

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dana Kennamer
FROM: Neal Coates, Chair Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice
DATE: March 7, 2024
RE: Department and Curriculum Changes

Summary

The faculty in the Department of Political Science & Criminal Justice have been working on significant curriculum changes aimed at making our POLS program more career-focused and friendly to double majors and new minors. We also attempted not to create a significant number of new courses based on existing course loads and assignments, and have recently closed several courses and have two more to close. The Department thought of also making our regional courses more accessible to all students by reclassifying them as 200-level.

Thank you to Chris Riley, Acting Chair for our department during the fall semester, who formulated much of this work plan and generated faculty input while I was on sabbatical.

We have some “minor” changes regarding our CJ courses (pre-reqs, etc.) to be submitted separately.

Outline of Major Changes

Our work resulted in the changes outlined below along with the rationale for the change:

Change	Rationale
Change the name of the department to Department of Government & Criminal Justice	Based on (1) “Government” connecting more closely with potential career destinations, (2) other leading departments continue to use “Government” instead of “Political Science” (e.g., UT and A&M Bush School of Government and Public Service), and (3) negative connotation with the term.
Change BA in POLS to BS in Government	Same as above; also moving to BS better aligns with other BS/Social Science degrees in CAHSS (i.e., JMC, Sociology, Communication, CJ); makes dual majors more obtainable without required foreign language. This will require POLS prefixes to change to GOVT.

New First-Year Course	To better engage our new students and help them understand career options early, we will introduce a new first-year course that was piloted F23 (Politics, Citizenship, and Community). This also allows the Department to have an entry-level course in POLS as we already do in POLC – Introduction to Criminal Justice.	
Change from two general tracks to three more career-focused tracks	As opposed to a traditional (our current) menus-based approach, which asks students to take one or two courses from several disciplinary subfields whether they are interested in those courses, this change allows students to focus on courses directly related to their career interests and path. This will aid the Department in helping students identify specific career tracks and outcomes and talk about those as soon as the first year.	
	Current tracks: 1) Political Science 2) International Relations and Comparative Politics	New tracks: 1) Government and Economic Development 2) Politics and Public Policy 3) International Relations and Foreign Service (similar to former IRCP certificate)
Require all students to take Math 123 – Elementary Statistics	Requiring statistics for students' GE math requirement will better prepare them for the required Research Methods course as well as their careers.	
Introduction of Skills Menu	Each of the tracks incorporates a six-hour skills menu aimed at providing students with opportunities to develop job-ready skills.	
Add one new career-specific minor	This new minor reflects part of the career-based tracks being introduced. We think it will also pair well with other majors. It also provides students more freedom to create Liberal Studies programs designed to their specific interests. Finally, the Department will consider next school year a new minor in International Relations and Foreign Service, revised from our former IRCP certificate. • <i>Policy and Public Service (New, revised from Political Science)</i> • Public Service (only for Pope Fellows)(Existing minor)	

	• Criminal Justice (Existing minor) • Legal Studies (Existing minor)
Add additional regional/topic specific courses	Foreign service officer and other USG and professional positions need specific knowledge of particular areas and the topics associated. These include 281 Politics of Asia, 262 Politics of Israel, 271 Gov't. & Politics in Latin America, 371 Women in Politics. These courses have been taught as special topics. Having 281 and 258 (described below) allows ACU students to have courses specific to China and Russia. 271 supports the LA minor in HIST. 262 is a country-specific course often found in colleges.
Change existing region-specific courses to 200-level	Along with the new regional courses, make these existing courses more accessible to students: 357 to 257 West European Politics, 358 to 258 Russia & East European Politics, 361 to 261 Middle East Politics.
Close two courses	POLS 485 Int'l Political Economy will be replaced with Economics, Int'l Pov. and Dev.; POLS 494 Public Admin. Management is left from a former masters program.