

RAC Meeting Minutes 1/15/2021 via zoom 10:00AM-11:00AM

Dlynn Armstrong-Williams University of North Georgia

Kimberly Gill CSU

Johnny Green FVSU

Roger Marietta ASU

John Vanzo ABAC

Geoff Bowden Savannah State

Christopher Lawrence (filling in for Julie Lester), MGA

Randy Green - Georgia Highlands College

Kris Beck Gordon State College

George Vargis, GSU Perimeter College

Blair Thomas, Valdosta State (filling in for Joe Robbins)

Peter Brecke Georgia Tech

Paul Rutledge- University of West Georgia

Barry Balleck Georgia Southern University

Scott Ainsworth University of Georgia

Michael Herb Georgia State University

Tom Caiazzo East Georgia State College

Michael Mlewkowi Georgia Gwinnett

Tom Rotnem Kennesaw State University

Dlynn Williams opened the meeting with a recap of the legislative mandate. She reviewed the sentiments held by both the POLS and History RACs. In an effort to ensure compliance with the legislative mandate and provide student learning outcomes that link to the legislative mandate, a subcommittee was created to propose possible of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on SLOs for the Legislative Mandate. Members of the subcommittee consist of: Geoff Bowden, Michel Lewkowicz, Lance Hunter, and Benjamin Taylor.

### Subcommittee Initial Proposal:

#### Proposed SLOs for U.S. Constitution

- In fulfilment of the legislative mandate, students in this course will...
  - **Identify** the branches required by the U.S. Constitution.
  - **Define** civil liberties and civil rights outlined in the U.S. Constitution and Amendments.
  - **Describe** the ways the U.S. Constitution may change or be amended.

#### Proposed SLOs for Georgia Constitution

- **Identify** the branches of government required by the Georgia Constitution.
- **Define** civil liberties and civil rights outlined in the Georgia Constitution and Amendments.
- **Describe** the ways the Georgia Constitution may be changed or amended.

### Discussion:

Peter Brecke

In fulfilment of the legislative mandate, students in this course will be able to  
Identify the branches required by the U.S. Constitution and their roles in governance  
Identify the branches of government required by the Georgia Constitution and their roles in  
governance

Dlynn Armstrong-Williams

Identify the branches required by both the US and GA Constitutions and their role in governance.

Define civil liberties and civil rights outlined in both the US and GA constitutions and their amendments.

Describe the ways in which the GA and US constitutions may change or be amended.

### **Suggested Final Learning Outcomes:**

**Identify the branches required by both the US and GA constitutions and their role in governance.**

**Define civil liberties and civil rights outlined in both the US and GA constitutions and their amendments.**

**Describe the ways in which the US and GA constitutions may change or be amended.**

Vote: In favor of the proposed learning outcomes:

Michael Herb

John.Vanzo

Kris Beck

Geoff Bowden

Tom Rotnem

Dlynn Armstrong

Christopher Lawrence

Randy Green

Johnny Green

Dr. Blair Thomas

Tom supports via telephone

Peter Brecke

Michael Mlewkowi

Kimberly Gill

Old Business:

Our charge provides for a role in e core. This role consists of textbook review and materials review. As a RAC we have had little involvement in e core but moving forward, Dlynn asked if this involvement is something the RAC would like to pursue. Some members expressed a need to be more active and involved in e core. General consensus is to engage more with e core in terms of text and materials and to look into possible avenues for greater collaboration and input.

Dlynn reviewed some institutions have a grade of 4 for CLEP or AP exams to give credit but currently it is institutional prerogative. ACE recommends a 3 of passing some institutions have a score requirement of 3 while others have a required score of 4. The issue is the transferability of credit and is part of the charge of the RAC. AP tests and scores on AP tests was brought up in Chairs meeting with the BOR. Strong interests for system wide acceptable score for AP tests and across the USG. Last year we addressed this in Savannah but it was a more flexible answer with a range of acceptable scores. At a future meeting, we need to review institutional scores and institutions wanting to keep a higher score will need to vocalize the institutional rationale.

Question regarding AP: We want to know is this a mandate that the USG is requiring of us all, OR do we still have flexibility, but we just need to provide a justification for having a higher score requirement?

We want to know is this a mandate that the USG is requiring of us all, OR do we still have flexibility, but we just need to provide a justification for having a higher score requirement?

Could we suggest a narrower transferability fix: maintain the institutional decision for first time freshmen but say that schools have to accept that POLS 1101 has been completed by a transfer student who comes in from a school that gave credit for a 3?

**AP US Government and Politics:** <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-united-states-government-and-politics/course?course=ap-united-states-government-and-politics>. Course Overview/Fact Sheet at <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-us-government-politics-course-overview-effective-fall-2018.pdf?course=ap-united-states-government-and-politics>. There is no current ACE credit recommendation for this course. To see the previous ACE credit recommendation, go to <https://www.acenet.edu/National-Guide/Pages/Organization.aspx?oid=e7089b28-9016-e811-810f-5065f38bf0e1>. Go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> page. Click on “AP Government and Politics: United States.” Or go to <https://aphighered.collegeboard.org/setting-credit-placement-policy/credit-granting-recommendations>

There is one **CLEP test** relevant to this committee:

**American Government:** Test Overview/Fact Sheet at [https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/clep/american\\_government\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/clep/american_government_fact_sheet.pdf). The ACE credit recommendation is “In the lower-division baccalaureate/associate degree category, 3 semester hours in American government or US government. Credit is recommended for candidates scoring 50 and above.” Credit recommendation is near the end of the document, just above the “Answers to Sample Questions.” Or you may go to <https://www.acenet.edu/National-Guide/Pages/Organization.aspx?oid=e9089b28-9016-e811-810f-5065f38bf0e1>. Click on “American Government.” Or go to <https://clep.collegeboard.org/develop-your-clep-program/create-a-clep-policy/ace-credit-recommendations>

Going Forward:

Each member of the RAC will present the new approved SLOs for POLS 1101 (American Government) to his/her/they/them representative units and see if these can be incorporated in the syllabus of all instructors for POLS 1101. Request is to make sure the SLOs have institutional support and the SLOs are reflected in the syllabus. Once it goes through the department and has institutional support, please send notification to [gill\\_kimberly1@columbusstate.edu](mailto:gill_kimberly1@columbusstate.edu)

## Basis for POLS 1101 as Vehicle for Legislative Mandate

O.C.G.A § 20-3-68, Instruction in essentials of United States and Georgia history and Constitutions, states:

All colleges and universities sustained or in any manner supported by public funds shall give instruction in the history of the United States and the history of Georgia and in the *essentials of the United States Constitution and the Constitution of Georgia*; and no undergraduate student in any college or university shall receive a certificate of graduation or a degree without successfully completing course work or previously passing a satisfactory examination on the same.<sup>1</sup>

The members of the Political Science Regents' Advisory Committee, on behalf of all political science faculty in public universities and colleges in the University System of Georgia, firmly resolve that the goal of encouraging civic participation and awareness is best met by requiring all USG universities and colleges to ensure their graduates earn a passing grade in a core curriculum course that examines and discusses the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions on a continuous basis throughout the semester. The course that offers the most consistent and comprehensive analysis and evaluation of both these Constitutions, as well as the governmental institutions, civil liberties, and participative institutions and avenues for encouraging responsible citizenship in America is POLS 1101, "Introduction to American Government."

## Current Evidence on Satisfying the Legislative Mandate

To outline the ways POLS programs are currently meeting the legislative mandate, the POLS RAC subcommittee on the legislative mandate fielded a survey asking about specific practices and SLOs currently in place. Given the position of POLS 1101, assessment protocols and processes are widely variable. However, a common theme in all programs for POLS 1101—beyond instruction in the U.S. and Georgia constitutions—is a focus on civic education and engagement and critical thinking.

## Theoretical Approaches Used in POLS 1101

Based on a survey of the syllabi offered for examination, most POLS 1101 courses reflect the area of expertise of the instructor of record. Faculty who are experts in political institutions may focus more heavily on how the U.S. and Georgia constitutions shape the framework and procedures of governments, while behaviorists may focus on the ways the U.S. and Georgia constitutions affect political behavior. Despite these course-based idiosyncrasies, there do appear to be two main theoretical approaches to POLS 1101: 1) practical knowledge and understanding, and 2) higher-order linkages to psychological, sociological, and institutional implications of American government.

### Practical Knowledge & Understanding

A primary concern for POLS 1101 faculty is making certain students have a firm grounding in the facts about the U.S. and Georgia constitutions as well as American politics

---

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis added.

more broadly. Moreover, based on responses from political science departments and submitted sample syllabi, it is clear the main pathway for this practical knowledge is a standard, survey-style course where aspects of the US constitution are unpacked chapter-by-chapter, week-by-week. Most courses cover the Georgia constitution as part of the final module in the course.

#### Higher-Order Linkages to Relevant Theoretical Approaches

Beyond the basic approach, many POLS 1101 courses make linkages to sociological, psychological, and game theoretic approaches to understanding the US and Georgia constitution. Attention is given to the philosophical and historical foundations of the constitutions as needed. The overwhelming attention of POLS 1101 is devoted to examining and explaining the implications of the constitutional basis for the underlying institutions (i.e., the executive, legislative, and judicial branches), civil liberties, and civil rights in the United States and how political actors operate within that structure, at least insofar as constitutional frameworks leave room for interpretation and political maneuvering.

#### **POLS 1101 as Critical Thinking for Civic Engagement and Education**

Evident in the sample syllabi, as well as responses to the POLS RAC *ad hoc* survey, is the connection to the U.S. and Georgia constitutions and civic engagement. More specifically, POLS programs and faculty teaching POLS 1101 prioritize critical thinking about civic engagement and civic literacy as part of this course. This adds depth to both the course and the curricular associations POLS 1101 has at various USG institutions. Some POLS 1101 courses employ a range of activities to deepen the connection between the content and engaged citizenship. In some POLS 1101 courses, students connect with elected officials, develop civic engagement programs, employ service-learning projects, or use active learning techniques like mock trials or legislatures. Overall, it is clear from both the sample syllabi and the survey responses that POLS 1101 is a versatile course, which expands students' conceptions of what government is and how they can affect their government through civic engagement.

#### Pathway for Student Learning Outcomes on Legislative Mandate

##### **Current POLS 1101 SLOs**

Based on responses to the POLS RAC *ad hoc* survey, there are a wide range of SLOs currently in use. Some institutions assess POLS 1101 as part of their core curriculum while others assess that course as part of their program assessment. At present, there are no USG-wide SLOs for POLS 1101. Of the SLOs forwarded to this committee, the primary verbs from Bloom's taxonomy being used are "identify," "define," "explain," and "describe." These outcome objectives are appropriate for POLS 1101 course level, and we understand our task is to propose content-specific connections to these outcomes demonstrating satisfaction of the legislative mandate.

## **Approved POLS 1101 SLOs for the Legislative Mandate**

**Identify the branches required by both the US and GA constitutions and their role in governance.**

**Define civil liberties and civil rights outlined in both the US and GA constitutions and their amendments.**

**Describe the ways in which the US and GA constitutions may change or be amended.**

## Conclusions

It is clear from the language of O.C.G.A § 20-3-68 that POLS 1101 is the course best suited to fulfill the requirement for all USG students to have instruction in the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions. Furthermore, POLS programs throughout USG are going beyond meeting the mandate using POLS 1101 to meet goals for both their programs and institutions for critical thinking, civic engagement, and civic literacy and education. Nonetheless, in the interest of ensuring that all students finish POLS 1101 successfully meeting the requirements of O.C.G.A § 20-3-68, mandate-specific SLOs seem to be in order.

The SLOs we propose here use action verbs on the lower end of Bloom's taxonomy of learning skills because POLS 1101 is an introductory course. It would be, therefore, unfair to both students and faculty to require higher order outcomes like "analyze" or "examine." O.C.G.A § 20-3-68 says students shall have instruction in the "essentials" of the U.S. and Georgia constitutions. The SLOs we propose are in accordance with this level of instruction; it is essential that a student be able to "identify," "define," and "describe."

A second reason we propose these SLOs is that—as evidence by materials submitted to us and by our own understanding of what our colleagues are doing—these SLOs are already operative in most POLS programs either implicitly or explicitly. However, for the purposes of assessment for the core curriculum, having these SLOs formalized and having each POLS program identify an assessment protocol is a logical next step. The first step, however, is to successfully identify the outcomes we want students to achieve, and we believe we have done that here.

We conclude by saying that POLS 1101 is a necessary course for any student in any major or program at any USG institution. National and state government and politics will touch the personal and professional lives of all USG students in myriad ways both large and small. As evidenced by the legislative mandate itself, the state of Georgia takes our responsibility to prepare students for this very seriously. Furthermore, beyond understanding the basics about government, the content in this course also prepares students to become engaged citizens who can think critically about politics and how it affects them. It is for these reasons that we, once again, declare that the only course that can adequately and appropriately meet the legislative mandate for instruction in the basics of the U.S. and Georgia constitutions and government is POLS 1101, "Introduction to American Government."

