

**Academic Assessment of Political Science Major
2020-2021
Written and submitted by Professor Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo,
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(I) Introduction

My main goals are:

- (a) to articulate the importance of the new Political Science Major;
- (b) to discuss its curriculum and its requirements; and
- (c) to comment on the courses and how we evaluate the students' learning acquisition.

During the Academic Year 2019-2020, the two faculty members of the Political Science Major, then Susan Tabrizi and Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, undertook major structural changes of the political science curriculum in order to make it more realistic and attractive to students in a small liberal arts college with limited financial resources. The old program was viewed as being too broad within the context of a small institution facing financial difficulties. Unfortunately, before this new program was implemented and explored further, the Chair of the Major, Professor Susan Tabrizi, left the College. Happily, my request for replacing her was quickly approved. In the process of the job search, we produced a job description which reflected a new orientation. The changes were done in reducing the number of required courses, the number of the electives and in refocusing the major (see the detail below).

Because the new program has not been actualized yet and the recruitment to replace Professor Tabrizi was stalled in 2020, it is not possible to produce any effective assessment at this point that can make any good sense in terms of planning for the future of the major. The assessment is, thus based on what effectively is being accomplished and what is needed to go forward. We need to consider the big picture in order to assess inputs and outcomes of this major effectively. At the moment, it will not be possible to build any rubric which ought to be consistent as one of the most important variables is missing in the equation of assessment: a full-time faculty member. No survey was conducted to produce any consistent percentage. I did not meet with anyone to discuss what is written in this report. Thus, my comments are general in documenting the main dimensions of the new program.

With the dismantling of the International Studies major in 2020, an affiliated major to the major of Political Science in its history and its curriculum, the Political Science curriculum was restructured further.

I would like to suggest that we plan for an assessment after hiring a new faculty and after the full implementation of the new program within at least 2 years.

My main goals are therefore to provide a brief documentation of the new program that was approved in 2020 and to describe the new curriculum as is, its content, the general requirements and the course distribution in each category.

(II) Main Objectives of the Major

The discipline of Political Science is in the heart of liberal arts education in colleges and universities. It prepares students to learn and think critically about power relations, institutions of power and policy implications of power in a rapidly changing world. It provides critical thinking, specific skills and knowledge needed for students to analyze and to assess the nature of the institutions which govern the world, in the domestic sphere and globally, the quality of the relationship between them and society, and how these institutions make decisions within them.

However, after the sudden departure of Professor Susan Tabrizi, the Chair of the Major of Political Science in the spring 2020, the major has been plunged into a planning instability of its agenda. The process of the replacement, which was approved, has been idle even though Dean Speakers promised to restart it in fall 2020. However, this did not happen.

The implementation of some aspects of the new curriculum started in spring 2021 with uncertainty in its future because of the lack of the full-time faculty.

(III) Requirements and Distribution within Selected Categories of Course offers

The number of courses for graduating is 14 (43-45 semester hours); with 7 core required courses, which include:

- (1) Political Science 151 (Introduction to International Politics);
- (2) Political Science 155 (American Politics);
- (3) Political Science 390 (Internship in Political Science);
- (4) Social Science 394 (Research Methodology in Social Science) and two additional courses from the subfields listed of political science;
- (5) Political Science 401 (Senior Seminar) is a required course offered yearly to all graduating seniors; It prepares the seniors when they are in the process of writing their senior thesis.
- (6) One elective course from American politics; Comparative Politics; Political Theory; and one course from Philosophy.
- (7) In the new major the concentration is on two subfields: American Politics and International Politics /Comparative Politics.

(IV) *Curriculum Changes

Several courses were **deleted**, some titles were changed and (especially those offered by Lumumba-Kasongo as International Studies major was dismantled).

The following changes were introduced by Lumumba-Kasngo's course offerings:

Political Science 340; (Environmental Policy Analysis)—**deleted**;
 Political Science 213 (Sustainability and Comparative Environmental Politics)—**new**;

Political Science 261 (Politics and Governments in Developing World)--**new**;
 Political Science 262 (Politics in Developing World Countries)—**deleted**;
 Political Science 268 (Comparative Governments and Politics: Case of predominantly Black Nations)--**deleted**;
 Political Science 263 (Politics of Globalization)--**new**;
 Political Science 267 (International Organization)--**deleted**;
 Political Science 332 (old and New Paradigms in the World Politics)--**deleted**;
 Political Science 320 (Liberalism and Its Critics); the level was changed to **200**.

*NOTA BENE: Professor Susan Tabrizi also made many changes in her courses;

(V) Strategies:

(a) Prerequisites:

-To facilitate the access to the courses in the major, there are only two prerequisites in the few upper-level courses of the major: Political Science 151 or Political Science 155.
 -Permission of the Instructor is also used along Political Science 151 and Political Science 155.

(b) Rotation of our courses is planned for two years. We have 22 listed courses in Political Science Major, including those related to internship, tutorial and independent studies. However, Political Science 151 and Political Science 155 are offered yearly.

(b) Research methodology in social science is to be taken in the junior year.

(c) There is a good balance between 100 level courses, and the 200 and 300 level courses:

-There are two courses at 100 level (Political Science 151 and Political Science 155): these two courses introduce students to the fundamentals of the Discipline of Political Science. They also introduce methodologies and/or dominant approaches used in studying International Politics and American Politics.

-There are 10 courses offered at 200 level and 2 Political Science 290/390 (internship in Political Science) and Political Science 299/399 (Independent Study in Political Science).

-There are 5 courses offered at 300 level and 2 Political Science Courses: Political Science 395 (Tutorial in Political Science) and Political Science 399 (Independent Study in Political Science).

(d) The 200 courses introduce concepts, theories, historical and comparative approaches in politics while the 300 level courses deal more with policy analysis, paradigm shifts or intellectual and theoretical debates; special issues or topics or themes.

(VI) Focus and Objectives

In the new program, there are two areas of concentration: American Politics and International Politics. However, students are required to take one course from each of the following subfields of Political Science: American Politics; Comparative Politics; Political Theory; and World Politics;

In the Discipline of Political Science, we develop and emphasize the following learning objectives:

Critical thinking; Methodological Skills, Policy and Political Analysis; and the Acquisition of Comprehensive Knowledge;

(VII) Courses taught after curriculum changes

Fall 2020

Political Science 151 (Introduction to International Politics)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 221 (Liberalism and Its Critics)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 365 (Governments and Politics in Industrial Countries)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo

Spring 2021

Political Science 151 (Introduction to International Politics)---Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 213 (Sustainability and Comparative Environmental Policy)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 401 (Senior Seminar)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 155 (American Politics)—Dr. Robert Kaufman (Adjunct)
 Political Science 230 (Democracy in America)—Dr. Robert Kaufman (Adjunct)
 Political Science 235 (The US Congress)—Dr. Robert Kaufman (Adjunct)

Fall 2021

Political Science 151 (Introduction to International Politics)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 201 (Media and Politics)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 261 (Politics and Governments in Developing World)—Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo
 Political Science 115 (Introduction to American National Government and Politics)--Ivy Raines

(VIII) Assessment Tools

In order to fulfil the objectives described in this report, at all the two 200 level courses, we give midterm and final exams. Papers, chapter and research presentations are also done in almost all the courses.

In each assignment, students must construct a significant bibliography related to the Discipline of Political Science.

At the 300 level courses, research papers are presented and discussed. Courses at this level take the forms of seminars where a student's intellectual engagement in debates is appreciated. We also do book reviews in selected courses at 300 level.

In short, the assessment reflects extensive research, writing, oral intellectual building of the arguments (pros and cons forms of articulation) and data analysis leading to political and policy decision making.

Senior seminar also serves as another tool for assessing what has been taught and what has been learned.

Internships also are other areas where we test or measure what we teach as students have to work closely with an academic supervisor in order to write their respective reports based on political science scholarship exigencies.

Conclusion

If and when the new major is fully implemented, it will be possible to assess it effectively or more accurately. In order to implement it, it will be necessary to hire the second faculty member in the American Politics subfield. It is worth noting that the interests in the major are strong. My introductory courses are well attended. Several students have declared their major in Political Science.