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MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. James Sellmann, CLASS Associate Dean

FROM: Dr. Richard R. Matheny, Professor of Political Science

SUBJECT: Assessment Report for PS101 "Introduction to Government and Politics," 2005 Fall Semester

After an extensive review of literature on the subject of teaching, I discovered that there is not any agreement among educators on what the concept "good" teaching means. Consequently, validity is a total joke in this area of inquiry since researchers cannot establish the internal consistency of the definitions nor can they establish the fit of the concept with some outside reference point already assumed valid itself. In addition, as I pointed out many times to university administrators, student evaluations at UOG are particularly useless since they lack **validity** as well as **statistical reliability**. Nevertheless, since WASC mandates "assessment" and UOG officials feel compelled to comply, I will briefly assess **achievement** during the fall of 2005 in my four freshmen classes, PS101 "Introduction to Government and Politics." By the concept of "achievement," I mean a test for the measure and comparison of knowledge in the academic study of politics or the disciplined study of political science. I wish it understood, however, that "good" teaching and achievement is not necessarily the same thing and more is made of this point below.

Apparently, WASC's current fad is "measure and more measurement but not a thought to commonsense." This is one important reason higher education is failing in this country, although there are several other reasons including students having the right to judge their professors and the proliferation of special studies programs at the expense of the liberal arts and sciences. Some of the other reasons include growing political correctness, the acceptance of PhD's that are not really doctorates, the inappropriate democratization of the university in some areas, the growing influence of postmodernism, and other reasons I will not take the time to note. Accreditation agencies like WASC do not know what they are doing, because if they did they would stop trying to quantify everything and spend more time stressing that "good teaching," research, and service do not necessarily go together. (There is no substantial knowledge that empirically supports the hypothesis that these endeavors relate to one another in a cause-and-effect manner. Nor is such a relationship suggested by simple logic.)

If WASC and other accreditation agencies knew what they were doing, they would understand that the three most important keys to better teaching are positive reinforcement from the administration, high morale, and close collegial cooperation among fellow teachers that allow them to learn from one another. These things of course overlap. Instead, higher education administrators waste the classroom teacher's limited time constantly forcing he

or she to justify themselves over and over again through the use of bogus measuring devices. Still worse, most university administrators through the rank system, bogus promotion and tenure process, phony best teacher of the year awards and other seemly positive competitive devices, divide professors so badly that most of them refuse to cooperate with one another other than in a superficial fashion. Rancor, jealousy, maliciousness, and fear characterize UOG faculty relations and all other faculties I have direct knowledge. This in the end means, "divide and conquer" which allows administrators to control most things, but it definitely does nothing for the cause of "good" teaching.

The Universe of Subjects and Instruments

The total number of students officially enrolled in my four PS101 freshmen classes during the fall semester of 2005 was 139 (PS101-01=27, PS101-02=32, PS101-05=32, and PS101-06=24). Nineteen (19) students did not take part in any testing reducing the total number to 120 while 15 other students only completed either one or two of the three examinations given. The instruments for testing purposes were the same three examinations I require students to take every semester. For each examination, students were first required to take a pretest and at the usual time in the semester, they retook the examination for purposes of grading (the posttest). At the semester end, a comparison of the means of the pretest and posttest for the three examinations determines if students achieved additional knowledge during the term of the course. I purposely made the second exam more difficult than the first and the third exam more difficult than the second exam. (I also cover more course content in shorter periods as compared with what the first exam covers.) I do this in an effort to build confidence in students hoping that if they work hard and follow instructions they can achieve higher grades. I never attempt to teach students through fear, but try to convince them that they have what it takes to do well. Contrary to what many educators tried to push down our throats a number of years ago, a student's self-esteem is not everything, but I have found that it is an important element in the leaning process. Confidence in one's self is a primary factor in achieving anything in life so long as it balances with a proper degree of humility. For as the fictional character Dirty Harry once said in one of Clint Eastwood's films, "One has to know his limitations." Nevertheless, the very first day of class I tell my students that it does not take a rocket scientist to pass my class or to gain a college degree. I further reassure them that they will do well in my class if they have confidence in themselves and their professor, are honest and loyal, do a reasonable amount of work, carefully follow my instructions, come to class, and come to class on time.

The first of the three examinations taken by my freshmen PS101 classes consisted of 100 objective questions, 91 true or false questions and nine (9) matching questions. I expected the mean for the pretest on this type of exam to be slightly under 50% since students had a 50-50 chance of being correct on 91% of the exam questions. I designed all 100 items on the first exam and judging from what students from previous classes had scored, I estimated the mean score on the posttest would be about 75%. The second examination given to my fall 2005 PS101 students was also my design consisting of 70 true or false questions and 30 matching questions. The 30 matching questions concerned a story or myth I made up describing and explaining the creation, maintenance, decay, and destruction of a political system and then the political process beginning anew. From previous scores on this exam, I anticipated a mean score on the pretest to be in the middle 40% and the mean score on the posttest to be in the range of 77% to 80%. Why students in past semesters increase their performance on this second exam is unknown to me, but I suspect some of them are encouraged to perform better because of either positive or negative results from the first exam or perhaps simply because they know better what their teacher expects. In addition, those students who perform especially poorly on the first exam get extra instruction from me in an attempt to raise their grades on the second exam. The third examination given to the fall PS101 classes is composed of 150 multiple-choice questions that the author of the course textbook, Dr. Kay Lawson, requires her students at San Francisco State to take. In terms of both the pretest (25% to 30% mean) and the posttest (67% to 70% mean), historically this final exam has been the most difficult for my students because it covers more material in less time and the chance of marking the correct answer by pure luck is greatly reduced. This exam, however, gives my students a rough measure by which they can compare what I expect of them with at least what one good mainland school requires.

Results

One hundred and twenty (120) students provided pretest and posttest scores for the first examination. The pretest mean score for the four PS classes combined was 47% while the score for posttest mean was 75%, a 28% positive

increase. PS101-01 students scored about 10% points higher than the three other sections of PS101 on the posttest mean (82%) but there was not any significant difference among the four classes with regard to the pretest mean scores. As compared to the first examination, the pretest and posttest mean, scores for the second examination taken by 111 students reveals a significant positive increase in achievement of about 10%. The mean score for the second exam was 44% for the pretest and 82% for the posttest mean score, a 38% increase. As I explained above, this positive higher increase on the second instrument (Examination II) is consistence with the past performances of my students. In addition, as was the case with the first examination, PS101-01 students preformed better on the posttest than did students in the other three classes with a mean score of 87% as compared with means scores of 80%, 80%, and 79%.

The PS101-01 class, however, also scored about five more percentage points on the pretest than the other three classes, 47% compared with 43%, 42%, and 42% respectively. Finally, for those 100 students participating in the final examination of 150 multiple-choice questions, the pretest mean score was 24% and the posttest mean score was 72% or a 48% positive increase in achievement. Once again the score for the PS101-01 class was about 10% higher than the other three classes, 80% compared with 70%, 69%, and 67%. There was not any significant difference among classes with respect to the pretest on the third exam.

The question of why PS101-01 students were able to achieve more than were students in three other of my freshmen classes is a mystery to me. I was very careful to teach each of the four classes exactly the same way. Perhaps the students in my PS101-01 class were better students from the start, as a group they may have simply had more of an interest in politics, or there could be numerous other factors interwoven in a complex web. On the other hand, more likely the students in PS101-01 were more uniformly a cluster of learners that were more receptive to my teaching style. The one thing that research has established over the years is that human beings learn in different ways, that is, there are various learning clusters in any single class. For example, some students favor lectures, while others learn more from interaction projects such as debates or there are students who learn best by simply reading books or watching films and engaging in discussions. (I use all of these models in teaching my freshmen but I primarily lecture while the reverse is true in teaching upper class students.) This is why a teacher cannot be all things to all students. I try, however, by challenging the idea that there is any such thing as a perfect teaching model. To quote the book entitled **Models of Teaching** by Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil:

> We should not limit our methods to any single model, however attractive it may seem at first glance, because no model of teaching is designed to accomplish all types of learning or to work for all leaning styles. We make the assumption that there are many kinds of learning, for the most part requiring different methods of instruction. We also assume that our students come to us with different learning styles, calling for different approaches if each one is to become a productive and effective learner.

Most freshmen students, however, do not judge their professor by how much they learn in terms of substance but they judge him or her by whether they have been treated with respect, have been fairly graded, whether authority has been exercised legitimately, or on what they perceive as pleasing personalities or some other idiosyncratic reason.

Conclusion

The Associate Dean of CLASS directed me to conduct "an assessment study" of some of my classes because WASC is currently stressing mindless quantification and measurement. Although, WASC officials and educational researchers cannot agree on what the concept of "good" teaching means, I tried to get around the problem by focusing on achievement on three examinations given in my four PS101 classes by requiring students to take a pretest and posttest. The results of these computations showed that the students raised their scores on my three examinations by an average of 28%, 38%, and 48% respectively. Consequently, if these three exams actually measure political knowledge then students are learning in my classes. Scientifically speaking, however, these results do not link me in a cause-and- effect way to the seemly success of my students. This is why; instead of talking about cause-and-effect, social scientists usually talk about antecedents and consequences. Notice that we do not talk about a single antecedent, but about many antecedents, which is a way of acknowledging that there are usually numerous antecedents to deal with and each antecedent has an endless network of ancestors stretching back

in time. In fact, if one analyzes the research on teaching and learning carefully, he or she will discover that most researchers consider themselves lucky if the explanatory model they employ can explain at least one fourth to half of the variance in the teaching-learning phenomenon under study. The educational researcher, however, should deal with these problems, because for the most part the classroom teacher does not have time to worry about them.

On the other hand, quantification, measurement and the scientific method are not the only way people have to know the environment around us. There is commonsense, tradition and authority. Commonsense should tells us that most freshmen come to my class not knowing much about the disciplined study of political science and when a PhD in political science from Vanderbilt University with 30 years of teaching experience records an "A" for a student he or she has learned a great deal in the class. I am talking about the grading system used by professors that is a specific design to measure achievement. Should an administrator want to know whether students achieve in my class they should consult my grade book. Tradition (history) also can tell us whether students are learning in the classroom and I submit that no academic program at UOG can match the record of the Political Science Program in graduating honor students, which says something quite positive about the quality of political science teachers at the university during the past 20 years. Last, positional authority in all societies is another way of knowing the world. Consequently, if the "authorities" outside UOG such as judges, lawyers, policepersons, teachers, other government officials as well as business leaders are ask about the reputation of UOG political science teachers, me in particular, they always show us a great deal of respect saying we are good teachers and even better practitioners of the science of politics. Finally, I know I am a very good teacher, my students know it, the public knows it, and my deans should already know it. (With a few exceptions, I could care less what my so-called colleagues think.) My last year at UOG should be one of spending as much time as possible with my students not writing any more foolish reports justifying myself again. WASC does not know what it is doing. Instead of "measure and more measurement but not a thought to commonsense," it should be focusing on strategies to improve cooperation between administrators and professors, on the one hand, and cooperation among professors themselves on the other hand. The ability to cooperate effectively is the foundation of civilization, although fair competition and rugged individualism sometimes have their place. Even primitive tribal peoples understood that everyone in community had to cooperate at a high level to educate better the next generation. Why WASC and UOG do not understand this simple fact is a beyond me.

Richard R. Matheny

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PS101 Introduction to Government and Politics
FIRST EXAM
Form A

Dr. Richard R. Matheny

Name: KEY

Answer either *True* or *False*.

T 1. Empirical Theory is based on observations or facts.
F 2. A theorist may be regarded as engaging in science if his aim is to suggest rules of behavior which states and citizens ought to follow.
T 3. Theory is a mental tool which we build in our heads to aid us in ordering chaos; it enables us to understand the world in which we live by ordering facts and concepts into some meaningful pattern.
T 4. Theory is a framework for organizing facts.
F 5. Aristotle was not interested in answering the question of in "Whose interest Government rules". His only concern was to describe how government rules.
T 6. Theory, when well advanced is a compact statement about what is known.
F 7. Theory is not important for identifying subjects about which little is known.
F 8. There can be a totally "pure" and "objective" political science. The theorist needs only to try very hard.
T 9. It is an assumption or bias of social science to assume the existence of regular patterns of behavior, to explain these in terms of specific variables and to use historical data primarily to illustrate the generalizations it is attempting to make.
F 10. Socrates did not waste time asking questions. His method was to present knowledge in a straight forward manner.
F 11. Normative theory and political philosophy are pretty much the same thing.
F 12. The theorist whose pursuit is political philosophy is interested in describing and explaining the realities of political behavior.
F 13. "This if - then" kind of proposition is called policy science.
F 14. Abstractness is the essential quality of theory and also its chief virtue.
F 15. Philosophy is an objective search for the principles of the good state and good society.
F 16. "Democracy" and "Authoritarianism" are mutually exclusive categories.
F 17. Aristotle did not actually observe governments therefore his classification of governments is useless.
F 18. Empirical theorists can and do work in a normative void.
F 19. Most political scientists would disagree with the statement that they "should" confront and acknowledge his or her own normative biases and then pursue the work at hand as objectively as possible.
T 20. The word structure refers to a concept which denotes a set of patterned role relationships such as organizations, institutions, states, and systems.
F 21. Order is essential, yet it is often difficult to establish without sacrificing other desired conditions. Consequently, the problem of balancing governments' responsibility to aid the needy with its responsibility to protect individual freedom is compounded by our need for order and stability.
T 22. It is impossible to determine what governments' role should be in ensuring any form of equality without confronting the concept of freedom since any political measures taken to make us more equal are likely to make us both more and less free. Most people would therefore agree that there are times when governments must limit individual liberty. The question, however, is where shall the line be drawn?
T 23. The relationship between economic freedom and equality is complex. Permitting individuals to behave with absolute freedom inevitably leads to great inequalities of wealth and status, yet when freedom is curbed, that too, may be a means of fostering inequality. Few will deny that in most societies restrictions on individual liberty fall more heavily on those already at the bottom of the social and economic ladders.
T 24. Political scientists view the concept of "influence" to be a broader relationship of control then that of "power." Thus influence can take place without the threat of sanctions or use of force, as well as without the promise of personal rewards.
T 25. Political legitimacy means having widespread approval for the way one exercises political power but standards of legitimacy do not always change with standards for achieving authority.
T 26. Authority is the right to exercise the power and influence of a particular position that comes from having been placed in that position according to regular, known, and widely accepted procedures. The accepted means in a democratic system for establishing authority is through elections or appointments by elected officials.

This exam has been revised since 2005. The current exam has 113 True or False questions and 37 Matching questions.
RRM

27. Political power should not be conceptualized in terms of "a relationship of control." Rather, "power is money" which comes in lump sums and cannot be shared, so all one needs to ask is: Who is in charge?
28. "Political freedom", "social freedom", and "economic freedom" are precisely the same thing and it is a total waste of time to attempt to separate them in discussions with other persons.
29. Political equality means the right to be treated as a social equal, at least with respect to one's basic characteristics and needs as well as a right that every citizen have an equal share of the same amount of material goods.
30. The quest for order does not in any way impede the quest for equality and freedom.
31. Politics itself is largely concerned with the establishment and implementation of values and the distribution of resources, and those who care enough to study politics are not likely to be individuals coldly unmoved by questions of right and wrong.
32. During the "behavioral revolution", many political scientists were persuaded that the more scientific their discipline could be made, the less concern anyone who worked in it would have with matters of moral choice.
33. A normative puzzle is a puzzle about values. Facts will be pertinent, of course, but the final solution of the puzzle is one that depends on what standards, or norms, an individual, a group, or a social system decides to apply to the facts uncovered.
34. Ideology is a distorted description or explanation of political and social reality.
35. To analyze is to separate into parts so as to find out their nature and function.
36. As philosophy, theory will describe political reality without trying to pass judgement on what is being depicted either implicitly or explicitly.
37. Ideology is rationalization for current or future political and social arrangements.
38. The intention of ideology is to justify a particular system of power in society. The ideologue is an interested party: his interest may be to defend things as they are or to criticize the status quo in the hope that a new distribution of power will come into being.
39. Classical theory does not utilize facts. It is only value based.
40. Science and empirical theory are related but their methods of answering questions are very different.
41. Theory should not be viewed as a code that describes in short the character of the detailed knowledge within its compass.
42. Theory cannot establish relative priorities for further inquiries by establishing criteria of significance.
43. Aristotle considered democracy to be the very best form of government.
44. Theory permits by virtue of its ordering of facts in regular and recurring patterns, the recognition of variations in phenomena beyond the patterns. That is, it stimulates the awareness of irregularities, accidents and other unanticipated events.
45. The thinking of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle was very good for old Greek society but it just does not apply to the modern world.
46. Theory can tell us where to look next.
47. Theory deals with the concrete it is not abstract.
48. Not all Theorists are aware of the ideology which is in their writing and of those who are not all feel obliged to declare their interests.
49. Theory should not be used as a guide to action.
50. As science theory will prescribe rules of conduct which will secure the good life for all society and not simply for certain individuals or classes.
51. To say that democracy is a good form of government and every country should strive for it is to express a value judgment or a value preference.
52. Value judgments are made most frequently in political philosophy and because the discussion of values and norms has been the primary preoccupation of so-called political philosophers, political philosophy is often called value or normative theory.
53. The first essential characteristic of political philosophers is morality. Moreover, since its central message is almost invariably moral, political philosophers can ignore the empirical world altogether.
54. Although it is important to know the structure of a political institution some behavioral oriented students of politics say that it is even more important to understand how individual political actors behave within institutions and by which processes, formal as well as informal, they make policy.
55. Statistics and computers are often used in behavioral studies of politics to verify hypotheses and to attempt to explain and even predict political phenomena.
56. It is not proper to say that the ultimate goal of the behavioral directed student of politics is to develop a political theory that would incorporate verifiable generalizations about the observable political world.

57. Political Theory in terms of behavioralism is empirical in that it deals with observable world. Moreover, behavioralism is not normative but attempts to be "positive" which is to say it seeks not to incorporate value judgements.

58. Postbehavioralists do not believe that behavioral political scientists have been much too preoccupied with scientific method and have consequently failed to indentify and resolve the major problems facing society. The emphasis in post-behavioralism is not therefore on issues and objectives, but is on methods.

59. Postbehavioralists do not wish to make the study of politics less scientific or even less interdisciplinary; rather, they advocate a far greater emphasis on the substance of politics.

60. The postbehavioral approach does not advocate scientific and interdisciplinary study of politics nor does it suggest that action must be taken by political scientists and other social scientists to resolve major problems.

61. In emphasizing solutions to problems and action for such solutions, postbehavioralists would not maintain that value judgments must be made.

62. The postbehavioral argument is fairly straightforward: when we propose solutions to problems and attempt to have them accepted in the political sphere, we make value judgments.

63. Value judgments are not made when we evaluate action taken by others, for the criteria used to evaluate such action are clearly based upon observations and not upon our own values.

64. The natural sciences and social sciences share a common pattern of research and are known as empirical sciences which is to say those based on experiment or observation and experience, using rigorous methodology, logical reasoning, and an objective approach.

65. It is not fair to say that the researcher of political phenomena has a certain amount of personal psychological involvement in the subject of his inquiry, be it an urban problem, an aspect of national government policy, or a particular issue of U.S. involvement abroad.

66. Everyone would agree that philosopher John Rawls has found an "archimedes point" – that is, a rational justification on which to rest the lever of political philosophy and moral judgments.

67. The complexity of political phenomena and the influence of values make it impossible for the political scientist to be as objective as a colleague in the natural sciences. This does not mean, however, that political science inquiry is not scientific.

68. Philosophy starts with empiricism, the observation and verification of facts, and the formulation of generalizations and propositions.

69. Describing a political system, an aspect of it, or a general political phenomenon, and explaining or accounting for such facts are normative.

70. "Scientific" is roughly equated with talking about and explaining on the basis of the world of observation and experience, that is the empirical world.

71. Classical political theorists have always been engaged in scientific activities, however, as a generality they were not as a group very good at scientific methodology, especially when it comes to explaining political phenomena.

72. The primary activities of students of politics when they use the scientific method have been normative, that is activities which involve moral, ethical or value judgments.

73. There are several varieties of normative activity – prescribing the "best" state or political system such as Plato did and recommending the proper or true goals of politics which was characteristics of Rousseau's work.

74. Instrumental or applied value judgments do not recommend the best way of achieving a given end but instead attempt to justify the end itself.

75. "Means-ends analysis" is a scientific-empirical activity, for it is really an explanation of why certain conditions or actions lead to the desired end but it should be clearly understood that a normative activity is also involved inasmuch as an ultimate end or value is first recommended and then the best means for achieving this end is described.

76. Although Plato and other classical philosophers engaged in "analytic" activities, that is the analysis of political words and concepts and the examination of certain aspects of political arguments (i.e. logical consistency) only recently has "analytic political philosophy "became a distinctive kind of political philosophy.

77. Those persons found in academic departments of political science engage in four kinds of activities which can be characterized as normative, scientific, instrumental, and analytical.

78. There are two kinds of political philosophy. The historically oldest kind claims that the theorist seeks true knowledge, of reality, goodness, or

beauty, and that successful philosophical reasoning produces knowledge different in kind but on a par with the results of scientific research.

___ 79. A number of philosophers today reject the notion that normative analysis produces any ultimate knowledge of reality or goodness. Thus they say the theorist can only analyze language in order to straighten out "linguistic muddles" or clear away "philosophical rubbish"

___ 80. The results of analytic or linguistic philosophical activities are ultimate truths not simply logical clarification of normative discourse.

___ 81. No students of politics holds the position that the truth or falsity of normative statements can be objectively demonstrated in an objective sense through the use of a mental process called "reason".

___ 82. The discipline of political science is concerned with the good political life and the underlying ethical principles of politics, a science of politics and an understanding of significant empirical phenomena (facts, circumstances, experiences), and political wisdom in the arena of citizenship and public policy.

___ 83. It is obvious that the view of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and many neo-positivists that strictly scientific analysis would replace moral and political philosophy–has simply been borne out.

___ 84. There is no evident reason why an empirical or scientific orientation need be fundamentally at ods with a normative orientation. Each would enrich the other.

___ 85. Without the mapping of reality produced by empirical oriented analysis, political philosophy can easily become irrelevant or simply silly. Without concern for some of the fundamental questions typically posed by political philosophers, whether ancient or contemporary, empirical analysis runs the risk of degenerating into triviality.

___ 86. Most students of politics do not recognize that in political science, as in all the sciences, the very decision that a puzzle is interesting and worthwhile is itself a normative one – as is the contention that "should" should not be part of scientific methodology.

___ 87. The normative component of the study of politics cannot disappear nor can it be disregarded. For as Leo Strauss has observed "all political action has in itself a directedness toward knowledge of the good: of the good life, or the good society."

___ 88. The great physicist Albert Einstein was asked once by a colleague why mankind, on one hand, has been able to unlock the secrets of the atom but, on the other hand, has been unable to devise the political means necessary to keep the atom from destroying civilization. Einstein replied, "This is simple, politics is more difficult than physics.

___ 89. Politics, like Gaul, can be divided into three parts. From the practice of politics, we distinguished the theory. But the theory itself is divided into political science and political philosophy.

___ 90. Scientific inquiry does not call for adding new knowledge to what is known already.

___ 91. The perennial debate over the scientific nature of any or all of the social sciences has been influenced all too often by the commonly held notion that the term "science" should be reserved for those disciplines that show constant progress in obvious ways and use standard research techniques to achieve this progress.

Answer either Normative (Philosophy) "N", Empirical (Science) "S" or Prudential (Policy-Science) "P".

___ 92. How should political actors behave?
___ 93. Which values can wisely exist in the political community?
___ 94. Which public policies should prevail?
___ 95. Which public policies can be formulated and sensibly implemented?
___ 96. How do political actors behave?
___ 97. Which values actually exist in the political community?
___ 98. Which political values should exist?
___ 99. How can political actors wisely behave?
___ 100. Which public policies are actually in existence?