

**Department of Political Science
Core Curriculum Assessment
Spring 2016**

This report summarizes data collected by the individual department method to meet the requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Two approved Texas Core Curriculum courses within the Government/Political Science Foundational Component Area are taught within The University of Texas at Arlington Political Science Department. POLS 2311, Government of the United States and POLS 2312, State and Local Government were specifically targeted to meet four of the six Texas Core Curriculum Objectives: *Communication, Personal Responsibility, Social Responsibility, and Critical Thinking*. It is important to note that separate multi-departmental reports are available for these four objectives from departments that conduct Texas Core Objective assessments using The University’s communal method.

Students in three sections of POLS 2311 and POLS 2312 were assessed. Table 1 contains the available demographic characteristics of the students in the sample ($N = 432$) as well as their representation by college. The four sections that follow present the information directly from the Government/Political Science Department. Each section heading describes the instrument used to assess the respective Texas Core Objective, followed by a results summary.

Table 1
Comparative demographic data from POLS 2311 and POLS 2312

	Section A	Section B	Section C
Gender	n = 143	n = 143	n = 146
Female	56	67	84
Male	87	31	62
Classification			
Freshman	93	97	55
Sophomore	35	31	61
Junior	9	12	23
Senior	6	3	7
Schools and Colleges			
College of Architecture, Planning & Public Affairs	3	1	2
College of Business	17	25	29
College of Engineering	42	23	25
College of Liberal Arts	8	25	12
College of Science	29	24	18
College of Education	16	16	7
College of Nursing and Health Innovation	8	14	23
School of Social Work	2	0	6
University College and Major Intended	18	15	24

Communication

Communication	2311-001	2311-002
Q1	32	25
Q2	77	82
Q3	67	74
Q4	95	96
Q5	54	67
Mean	65	69
Mean w/0 Q1	73	80
Communication	2312	
Q1	35	
Q2	83	
Q3	75	
Q4	93	
Q5	67	
Mean	71	
Mean w/0 Q1	80	

The students in Political Science 2311 (US Government) and 2312 (State/Local/Texas Government) were, on average, mostly able to communicate at the standards set by the Department: 75% successfully answering the five questions in the communication assessment instrument. The complete instrument is provided at the end of this summary.* The Department has set 75% as a satisfactory threshold as that matches to an “average” or C grade.

The instrument was designed to capture key elements of effective written communication in the social sciences: syntax and grammar, essay construction and argumentation. Interestingly, the item in the instrument with the lowest scores was Q1, which measures effective essay construction. We provide the means for the battery with and without this question. Without the question included all students except those in one section were able to meet the standard. If one includes the question, students have some work to do to meet our standards of effective communication.

**NOTE: Questions 1-5 from the communication assessment instrument are available by request with permission from the department.*

Personal Responsibility

Responsibility	2311-001	2311-002
Q1	91	88
Q2	94	97
Q3	91	92
Q4	82	76
Q5	95	98
Mean	91	90
Responsibility	2312	
Q1	91	
Q2	98	
Q3	96	
Q4	88	
Q5	96	
Mean	94	

The students in Political Science 2311 (US Government) and 2312 (State/Local/Texas Government) were, on average very successful in demonstrating their understanding of personal responsibility, to the standards set by the Department: 75% successfully answering the five questions in the personal responsibility assessment instrument. The complete instrument is provided at the end of this summary.* The Department has set 75% as a satisfactory threshold as that matches to an “average” or C grade.

The questions in the assessment instrument were designed to measure the students’ understanding of student responsibility, ownership of blame and reasonable expectation of university professors. Across all measures, students showed that they do understand these important boundaries.

**NOTE: Questions 1-5 from the personal responsibility assessment instrument are available by request with permission from the department.*

Social Responsibility

Social Responsibility	2311-001	2311-002
Q1	96	98
Q2	90	83
Q3	94	96
Q4	98	97
Q5	63	68
Mean	88	88
Social Responsibility	2312	
Q1	98	
Q2	89	
Q3	94	
Q4	100	
Q5	61	
Mean	77	

The students in Political Science 2311 (US Government) and 2312 (State/Local/Texas Government) were, on average very successful in demonstrating their understanding of social responsibility, to the standards set by the Department: 75% successfully answering the five questions in the social responsibility assessment instrument. The complete instrument is provided at the end of this summary.* The Department has set 75% as a satisfactory threshold as that matches to an “average” or C grade.

The questions in the assessment instrument were designed to measure the students’ understanding of civic engagement and social bonding, common good, relationship between community and government. On most measures, students were able to demonstrate satisfactorily that they understood the relationships among these important concepts. They were somewhat less able to make the connection between civic and community activity and government policy (Q5).

**NOTE: Questions 1-5 from the social responsibility assessment instrument are available by request with permission from the department.*

Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking	2311-001	2311-002
Q1	48	35
Q2	21	18
Q3	66	68
Q4	72	77
Q5	42	41
Mean	50	48
Critical Thinking	2312	
Q1	31	
Q2	27	
Q3	72	
Q4	87	
Q5	50	
Mean	53	

The students in Political Science 2311 (US Government) and 2312 (State/Local/Texas Government) were, on average not successful in demonstrating their critical thinking skills, to the standards set by the Department: 75% successfully answering the five questions in the critical thinking assessment instrument. The complete instrument is provided at the end of this summary.* The Department has set 75% as a satisfactory threshold as that matches to an “average” or C grade.

The questions in the assessment instrument were designed to measure the students’ ability to determine theses, supporting evidence, and identify logical conclusions. The data show wide variance in students’ performance. For example, while students were general able to identify crucial elements of the argument, they were not generally able to determine the thesis and to identify supporting evidence.

**NOTE: Questions 1-5 from the critical thinking assessment instrument are available by request with permission from the department.*