Course Description
Surveys the structure and operation of the American federal government, the state government of Georgia, and American local government.

Program Outcomes/Goals

POG1  Critical Thinking, Reading & Writing
Produce graduates who read, articulate thought through writing and think critically.

Student Learning Outcomes

SLD1  Analyze, Evaluate, & Provide Convincing Reasons in Support of Conclusions
Students will analyze, evaluate, and provide convincing reasons regarding issues pertaining to the structure and operation of American government.

Supported Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>Institutional Priorities</th>
<th>Strategic Initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures

Government Issue Online Discussion
Students will participate in an online discussion where they will present arguments and conclusions based on the analysis and evaluation of key political topics that are relevant to the connection between the study of American Government and modern day key political issues. Students are required to complete an original post answering the question. In addition, students are required to respond to at least two of their classmates with substantive responses directly related to the content or arguments that other students have made.

Methodology
Student essays will be evaluated using stated grading criteria or a rubric.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment

Target
A minimum of 70% of students will score a 70% or higher on their Government Issue Online Discussion assignment.
This class, POLS 1101-55: American Government, was a traditional, face-to-face class that met at the Gilmer Center campus of Dalton State College in Ellijay, Georgia during the Fall 2016 semester. To measure students' ability to analyze, evaluate and provide convincing reasons in support of conclusions, I examined the grades from the online government issue assignment that students completed during the semester. An average of 82 percent (N=26/32) students who completed the assignment earned at least a 70% on the assignment, whereas only 18 percent (6/32) did not earn the necessary points. This illustrates that the target of 70% of students earning a 70% or better on the government issue online discussion assignment was met, and that students in POLS 1101-55 (Fall 2016) showed an ability to analyze, evaluate and provide convincing reasons in support of their conclusions.
Analysis of Finding and Evaluation Results

This measures success can be tied to the amount of time that we spent in class discussing current events and the election during the Fall 2016 semester. Students in POLS 1101-55 were required to participate in in-class discussions, small group workshops and short in-class writing assignments related to their views on the elections and the current events that were shaping the events that were playing out during the election. I believe that another area that increased the success of this assignment is that my students at the Gilmer campus were significantly more likely to have known one another prior to the class (and approximately 20 percent of the class were dual enrollment students who were in High School together). This familiarity made them more comfortable participating in the small group discussions and workshops as they didn’t have to engage in any of the “getting-to-know-you” phases that classes taught on the main campus are often struggling to deal with. Finally, we were in an extremely politically charged environment during this past semester and I believe that this hyper-focus on politics made American Government more relevant to their real lives that it normally seems like it is. They were more likely to be having conversations about politics outside of class than normal, and thus the conversations that were occurring in class simply became extensions of conversations that were already occurring. Even students who were generally disinterested in politics seemed more likely to participate in the online nature of the conversation as there was not an immediate (or visceral) reaction from classmates regarding their opinions.

While the overall target was met, I still think that there were students who were hesitant to be honest about their opinions for fear of ridicule from the class. Ironically, this was especially true of liberal leaning students who were in the minority in this particular section of the course. I think that the political climate may have been too politically charged for those who didn’t do well to share their true opinions about the election and the current political climate.

Action Plans for Improvement Description

Although students met the target for this particular measure, I feel that their success could be improved in several key ways. First, I have found that student success increased when I provided video lectures for them as a study tool for their examinations. In the past I have done this for material covered later in the semester, (usually as a response to getting behind in the material and needing to give students an opportunity to re-examine material at their leisure). As a result, I will create video lectures for all of the material covered in the course to aid students in their preparation. In addition, I plan on creating "Working study guides" which will help students prepare for the examination while still recognizing that they are responsible for test preparation in an introductory course.

Target

A minimum of 70% of students will score an 75% or better on their first examination.
This class, POLS 1101-55: American Government, was a traditional, face-to-face class that met at the Gilmer Center campus of Dalton State College in Ellijay, Georgia during the Fall 2016 semester. To measure students’ ability to articulate constitutional principles and processes fundamental to democracy, I examined the grades from their first examination on the constitution and American federalism. I am using all of the questions because I believe that the entirety of the examination speaks to the principles and processes that are essential to understanding democracy in America. An average of 94 percent (N=30/32) students who completed the assignment earned at least a 75% on the examination, whereas only 6 percent (2/32) did not earn the necessary points. This illustrates that the target of 70% of students earning a 70% or better on the government issue online discussion assignment was met, and that students in POLS 1101-55 (Fall 2016) showed an ability to articulate constitutional principles and processes fundamental to democracy.

Analysis of Finding and Evaluation Results

It is important to note that this success on this particular target is a bit deceptive. Although students had a high degree of success, I am not entirely sure that their success is fully illustrative of their knowledge or success of the course material. The major reason for student’s success is after dismal results in their original (or raw) test scores, I allowed students to make corrections to their examinations to earn up to half of the points they missed on the examination. In order to be eligible to earn these points students had to indicate the questions that they had gotten incorrect, find the correct answer (including page number) and provide a detailed description of why their answer was incorrect. I allowed students to do this because they were adjusting to my style of the examination for the first time during the course of the semester. In addition, students appeared to be having some difficulty reconciling the way that I explained things in class with the way that the textbook presented information. Indeed, if you examine the Raw examination scores (the scores without questions that more than 65% of the class missed and without a curve applied) only approximately 59% (N=19/32) of the students score above a 75% on their first examination. Again, I believe that some of this is due to the trouble that students experienced with reconciling the very “academic” nature of the textbook versus my more real-world example reliant approach to teaching political science and American government. In addition, the first examination occurs only about 3 weeks into the semester and students have usually not acclimated to the difference between high school and college yet and are usually unprepared to take an examination (especially one where a study guide has not been provided).
POG2 Social Sciences and History
Produce graduates who demonstrate an understanding of the forces shaping contemporary society as revealed through the social sciences and history.

Student Learning Outcomes

SLO1 Articulate Understanding of Major Political Forces Shaping Society
Students will articulate an understanding of major forces and events, influences, or ideas that have shaped history and society within the framework of a federal system of government.

Supported Initiatives

| 2 | Standards | 1 | General Education | 0 | Institutional Priorities | 14 | Strategic Initiatives |

Measures

M1 Multiple Choice Examination on Civil Liberties, Civil Rights & the Media
Students will take a multiple choice examination covering the Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, and the Media in America. The entire examination (75 multiple-choice questions) covers these three topical areas (each topical area is specific to a chapter).

Methodology
For the examination, students will be graded on whether they correctly answer the questions on the examination.

Source of Evidence: Test/Exam/Quiz

Target
A minimum of 70% of students will score a 75% or higher on their fourth multiple-choice examination dealing with major forces and events that have shaped American society.

| Target | Findings | Improvements Achieved from Previous Action Plans | Improvement Type | Status |
This class, POLS 1101-55: American Government, was a traditional, face-to-face class that met at the Glimer Center campus of Dalton State College in Ellijay, Georgia during the Fall 2016 semester. To measure students’ ability to articulate an understanding of the major forces, events, and influences that have shaped society, I examined the questions from their fourth examination. I am using all of the questions because I believe that the entirety of the examination speaks the forces that have shaped society in America. An average of 80 percent (N=26/32) students who completed the assignment earned at least a 75% on the examination, whereas only 20 percent (6/32) did not earn the necessary points. This illustrates that the target of 70% of students earning a 70% or better on the government issue online discussion assignment was met, and that students in POLS 1101-55 (Fall 2016) showed an ability to articulate constitutional principles and processes fundamental to democracy.

Analysis of Finding and Evaluation Results

I believe that there are several reasons that students were able to meet the target on this particular examination. First, I believe that the fact that this was the final examination in the course (and the students last significant way to improve their grades before the end of the semester) that students put a significant amount of time and effort into preparing for these examinations. Although it is anecdotal, I had more students contact me with questions about information regarding terms or concepts that we covered in class than I had for the first three examinations combined. I believe that this illustrates that students were more engaged in the information than they may have been for the first three examinations. Second (and potentially the most impactful piece of information) is that I created video lectures for the students for all of the information that would appear on Examination #4. This allowed students to hear the information in class and then, at their leisure, review the information via video at home. I had several students comment on how they believe that this helped them to be more successful on their last examination. In addition, I think it likely helped students who had less than exceptional attendance get caught up on material that they may have missed when they didn’t attend class. From a cursory glance at the students whose test grades improved the most from Test #3 to Test #4, I believe it is fair to note that students who did not attend class regularly likely benefited from being able to access information at their own pace (as opposed to simply not having the information if they missed class under normal circumstances.)
Related Projects

There are no related projects to this project.

Project Collaborators

- Henry Codjoe
  - Author
- Tammy Byron
  - Author
- Matthew Hipps
  - Author
- Michael Hoff
  - Author
- Mary Nielsen
  - Author
- Kathy Payne
  - Author

Project Attachments

- Civil Rights & Liberties Examination (Fall 2016)
  - TestCorrectionAssignment.pdf
- POLS_1101_Fall_16_Gilmer.docx
- Constitution & Federalism Exam (Fall 16)
  - GovernmentIssueOnlineDiscussion.pdf

Comments

Enter your comment... Post