

## Capstone Experience in the Major Application Template

Name of the Major\*: Political Science (Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science)

Department/Unit: Political Science

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Report of Dept. Vote: 7 Approve 0 Oppose 0 Abstain Date: April 26 2012

\*Note: Each major must have a designated Capstone Experience in the Major.

### Capstone Experience in the Major Learning Outcomes:

A capstone experience is either a single seminar or a broader culminating experience designed to be offered near the completion of a student's program of study. It is meant to provide students the opportunity to make connections between the key learning objectives of their majors and the General Education Program Outcomes, and to consider how their educations have prepared them for the world beyond the university.

*To fulfill this requirement, students will:*

- Complete a project that integrates knowledge, skills, and experiences related to those General Education Program Outcomes appropriate to the discipline.
- Demonstrate skills, processes, and resources needed to make a successful transition from college to the world beyond.

### Capstone Experience in the Major Criteria:

1. Departments will designate a Capstone course(s) or experience for each of its majors.
2. The Capstone course(s) or experience should require the use of skills, methodology, and knowledge which demonstrate continuity between the General Education Program Outcomes and the major.
3. Capstone courses or experiences should have sufficiently small enrollment caps to allow for active participation by each student and feedback by the instructor.

### Capstone Experience in the Major

**1. If the department is designating a course or courses for the Capstone Experience, list them here:**

The Capstone Experience in Political Science will be satisfied by ONE of the following courses:

Poli 498 Capstone Seminar  
Poli 499 Independent Study (3 credits)

**2. Describe how the course(s) listed above will require the use of skills, methodologies, and knowledge that demonstrate continuity between the General Education Program Outcomes and the academic major.**

The Capstone Seminar will be a topical course that requires students to engage in an individual and/or group research project in which research, writing and perhaps oral communication assignments correspond directly to the written and oral communications requirements and social science perspectives in the General Education Program. In their research projects students will employ analytical, critical, and/or interpretive skills appropriate to the political science discipline to explain how individuals, groups, and institutions are influenced by social, cultural, or political institutions, and to "identify the role of human agency in shaping events and historical changes." Political Science capstone seminars will require students to use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies appropriate to their research and the social sciences.

The Independent Study option (Poli 499) will be based on the same principles outlined above. The primary difference is that with the independent study option students will pursue research and writing in a topic of their choosing instead of a project based on the theme of a capstone seminar.

**3. Describe how the assignments in the course(s) listed above will achieve the following outcomes:**

**a. Students will complete a project that integrates knowledge, skills, and experiences related to those General Education Program Outcomes appropriate to the discipline.**

In the Capstone Seminar students will complete a major research project resulting in a written research paper, extended length powerpoint presentation, or similar assignment in which they report on their research and findings. Students will select a topic that fits with the theme of the offered seminar. The research will require data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data, as well as analysis and criticism of political science theories relevant to their research. These basic skills are developed in a wide range of courses in the Political Science major. Students will employ an array of political science methodologies to inform and defend their arguments and will share their findings with the other seminar members. The paper and presentation will demonstrate the integration of skills and knowledge learned throughout the major.

Again, the Independent Study option (Poli 499) will be based on the same principles. Since the student will not be enrolled in a seminar type course, the student will be required to present his or her research in some kind of public setting before other students, university faculty, public poster presentation, academic conference, or similar setting.

**b. Students will demonstrate skills, processes, and resources needed to make a successful transition from college to the world beyond.**

The ability to conduct independent research, locate and discern the quality of information, analyze and interpret it, as well as explain research outcomes effectively in both verbal and written forms is necessary for most professional work. These skills translate from Political Science to careers in education, business, law, and many other professional opportunities.

**4. Capstone courses and experiences should have sufficiently small enrollments which facilitate active participation and allow for feedback from the instructor. Please describe your department's enrollment policy for the Capstone Experience.**

Enrollment in the Capstone seminar will be limited to 20 for the first few semesters of the GEP. The department may choose to review this enrollment number in the future to determine if it needs to be raised to 25 to meet demand. At no time will enrollment in the seminar go above 25.

Enrollment in Poli 499 Independent Study will normally be limited to one specific student per section, although it is possible that more than one student may wish to enroll in a small group project leading to a research presentation. It is likely that some faculty members will oversee 2-3 independent study sections per semester.

We anticipate that this option will be used by students who are unable to schedule a capstone seminar on offer, or who are on a study abroad program and are capable of undertaking the research and writing required to successfully meet the requirements listed in 3a and 3b above. Thus, not limiting Poli 499 to one student allows flexibility in meeting the capstone needs of our students. For those students choosing the Poli 499 capstone experience, the department will seek outlets for the student to present his or her research to other faculty and students, per 3.a above.

**5. If your department is designating experiences other than a specific course to meet the Capstone requirement, please list those experience(s) below.**

**6. Describe how the Capstone experience(s) listed above will achieve the following outcomes.**

- a. Students will complete a project that integrates knowledge, skills, and experiences related to those General Education Program Outcomes appropriate to the discipline.**

- b. Students will demonstrate skills, processes, and resources needed to make a successful transition from college to the world beyond.**