

Annual Departmental Assessment Report

Department or Program: General Social Sciences

Academic Year of Report: 2018-2019

Department Contact Person for Assessment: Jamie Mayhew Bufalino, Director

Brief Introduction to GSS

The General Social Sciences program currently serves between 850 and 1000 undergraduate majors divided into 4 distinct career-oriented academic concentrations – Applied Economics Business and Society (AEBS); Crime, Law and Society (CLS); Globalization, Environment and Policy (GEP); and Social Studies Teaching (SST). The program has no dedicated faculty, instead course are drawn from 15 social science departments and 5 professional schools on campus to offer 4 distinct multidisciplinary, issue-based curricula. GSS, therefore, does not control the syllabi or in-class experiences for our students.

Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report

We investigated the education our students receive through the following two assessment plans:

Assessment 1: How well do GSS students' perform in courses designed to advance one or more of the GSS Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)? How well do GSS students perform as compared to others students, especially students majoring in a given course discipline?

The following data examines student performance in a course offered in the fall term of 2019 that fulfills at least one of the SLOs for each of the 4 GSS concentrations.

GSS student learning outcomes includes:

- 1) Develop a broad understanding of social issues related to business (AEBS), the justice system (CLS), education (SST), or the environment GEP) from a multidisciplinary perspective
- 2) Develop skills in social scientific methods of data analysis
- 3) Convey complex information and ideas through accessible writing, speaking and online communication
- 4) Connect theoretical knowledge with problem-solving skills to address contemporary issues within major social institutions

Assessment 2: How well do GSS students perform in 400-level courses compared to their performances at the 100- 300 levels and as compared to the wider UO student population and majors in the course discipline?

GSS students are currently not required to take 400-level courses due to logistical hurdles. However, I am currently working on a proposed revision to the curriculum that would establish a 400-level course requirement. In revising the current curriculum it is important to ensure that courses are scaffolded such as that GSS students have the requisite skills, and conceptual and

theoretical knowledge to be successful and 400-level courses. I am considering this question in order to identify if the current curriculum adequately prepares GSS students to succeed at 400-level coursework related to their major concentration.

Section 2: Assessment Activities

Due to time limitations, I did not account for + and – letter grades. I counted all grades as full letter grades (A, B, C, etc).

Assessment 1: How well do GSS students' perform as compared to other students in specific courses designed to advance one or more of the GSS Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) using data from courses taught in Fall 2019?

SLO #1: Develop a broad understanding of social issues related to business (AEBS), the justice system (CLS), history/education (SST), or the environment (GEP) from a multidisciplinary perspective

GSS Concentration: AEBS

Course: SOC 346 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Characteristics of work and occupational careers in modern societies; relationships of those to family, the economy, bureaucracy, technology, and alienation.

Overview of Data: A total of 63 GSS students enrolled in this course. They made up 58% of the total course enrollment (63/108). The pass rate among GSS students was 97% with an approximate average GPA of 2.9 (calculated based on whole letter grades, not including +/-). Average GPA for the total enrollment was a somewhat higher at 3.13 also with a pass rate of 97%. This increase likely was influenced by the higher average GPA among the 15 SOC majors enrolled in the class (3.57 with a 100% pass rate).

GSS Concentration: CLS

Course: SOC 204 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: The sociological perspective with emphasis on fundamental concepts, theories, and methods of research.

Overview of Data: GSS students were 12 among a total of 477 students in this introductory core ed fulfilling sociology course. SOC majors numbered only 9 out of 477. GSS majors had a pass rate of 67% with an average course GPA of 2.55 in contrast to a pass rate of 97% and a 3.07 GPA among the small sample of SOC majors. The pass rate for the entire population of students was 94% with a collective 3.11 GPA.

GSS Concentration: SST

Course: HIST 456 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Explores how revolutionary America and the American Revolution has been defined, narrated, and understood by historians and the

various ways that people of different backgrounds, genders, ethnicities, and statuses experienced the era and the war itself.

Data: As is common for 400-level courses, enrollment in this course was low and thus the sample size is small. Two GSS students were enrolled in this course. The pass rate for GSS students was 50% and cumulative GPA was 1.5 (students earned a B and an F). Total enrollment in the course was 39 with an overall pass rate of 97% and an average GPA of 2.96. Of the total, 56% (22/39) were history majors. They influenced the total pass rate of 90% with an average GPA of 2.96.

GSS Concentration: GEP

Course: INTL 240 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Introduction to major ideologies, theories, historical processes, and contemporary challenges in international development.

Data: GSS students accounted for 3 among a total enrollment of 165 students in this core ed satisfying course. They had a 100% pass rate and an average GPA of 2.33 as compared to the class pass rate of 96% with an average GPA of 3.07. The 7 INTL majors enrolled in the course performed significantly better than either GSS students with an average GPA was 3.57 (100% pass rate).

SLO #2: Develop skills in social scientific methods of data analysis

GSS Concentration: AEBS, CLS, SST, GEP

Course: GEOG 391 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: How social scientists approach knowledge creation, and the research design process, including developing research questions and selecting methods. Students will further develop an understanding of ethical considerations in social scientific research, as well as how to determine the quality of research design and study findings. This course will primarily draw upon theoretical content from geography.

Data: GSS students numbered 45 of 87 (52%) enrolled in this methods course (one of three options to fulfill a requirement for all GSS majors). Pass rate among GSS students was 64% with an average GPA of 2.1 (as compared to the class average of 2.32 and pass rate of 70%). Among GEOG majors (22/87), the average GPA was higher at 3.0 with an 86% pass rate.

SLO #3: Convey complex information and ideas in quantitative and qualitative form through accessible writing, speaking and online communication

GSS Concentration: AEBS

Course: BA 316 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Management systems for planning, controlling, organizing, and leading; how they influence human behavior in organizations. Selecting, training, retaining, and motivating the human resource in organization.

Data: (Drawn from three sections of this course offered in Fall 2019 for non-majors) GSS students made up 18% (54/302) of the students in these courses. The pass rate among both GSS and the class overall was 98% with a GSS average GPA of 2.83 and a class average GPA of 3.18.

GSS Concentration: CLS

Course: SOC 445 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Racial oppression as a structural and ideological feature in American life.

Data: GSS students in this 400-level course numbered 2 out of a total enrollment of 13. All of the other students were SOC majors. There was a 100% pass rate in the course with GSS majors earning an average GPA of 3.0 as compared with the average GPA among SOC majors of 3.33. In this small sample GSS majors who self-selected into this advanced Sociology course performed comparably to the majority of students who were Sociology majors.

GSS Concentration: SST

Course: HIST 201 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Creation and development of the United States socially, economically, politically, culturally. Native America, European colonization, colonial development, origins of slavery, Revolution, early Republic.

Data: GSS students number 6 among a total enrollment of 165 students in HIST 201. Ten history majors are enrolled in this core education satisfying survey course. There was a 100% pass rate for both GSS and HIST majors (93% pass rate for the entire class). HIST majors (3.6 average GPA) slightly outperformed GSS majors (3.5 average GPA). But both groups performed better than the overall average GPA for the course (3.14).

GSS Concentration: GEP

Course: INTL 446 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Explores development challenges, debt cycles, urban growth, neoliberalism, populism, socialism, gender, the environment, U.S.–Latin American relations, ecotourism, and drug geographies in the region.

Data: GSS students numbers 2 out of a total enrollment of 39 (22 of whom were INTL majors) in this 400-level international studies course. The pass rate was 100% for all groups. INTL majors performed very well with an average GPA of 2.86 while GSS majors earned an average 3.0 GPA.

SLO #4: Connect theoretical knowledge with problem-solving skills to address contemporary issues within major social institutions

GSS Concentration: AEBS

Course: EC 327 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Introductory course in game theory. Develops game-theoretic methods of rational decision making and equilibriums, using many in-class active games.

Data: GSS students numbered 4 out of a total of 81 students enrolled (5%) in EC 327 an elective specialization course for GSS-AEBS majors. EC majors may up 30% (24/81) of the total enrollment. Interestingly, the pass rates for GSS majors, EC majors, and the entire class were 100%, 79%, and 89% respectively. However, average GPA for each group was 2.5, 2.73 and 2.96 respectively.

GSS Concentration: CLS

Course: SOC 345 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Major class, racial, and ethnic groups in the United States with special attention to the culture and experience of minority groups.

Data: GSS students were 37 out of a total enrollment of 103 (36%). There were 15 SOC majors in the class. The average GPAs were: 2.69 (GSS), 3.07 (SOC), and 2.85 (entire class). Pass rates were 81%, 87% and 83% respectively.

GSS Concentration: SST

Course: HIST 308 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Survey of the diverse experiences of American women from 1600 to 1870.

Data: GSS students were 18/103 (17%); HIST majors took up roughly as many seats at 18% (20/113). GSS students had a pass rate of 94% and an average GPA of 3.24 as compared to HIST majors who had a pass rate of 85% and an average GPA of 2.95. Pass rate for the whole class was 88% with an average GPA of 3.32.

GSS Concentration: GEP

Course: INTL 345 (Fall 2019)

Course Description: Introduces students to current challenges facing African peoples today. Extends survey of Africa courses, and prepares students for more advanced study regarding the African continent.

Data: GSS students were 6 of a total of 56 students (11%) while INTL majors numbered 11 of 56 (20%). INTL majors had a 100% pass rate, in fact all of them earned As in the course for an average GPA of 4.0. GSS majors also had a 100% pass rate but had a lower average GPA at 3.67. Overall pass rate in the course was 98% with a course average GPA of 3.8.

Conclusions of assessment 1: GSS students quite consistently earn lower GPAs than majors in courses core to the GSS curriculum. However, adjusting for a couple of outliers based on very small sample sizes, the large majority of GSS students were able to successfully pass courses offered in the fall of 2019 that provided instruction critical to GSS student learning outcomes. This confirms past findings that GSS concentrations provide an important pathway to successful completion of the bachelor's degree for populations of students who consistently earn grades below the average for CAS majors in similar courses. While GSS

students tend to underperform as compared to students majoring in a particular course they also tended to underperform as compared to the class as a whole. In my analysis of data I will get data on the performance of all non-majors since the presence of majors in courses clearly raised the overall GPA in numerous of the courses analyzed here. One would hope to find that GSS students who took numerous courses within a single discipline and across disciplines on a single topic (such as crime, or the environment) should perform better than students who had no or no previous exposure to the topic.

Assessment 2: How well do GSS students perform in 400-level courses compared to their performances in courses at the 100- 300 levels and as compared to the wider UO student population and majors in the course discipline?

GSS Student Performance by Concentration and Course Level as Compared to Courses Majors Findings based on courses offered Fall 2019

CLS course	Ave GSS GPA	Ave major GPA	GSS pass rate	major pass rate	# of GSS students enrolled	# of Major students enrolled
SOC 204	2.55	3.07	67%	97%	12	30
SOC 345	2.69	3.07	81%	87%	37	15
SOC 445	3.0	3.33	100%	100%	2	12
AEBS course						
SOC 346	2.9	3.57	97%	100%	63	15
GEOG 391	2.19	3	64%	86%	45	22
EC 327	2.5	2.73	100%	79%	4	24
GEP course						
INTL 240	2.33	3.57	100%	100%	3	7
INTL 345	3.67	4.0	100%	100%	6	11
INTL 446	3.0	3.86	100%	100%	2	22
SST course						
HIST 104	4.0	3.33	100%	100%	1	6
HIST 201	3.5	3.6	100%	100%	6	10
HIST 308	3.24	2.95	94%	85%	18	20
HIST 456	1.5	3.0	50%	50%	2	22

Conclusions of Assessment 2:

In my view, the primary finding is that more data needs to be collected about how GSS students perform in upper-division courses to determine if they are receiving the best preparation we might offer to facilitate their success in higher level coursework as they progress through the multidisciplinary GSS curriculum. Although it is difficult to draw conclusions based on small sample sizes (likely resulting from the fact that 400-level courses currently are not required of GSS students), there does not seem to be compelling evidence that GSS students who self-select into 400-level courses that satisfy GSS major requirements are unprepared to succeed in those courses. However, it was not possible to gather the necessary evidence to analyze the research question for the AEBS concentration given the courses offered in fall 2019. In the case of the Social Studies Teaching concentration, the sample size was too small to be definitive but it does raise concern.

Previous research (reproduced below) indicates that a majority of GSS students did choose to take 400-level courses and felt relatively prepared despite underperforming as compared to course majors. Current research from performances in courses this fall seem to support this previous research.

Overall figures, from 2011W through 2017S, of completion of 400-level course

Total number of GSS students (including both current students and alumni): 2,207

GSS students that had completed a 400-level course: 1,668

Incidence (number of times GSS students have completed a 400-level course): 4,899

Number of 400-level courses taken, or distinct department and course numbers: 539

Summary: 76% of GSS students completed at least one 400-level student ($= 1,668 \div 2,207$), for an average of 2.9 courses/student ($= 4,889 \div 1,668$)

Breakdown of completion of 400-level courses by GSS Track

Track	% students within track	% students that completed a 400-level course*	% incidence*
AEBS	61%	61%	51%
CLS	25%	24%	31%
GEP	9%	9%	11%
SST	5%	4%	5%

* These data include 2-3% of students for whom Data Warehouse did not identify their concentration.

Summary: The likelihood that students will take a 400-level course does not depend on their track: The percentage of students within each track closely matches the percentage of students that take a 400-level course, broken down by track. On the other hand, in some tracks, students

take more 400-level courses than other tracks. Students in AEBS comprise 61% of all GSS students, but take only 51% of all 400-level courses, meaning that on average AEBS students are less likely to take a 400-level course. Conversely students in the other tracks are more likely to take more 400-level courses per student, particularly those in the CLS track.

Comparison of Grades:

Here we see that students in the different tracks have roughly the same likelihood to earn an A or B in 400-level courses:

Track	% of GSS students who earned an A or B in classes in 400-level
AEBS	68%
CLS	71%
GEP	69%
SST	72%

The following figures show the % of GSS students who earned a grade of A/B or D/F, and how that figure differs (Diff) from non-GSS students who took those same courses. The figures are broken down by the college that offered the 400-level course.

College	% A's and B's	Diff	% D's and F's	Diff
AA	79%	-3%	2%	0%
CAS	60%	-13%	6%	2%
BA	66%	-24%	5%	4%
ED	78%	-12%	5%	3%
JO	82%	-7%	2%	0%
LAW	72%	-9%	5%	1%
MU	82%	-8%	3%	1%
Overall	69%	-10%	5%	2%

Conclusions on performance in 400-level courses

The clear majority of GSS students take 400-level courses, even though they are not required to do so. Within those courses, 69% of GSS students earn a A/B while 5% earn D/F. Non-GSS students earn A/B with 10% higher frequency and earn D/F with 2% lower frequency. We assume that most UO students who take a 400-level course do so within their major, and thus are better prepared to succeed in those courses than are students from outside their major, such as GSS students. Therefore, we would expect non-GSS students to outperform GSS students in these courses, and the data bear out this expectation. Nonetheless, GSS students clearly perform respectably in these courses, and non-GSS students perform better at only a small to modest degree.

2017 Survey results:

Of 111 seniors who took the survey, 73 (66%) said they had taken a 400-level course at the UO. The Data Warehouse data shows that 76% of GSS students take 400-level courses, so that the survey respondents somewhat under-represent this sub-group. The most common departments that they said they had taken these courses were: Sociology (11%), Geography (9%), History (9%), PPPM (9%), and Political Science (5%).

Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis

The opening of Tykeson Hall and the resultant change in leadership and personnel in GSS has resulted in a steep learning curve this fall for all involved with GSS (PPSI advisors, director, and supporting personnel in the history department). As such, there has been little follow up on last year's report.

Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience

See above.

Section 5: Plans for Next Year

The changes in the scope of GSS with regard to advising and leadership has created the opportunity to reimagine the role of GSS on the campus. At present, my hope is to make GSS an incubator for new programs in CAS including some legible minors. To that end, I am developing two minor proposals – Commerce and society and criminology which build off a revised version of the AEBS and CLS curricula respectively.

Because GSS does not offer courses or control their content, the program has a limited impact on the in-class experience. However, we do have the ability to revise the GSS curriculum to in light to current and previous findings. As such, I am finalizing a proposal to revise the AEBS concentration under the new name “Commerce and Society” to better distinguish it from the business and economics majors and to foreground courses throughout the social sciences that address issues of commerce and society. This will allow us to offer a broader range of CAS courses and thus provide more opportunity for AEBS students to take 400-level courses that they currently lack the necessary pre-requisites (and requisite technical skills) to take. Revisions to the major include the addition of a 400-level course requirement and change to the double-dipping policy that we make it much easier for students and advisors to navigate the curriculum and choose to double major or minor, particularly in one of the business minors or certificate because the revised curriculum includes fewer courses in business, economics, and math that GSS majors have historically struggled with. I hope that these changes will go into effect next year and that we can begin gathering an analyzing data in order to ensure that we are offering students an educational experience that adequately prepares them for successful completion of a meaningful multidisciplinary course of study.