and to offer their own independent analysis of how their own research and findings stand relative to the literature. The one area in which the Department of Politics falls below the Carnegie Peer Institution mean is “analyzing numerical and statistical information.” The Department will review and assess this in terms of the prospect of requiring more statistical and numerical analysis in the introductory courses, particularly American Government.

More Attention to Non-Majors

A second area identified by the Department of Politics as needing improvement, is the overall performance of freshmen in the Politics 111, Introduction to American Government course. Course grade and enrollment data for the required gateway courses in Politics (Politics 111, 112, and 211) indicate that course grades improve as Politics Majors progress in the program. However, there is reason to believe that performance can be enhanced in the Politics 111 course by creating a separate introductory course for non-majors. Course data from 2008 to 2013 indicates that 73% of students in Politics 111 earned grades between B- and A while 8% of students receive grades of D, F, or W (Withdrawal) [see appendix 4]. In Politics 112 (Introduction to Comparative Politics), 77% of students earn grades of B- to A and only 6% receive grades of D, F, or W [see appendix 5]. The figures for Politics 211, Introduction to Political Theory, 80% of students earn grades of B- to A while 5% earn grades of D, F, or W [see appendix 6]. Part of the disparity in good grades in Politics 111 relative to Politics 112 and Politics 211 appears to be based on the fact that significantly more non-majors enroll in Politics 111 than in Politics 112 and 211.

Diverse Perspectives: A Continuing Strength

As can be seen on the third page of Appendix 1, the Department of Politics is above the mean for both Catholic University and Carnegie Peer Institutions in such categories as: “Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments,” “Had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own,” “Tried to better understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective,” and “Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.” This is largely due to the broad

perspectives offered by faculty in the Department of Politics, but also related to extensive internship participation in Congress and abroad. We have active Parliamentary internship programs in London, Leuven, Belgium, and Dublin, and Study Abroad opportunities in Rome, London, Latin America, and elsewhere.

The Senior Comprehensive Examination

The final measure of achievement for the Department of Politics is the administration of the Senior Comprehensive exam. This exam includes an essay examination to test students on their major subfield of study in Politics: American, Theory or World, as well as a multiple choice examination to test their basic knowledge over the entire field of political science. The examination results [see Appendix 2] are evaluated by the entire department to identify areas of weakness among Seniors so that we may strengthen our course coverage in these areas. As can be seen in Appendix 2, the overall pass rate for the Senior Comprehensive examination over the five year period from AY 2008-2009 to AY 2012-2013 is 98.49%. Only 7 students have failed the comprehensive examination out of 463 students taking the examination, thus indicating that Politics Department faculty have been quite successful in training Politics Majors to have solid substantive knowledge in the field of political science.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
 Planning, Institutional Research, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

**2013 National Survey of Student Engagement Mean Comparisons:
 Selected Catholic University General Education Goals
 Department of Politics: Seniors**

Department of Politics compared with:

General Education Goals: Graduates will demonstrate proficiency in oral and written communication, including argumentative essays, research papers, presentations, and creative and collaborative work employing a variety of media.	Department of Politics	Catholic University		Carnegie Peers		NSSE 2013				
	Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
<i>During the current school year, about how much writing have you done? 1=none, 1.5=1-2, 4=3-5, 8=6-10, 13=11-15, 18=16-20, 23=more than 20</i>										
Number of papers, reports, or other writing tasks up to 5 pages	7.5	8.4		-.14	7.2		.04	7.9		-.06
Number of papers, reports, or other writing tasks between 6 and 10 pages	5.3	4.3		.24	3.1	*	.57	3.7		.38
Number of papers, reports, or other writing tasks 11 pages or more	4.0	2.4		.48	1.9		.62	2.0		.53
<i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>										
Writing clearly and effectively	3.4	2.9	*	.54	3.0		.42	3.1		.32
Speaking clearly and effectively	2.9	2.9		-.01	2.9		-.02	2.9		-.08

Department of Politics compared with:

General Education Goals: Graduates will show facility in critical thinking and reasoned analysis.	Department of Politics	Catholic University		Carnegie Peers		NSSE 2013				
	Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
<i>During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>										
Memorizing course material	2.6	2.7		-.13	2.8		-.17	2.7		-.10
Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations	3.2	3.1		.19	3.1		.11	3.2		.10
Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts	3.4	3.1		.34	3.1		.35	3.1		.32
Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	3.4	3.0		.43	2.9	*	.54	3.0		.46
Forming a new idea or understanding from various from various pieces of information	3.4	2.9		.49	2.9		.52	3.0		.45
<i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>										
Thinking critically and analytically	3.3	3.2		.08	3.3		-.01	3.3		-.05
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	2.5	2.5		.04	2.9		-.37	2.8		-.32
Solving complex real-world problems	2.8	2.7		.05	2.8		-.03	2.8		-.04

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
 Planning, Institutional Research, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

**2013 National Survey of Student Engagement Mean Comparisons:
 Selected Catholic University General Education Goals
 Department of Politics: Seniors**

Department of Politics compared with:

General Education Goals: Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of scientific and quantitative reasoning.	Department of Politics	Catholic University		Carnegie Peers		NSSE 2013				
	Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
<i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>										
Thinking critically and analytically	3.3	3.2		.08	3.3		-.01	3.3		-.05
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	2.5	2.5		.04	2.9		-.37	2.8		-.32
<i>During the current school year, about how often have you done the following? 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>										
Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information	2.3	2.5		-.17	2.7		-.39	2.6		-.35
Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue	2.3	2.4		-.07	2.4		-.14	2.4		-.14
Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information	2.3	2.4		-.10	2.4		-.17	2.4		-.13

Department of Politics compared with:

General Education Goals: Graduates will demonstrate an ability to find information effectively using appropriate resources and technologies, critically assess the validity and relevance of that information, and utilize it in ethical and legal ways.	Department of Politics	Catholic University		Carnegie Peers		NSSE 2013				
	Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>										
Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments	3.0	2.9		.09	3.0		-.03	3.0		-.01
Connected your learning to societal problems or issues	3.2	2.8		.41	2.8		.40	2.9		.32
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	3.2	2.7		.56	2.6		.66	2.7		.55
Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge	3.4	3.3		.10	3.2		.18	3.3		.13

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
 Planning, Institutional Research, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

**2013 National Survey of Student Engagement Mean Comparisons:
 Selected Catholic University General Education Goals
 Department of Politics: Seniors**

General Education Goals: Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of and respect for different cultures and religions.	<i>Department of Politics compared with:</i>									
	Department of Politics	Catholic University			Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2013		
	Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>										
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	3.2	2.7		.56	2.6		.66	2.7		.55
Had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own	3.2	3.0		.28	3.1		.11	3.1		.11
Had discussions with people with religious beliefs other than your own	2.6	2.7		-.15	3.0		-.48	3.0		-.50
<i>During the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>										
Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	3.3	3.0		.41	2.9		.46	3.0		.40
<i>To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>										
Encouraging contact among students from different social, racial/ethnic, religious backgrounds	2.0	2.2		-.24	2.5	*	-.53	2.6	**	-.58
<i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>										
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	2.8	2.7		.10	2.7		.05	2.8		-.03

Appendix 2

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
 Planning, Institutional Research, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

UNDERGRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
AY2008-2009 to AY2012-2013

	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
AY2008-2009		0.00%	93	96.88%		0.00%	3	0.00%	96
AY2009-2010	2	2.00%	92	93.88%		0.00%	4	0.00%	98
AY2010-2011		0.00%	89	98.89%		0.00%	1	0.00%	90
AY2011-2012		0.00%	78	98.73%		0.00%	1	0.00%	79
AY2012-2013	5	5.00%	95	95.00%		0.00%		0.00%	100
TOTAL	7	1.51%	447	96.54%	0	0.00%	9	1.94%	463

Note:

- 1) Milestone outcomes were included in the categories High Pass and Pass with Honors if these designations were explicitly indicated in the students' milestone record.
- 2) Category "High Pass" includes both "High Pass" and "Pass with distinction".
- 3) The count in this table is based on the exam outcomes of all attempts in an academic year.

Appendix 3

Senior Paper Requirement

Details about the Senior Paper requirement are available from the department and the Undergraduate Coordinator, but are also sent by e-mail to all rising Politics seniors both during the spring semester of their senior year and again at the beginning of the fall semester of their senior year.

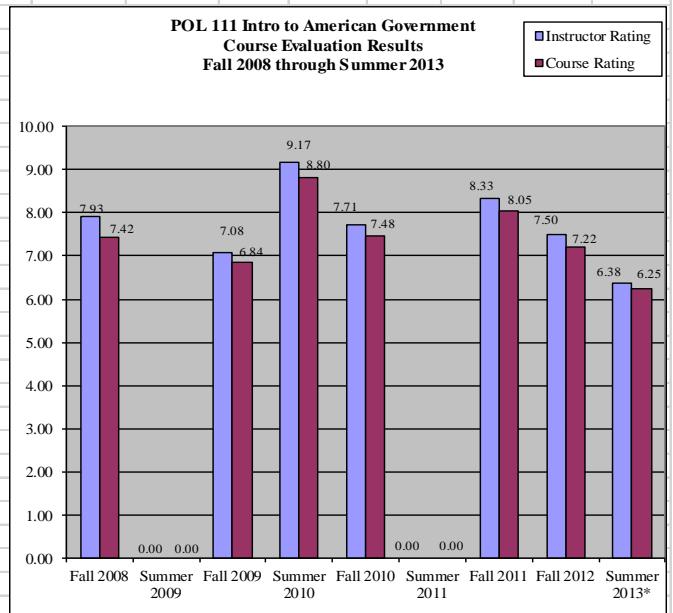
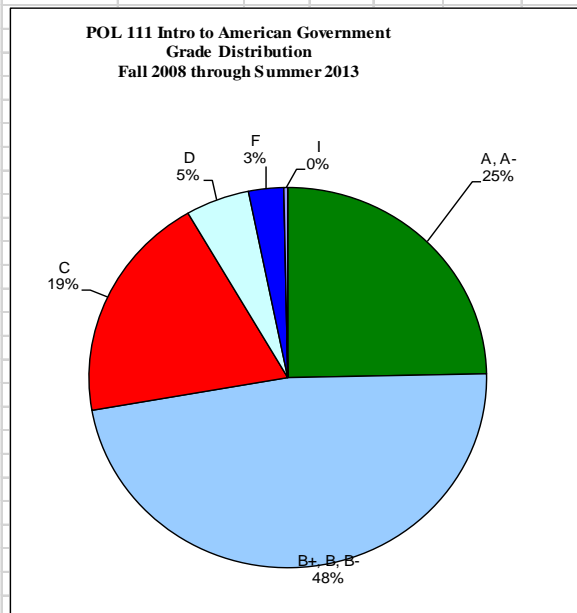
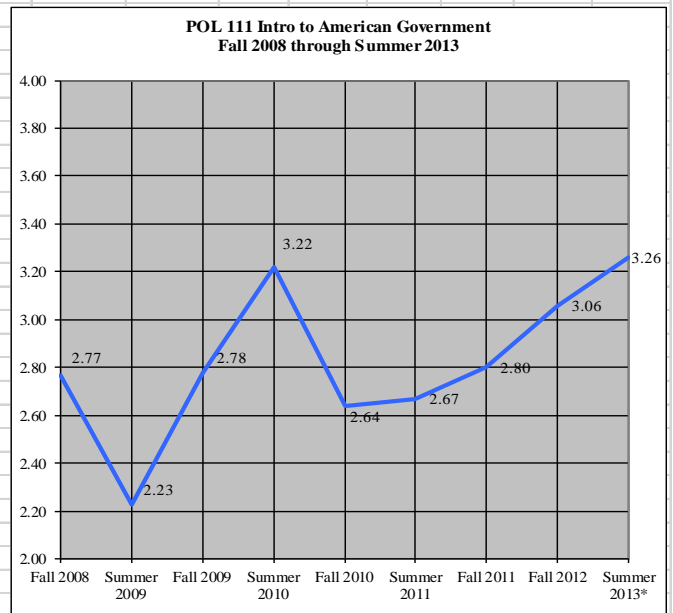
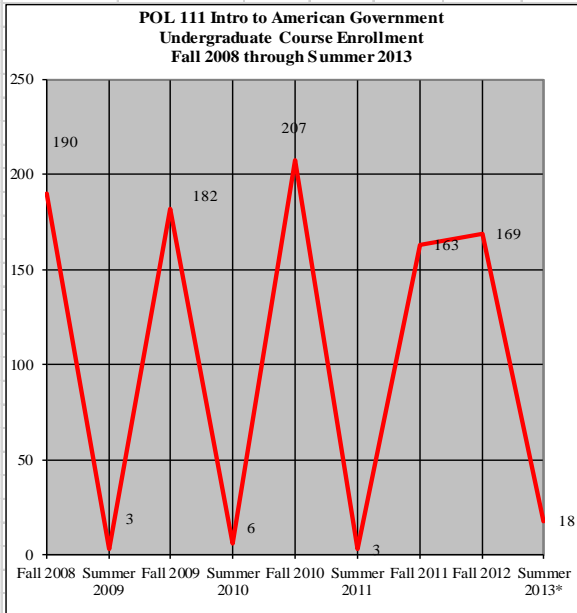
Formal requirements for the Senior Paper include:

1. Submission of a one-page proposal, which includes the topic of the paper, thesis or argument, methods to be used, and likely sources. The proposal should be submitted early in the fall semester to a faculty member who has agreed to supervise and approve the paper. The subject of the paper must generally align with the expertise of the faculty supervisor, unless permission is otherwise granted by the undergraduate coordinator.
2. The Senior Paper must be a minimum of 20 pages of text in length, excluding notes and title page, with reasonable (e.g. 1 inch) margins.
3. Students must cite a minimum of ten sources in the paper; each should be cited at least once within the paper, and not merely be listed in the bibliography.
4. The due date for the Senior Paper is the first Friday after spring break. Faculty must review the papers for revisions and corrections (if any) within two weeks, and the final draft of the paper (if one is necessary) is due by the end of the spring semester.

Appendix 4

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
 POL 111 Intro to American Government

Term	Undergraduate Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades							Course Evaluation Results					
		Avg.	StDev.	Grade Distribution							Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating	
				A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	D	F	W	I	#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.
Fall 2008	190	2.77	0.84	36	99	42	9	4			105	55.26%	7.93	2.15	7.42	2.20
Summer 2009	3	2.23	1.97	1	1					1	0	0.00%				
Fall 2009	182	2.78	0.97	45	83	39	6	9		2	153	84.07%	7.08	2.59	6.84	2.42
Summer 2010	6	3.22	0.44	1	5						6	100.00%	9.17	0.98	8.80	0.84
Fall 2010	207	2.64	1.00	47	88	45	19	8		1	133	64.25%	7.71	2.15	7.48	1.79
Summer 2011	3	2.67	1.15	1		2					0	0.00%				
Fall 2011	163	2.80	0.85	34	89	28	7	5			81	49.69%	8.33	1.79	8.05	1.94
Fall 2012	169	3.06	0.79	58	79	24	8				145	85.80%	7.50	2.16	7.22	2.28
Summer 2013*	18	3.26	0.86	10	5	3					8	44.44%	6.38	1.06	6.25	1.04

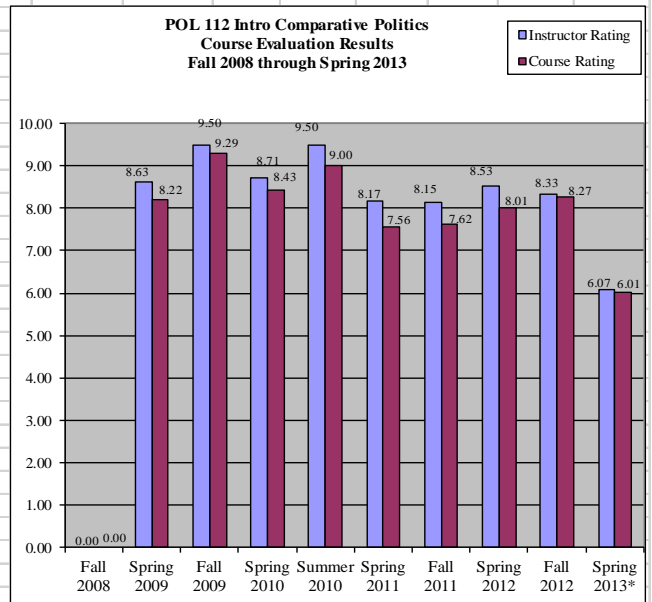
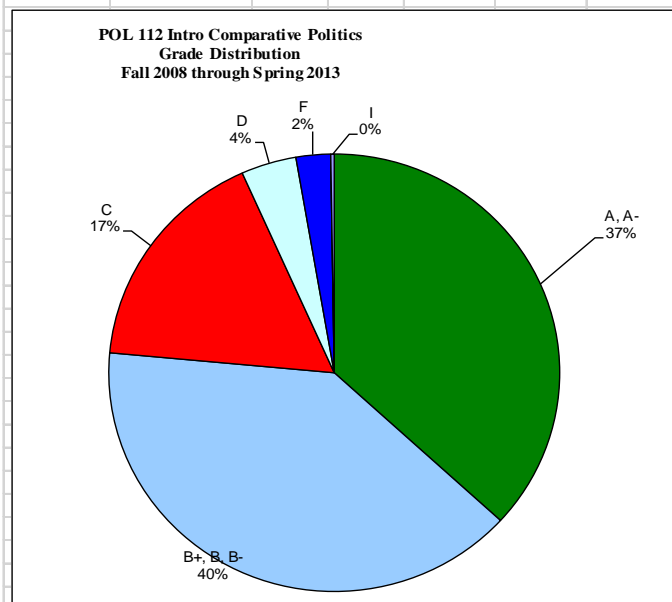
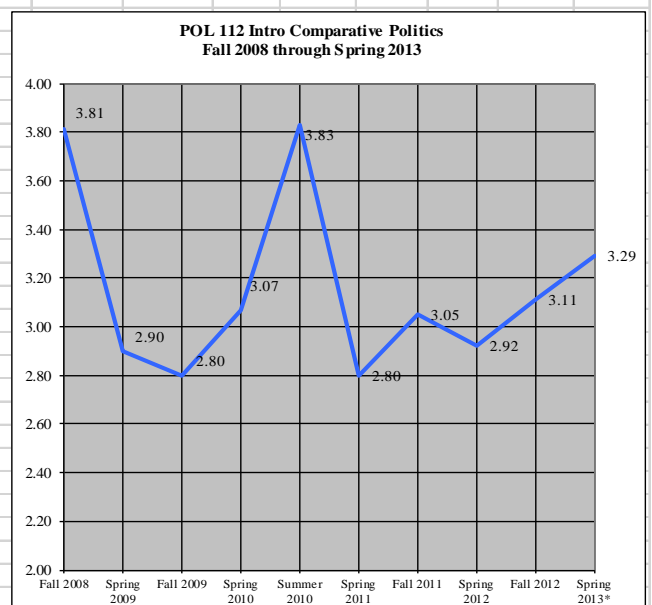
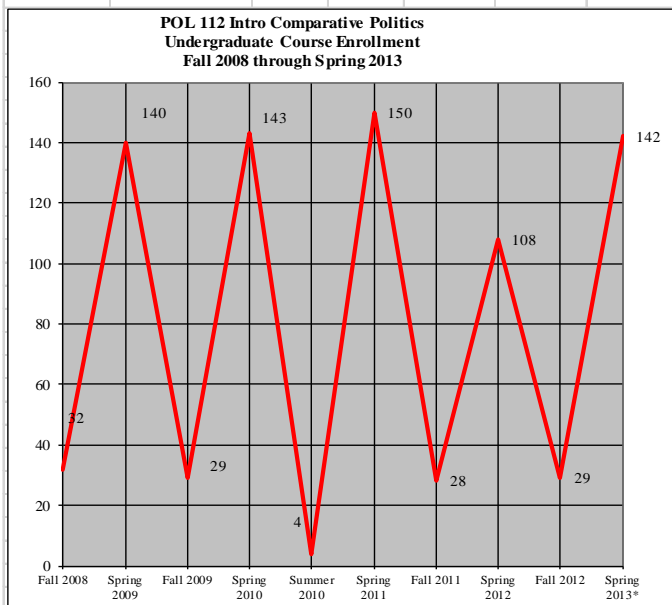


*Summer 2013 was using a new evaluation form where instructor and course ratings were based on a 7-point scale

Appendix 5

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
 POL 112 Intro Comparative Politics

Term	Undergraduate Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Grade Distribution							Course Evaluation Results					
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	D	F	W	I	Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating	
											#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.
Fall 2008	32	3.81	0.35	28	3	1					0	0.00%				
Spring 2009	140	2.90	1.00	42	59	28	5	6			65	46.43%	8.63	1.76	8.22	1.87
Fall 2009	29	2.80	1.27	11	9	5	1	3			14	48.28%	9.50	0.76	9.29	0.99
Spring 2010	143	3.07	0.80	51	60	28	4			1	108	75.52%	8.71	1.84	8.43	1.74
Summer 2010	4	3.83	0.35	3	1						4	100.00%	9.50	0.58	9.00	1.15
Spring 2011	150	2.80	1.03	42	63	30	8	7			117	78.00%	8.17	1.83	7.56	1.84
Fall 2011	28	3.05	0.92	10	11	5	2				13	46.43%	8.15	1.21	7.62	1.71
Spring 2012	108	2.92	0.94	29	52	17	7	3			86	79.63%	8.53	1.77	8.01	2.08
Fall 2012	29	3.11	1.07	15	8	3	2	1			15	51.72%	8.33	2.26	8.27	2.25
Spring 2013*	142	3.29	0.74	66	54	19	3			1	25	17.61%	6.07	1.39	6.01	1.51



*Spring was using a new evaluation form where instructor and course ratings were based on a 7-point scale

Appendix 6

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
 Planning, Institutional Research, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
 POL 211 Intro to Political Theory

Term	Undergraduate Course Enrollment	Course Grades										Course Evaluation Results					
		Course Grade		Grade Distribution							Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating		
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	D	F	W	I	#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.	
Fall 2008	110	3.22	0.89	52	42	10	4	2			53	48.18%	7.06	2.64	6.70	2.31	
Summer 2009	1	3.70		1							0	0.00%					
Fall 2009	113	2.79	0.96	32	44	29	4	4			36	31.86%	8.14	2.26	7.75	2.13	
Summer 2010	11	3.58	0.72	9		2					0	0.00%					
Fall 2010	132	2.94	0.88	41	60	23	5	3			105	79.55%	9.06	1.14	8.31	1.70	
Summer 2011	5	3.28	0.38	2	3						0	0.00%					
Fall 2011	115	3.16	0.73	46	55	11	2	1			104	90.43%	9.63	0.88	9.37	0.97	
Fall 2012	109	3.23	0.71	46	47	15		1		1	76	69.72%	8.17	1.84	7.18	2.30	

