

**Integrating Assessment into the Course Curriculum:  
Social Sciences at Delta State University**

**Alan W. Barton, Ph.D.  
Division of Social Sciences  
Delta State University**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

During Spring semester 2007, the Division of Social Sciences (DSS) at Delta State University (DSU) began in initiative to incorporate assessment-based education into its curriculum. The first stage of this initiative is the creation of two new courses. The courses have two purposes. First is to instill norms of professionalism in students, so that they take more responsibility for their academic progress, and so they are better prepared for their careers. In these courses, faculty and students discuss the goals and expectations of college and professional employment, and strategies for success. Second is to provide a venue to carry out assessment activities, in accordance with national and state policies, the demands of accrediting agencies such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and the practices at universities like DSU (Bollag, 2006). Through these courses, DSS faculty will have feedback that can be used for planning and to maintain high quality academic programs. The long-term goal is to increase student engagement in the courses and the overall program offered by the DSS.

## **ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Assessment is one of the most controversial current issues in higher education. The need to assess college-level programs derives from a desire to demonstrate that money invested in education is producing measurable results. This reflects a long-term trend in U.S. policy, dating back at least to the 1960s, to require evaluation of public programs to ensure accountability to taxpayers (Shavelson, 2007; Banta, 2006). Proponents of assessment argue that taxpayers deserve to know that public dollars allocated to education are well spent, and parents who pay for their children's education also should be able to demand positive results. Advocates also believe assessment increases student engagement, and raises performance standards, making American education more competitive with other countries. Opponents counter that assessment is part of a larger political agenda towards privatization, shifting policies that approach education as a public good to a concept of education as a private privilege (Kirwan, 2007). Others believe that finding standardized methods to measure learning defeats a crucial purpose of higher education: to encourage critical, creative and original thinking (Fendrich, 2007). Some believe that assessment represents a challenge to time-honored traditions of academic freedom; by dictating standardized requirements, policymakers infringe on the right of higher educators to craft their own classroom lessons.

Whether educators agree with its objectives or not, assessment is becoming a policy directive in higher education around the country (Miller, 2006). In 2006, the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, appointed by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, issued a report that offered a series of recommendations to improve higher education, including the following:

"The commission supports the development of a *privacy-protected* higher education information system that collects, analyzes and uses student-level data as a vital tool for accountability, policy-making and consumer choice ... It is essential for policymakers and consumers to have access to a comprehensive higher education information system in order to make informed choices about how well colleges and universities are serving their students, through accurate measures and individual institutions' retention and graduate rates, net tuition price for different categories of students, and other important information." (U.S. Department of Education, 2006)

The commission also recommended translating policy directives into concrete actions to measure learning outcomes:

"Higher education institutions should measure student learning using quality-assessment data from instruments such as, for example, the Collegiate Learning Assessment, which measures the growth of student learning taking place in colleges, and the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress, which is designed to assess general education outcomes for undergraduates in order to improve the quality of institutions and learning." (U.S. Department of Education, 2006)

While politicians may be responding to constituencies other than educators to produce public policy, educators have control over how assessment policies are implemented. Assessment does not necessarily handcuff educators; academic departments have discretion and leeway in how they put assessment into practice. Thus, at this time as assessment strategies are being forged and instituted, it is important for educators to establish educational approaches that integrate the valuable aspects of assessment while retaining important pedagogical objectives. Proactive approaches that meet assessment expectations provide educators more control in shaping the future of assessment in higher education.

### **INTEGRATING ASSESSMENT INTO THE CURRICULUM**

Assessment can be summative in nature, carried out after a program or intervention, or assessment can be formative, integrated into the program itself (Steckol, 2007). Formative evaluation provides ongoing feedback and allows for continuous adjustments in a program (Schulman, 2007). A comprehensive assessment program should include both formative and summative tools, as well as mechanisms to ensure that evaluation results are analyzed and taken into consideration in programming and planning (Banta, 2007).

The DSS assessment combines formative and summative assessment. The two new courses allow the DSS to carry out specific assessment efforts. Students receive one credit for each of these courses. They take SSC 101 Engaging the Social Sciences during their first semester as a major in the Division of Social Sciences, and SSC 499 Integrative Seminar in the Social Sciences during their final semester before graduation. Each course meets once a week for two hours, for eight weeks. SSC 499 meets during the first eight weeks of each semester, and SSC 101 meets during the last eight weeks.

### **Assessment Tools**

The DSS applies three assessment tools in SSC 101 and 499.

The first assessment tool is a *portfolio*. Portfolios are useful professional tools, and can increase student engagement by encouraging students to think about their progress throughout their degree program (Klenowski, Askew and Carnell, 2006). Students are required to submit a portfolio in order to graduate from the DSU College of Arts and Sciences. In the past, the DSS has enforced the portfolio requirement for graduation; however, the standards for what qualified as an acceptable portfolio have been low. These courses provide an opportunity to engage students in the production of a portfolio that will be useful to them in their professional development, and to the DSS as an assessment tool.

The second assessment tool is a *pre- and post-test* of information in the social sciences. This is implemented in both SSC 101 and 499. During SSC 101, student knowledge of the social sciences is measured using a test prepared especially for this purpose. The test is re-administered to students taking SSC 499, to generate a measure of student improvement over the course of their studies at DSU.

The third assessment tool is a *summative evaluation*, implemented in SSC 499. Graduating seniors complete questionnaires that evaluates the courses, faculty and degree requirements in the DSS, and their overall experience at DSU. Seniors also participate in a focus group-style interview that provides them with an opportunity to discuss a wide range of topics and evaluate their experiences in the DSS.

### **SSC 101, Engaging the Social Sciences**

SSC 101 Engaging the Social Sciences was offered for the first time during the second half of Spring semester, 2007<sup>1</sup> (See Appendix A for a copy of the course syllabus). New students in the DSS are advised to take this course. In addition to the assessment activities, students are introduced to the various programs and professors in the DSS, discuss strategies for completing their degrees, and learn about resources on campus to help them with studying, writing and technology. Thirteen students

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<sup>1</sup> SSC 101 is offered during the last eight weeks of the semester, giving students who declare a major in the Social Sciences early in any semester an opportunity to register for the course.

signed up and completed SSC 101 during its first semester. The course will be offered for the second time during the second half of fall semester, 2007, and over 40 students are registered for this course.

### ***Activities***

In SSC 101, students participate in two types of activities during the semester. Some activities are concerned with assessment, while others are designed to develop a professional approach to their studies. Included in the professionalization training are several activities to familiarize students with the programs, faculty and expectations of the DSS.

### **Assessment**

SSC 101 includes two important assessment activities.

First, students initiate a portfolio to document their work and accomplishments, which they will maintain over the course of their studies. In class discussions, faculty and students discuss the components of a professional portfolio (See Appendix D). The instructor encourages students in SSC 101 to keep copies of all significant papers and other work during their course of studies in the DSS. Students also prepare additional essays for their portfolio in SSC 101, including a statement of purpose, a statement of values, and a biographical essay (See Appendix B). Students can update these essays as they progress through their degree program and their objectives and perspectives change. All of these elements together form the student's general professional portfolio. This general portfolio can then be used to generate portfolios for specific purposes, such as job interviews, career evaluations, or funding proposals. Information can also be extracted from the professional portfolio to create an assessment portfolio for the DSS.

In the past, students have not been given clear parameters that specify what constitutes an acceptable portfolio, nor guidelines on how to prepare a portfolio. Furthermore, students generally have not addressed the portfolio requirement until just prior to graduation. This reduces the value of the portfolio, both to the student and to the DSS as an assessment tool. SSC 101 and 499 provide an opportunity to make the portfolio requirement more valuable to students, to the DSS, and to the College of Arts and Sciences.

The second assessment activity is a test to gauge baseline knowledge of the social sciences. The test consists of 40 multiple choice questions, each with five possible responses. The test covers information in sociology, geography, political science, social science education, criminal justice, applied development studies and research methods. Faculty in each discipline submit questions, which they rank on a 5 point scale in terms of difficulty. Level 1 questions should be answered correctly by

entering freshmen; level 2 questions should be answered correctly by a student who has taken the introductory course in the discipline; level 3 questions should be answered correctly by students who excelled in the introductory course; level 4 questions should be answered correctly by a student who has taken an advanced, specialized course in the discipline; and level 5 questions should be answered correctly by a student who has excelled in an advanced course.

Before taking the test, the purpose is clearly explained, and students are told the results will not affect their grades in any way. Nevertheless, students are advised to do their very best on the test. It is important to let student know how the results of the test will be used to ease any test anxiety, so they can do well on the test. The results of the SSC 101 test are maintained and used to compare with results in SSC 499.

### Professionalization

An important aspect of SSC 101 is professional training. Throughout the semester, the instructor encourages students to take a professional approach to their studies, and provides them with tools to help them in their professionalization. The concept of student engagement is introduced early in the semester as the current mission of DSU, and this concept is discussed frequently throughout the semester. One important aspect is orienting the students to view the university as a set of resources on which they can draw to learn, a point that is emphasized throughout the semester.

To reinforce the resource-based approach to education, speakers from various campus resource centers visit SSC 101 to introduce the students to some of the professional resources available at DSU. One of the professors from the Writing Center introduces the services available and discusses the importance of writing in one's education. The director of the Technology Learning Center talks about the role of technology in education and in society, and describes the organization of this center. The director of the Counseling and Testing Center introduces resources available at his center and advises students to take advantage of counseling services if necessary. He also tells students they can take tests in lieu of some courses, and describes the standardized testing for graduate and professional schools that this center coordinates. The director of the Academic Support Lab describes what types of assistance students can find there, and promotes the Academic Success Workshops that this center sponsors each semester. Finally, one of the reference librarians from the Roberts-LaForge Library introduces students to various resources the library offers and the services that the reference librarians provide.

The Division of Social Sciences includes several degree programs, in Geography, Sociology, Political Science, Criminal Justice, Applied Development Studies and Social Sciences Education. Although under one administrative unit, for many students these programs are as distinct as any two majors on

campus, as they take most of their courses only in one degree program. One of the goals of SSC 101 is to build more unity in the DSS. First, students can meet and form friendships with students in all degree programs. Second, in SSC 101 individual faculty members visit the class to speak about their degree programs. They discuss course requirements, characteristics of their discipline, what students in the program do, and opportunities for someone with a degree in their field.

As part of the introduction to the Division and professionalization, students are required to visit their advisors during the semester. Early in the semester, students are given an assignment to make an appointment and speak with their advisor, and ask a series of questions (See Appendix C). The primary purpose is to get to know their advisor better and feel comfortable visiting their advisor and asking questions. After meeting with their advisor, students submit an essay describing what they learned. Later in the semester students visit their advisor again and formulate a plan for graduation and a list of courses the student would need, and also discuss their plans for their portfolio with their advisor. We discuss these visits in class the following week.

We take time in SSC 101 to discuss academic honesty as well. We discuss plagiarism and places students could go to learn how to write papers correctly. We also discuss the university policy towards plagiarism and cheating, and what the possible sanctions are for violations. The instructor makes it clear that we do not tolerate cheating in the Division of Social Sciences. The DSS has an Academic Honesty and Ethics committee, which handles cases of cheating, and the procedures established by this committee are discussed. One of the primary messages is that the students are responsible for the work they submit.

### **SSC 499, Integrative Seminar in the Social Sciences**

All graduating seniors take SSC 499 Integrative Seminar in the Social Sciences during their last semester<sup>2</sup> (See Appendix A for a copy of the course syllabus). Like SSC 101, the purpose of SSC 499 is assessment and professionalization. Students complete and submit various assessment and evaluation tasks, and engage in activities to help them through graduation and to facilitate their transition between school and professional employment.

#### Assessment

In SSC 499, students continue to work on their professional portfolios, and are given additional guidelines on how to use the portfolio for their own professional development. In addition, students

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<sup>2</sup> SSC 499 is offered during the first eight weeks of each semester. At DSU, faculty must submit grades for graduating seniors during the last week of classes. Since all the students taking the course are graduating seniors, this allows the instructor to submit grades well before they are due.

produce an assessment portfolio, which includes representative samples of their work from each semester at DSU. They are encouraged to include a variety of different types of work, practical projects, book reviews, in-class writing assignments, analytical class papers, and research projects. In addition, students revise their biographical essays, statements of purpose and other essays to include in the assessment portfolio.

Students also complete an evaluation of the Division of Social Science, and a second evaluation of the university. The DSS evaluation consists of a questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions, followed by a focus-group style interview in which the students are encouraged to speak freely about their opinions of the program. The students have used this opportunity to make a number of valuable suggestions about the program. The DSU evaluation includes a questionnaire on their activities and opinions about services offered at DSU. Using both quantitative and qualitative measures provides a more robust assessment of the programs in the DSS (Beyer and Gillmore, 2007).

Finally, students take a post-test on information in the various social sciences. The results of the post-test are compared to the pre-test, both for individual students and for the class as a whole. These provide an indicator of how much information students have absorbed during their studies in the DSS. Because the tests ask questions drawn from all of the degree programs, it is possible to assess each student's learning by their own major.

### Professionalization

As part of the professionalization training, the Director of the Office of Career Services visits the class to give students advice on the transition from college to career. The presentation informs students about some of the changes they are likely to experience as they move from life as a college student to life in the professional world, and some of the concerns that are likely to arise. Examples of topics include money management, housing, dating, and establishing professional relationships. The discussion includes advice on preparing a résumé and cover letter, and strategies for finding and landing a job. The résumés that the students produce are included in their assessment portfolios.

The class also visits the Alumni Association and Foundation and the director of each organization speaks with the group about life as a DSU alumnus. The students learn about career planning, the value of giving to the Alumni Foundation, and the value of staying in touch with their university and classmates.



## CONCLUSION

The assessment initiative described here incorporates opportunities to collect data that is useful in evaluating the DSS and its degree programs, courses and faculty. The new courses provide an opportunity to carry out both formative and summative assessment in ways that benefit not only the DSS, but the students as well. Through these courses, students have the opportunity to meet others in their own degree program and in other degree programs in the DSS; they get to know faculty from across the Division and learn about the requirements for all of the degree programs; they learn about resources on campus that can assist them with their academics and their lives at DSU; they engage in projects such as the portfolio that will help them in planning their academic program; they begin the transition to their career and learn valuable skills that will assist them in finding a job; and they learn about giving back to their university after graduation and staying in touch with friends through the Alumni Association. Most importantly, students learn lessons about how to approach their education and their career in a professional manner, how to work with their advisor and other faculty members, and how to succeed in their courses.

The courses provide an opportunity to collect data from students, but because these initiatives are new, we have yet to establish techniques for building feedback loops into the operation of the DSS. Collecting data is one thing, another is producing an analysis and interpretation of the data, and yet another important stage is establishing means for using the data for programming, planning and improving teaching in the DSS. Analysis of the questionnaires and pre- and post-test is relatively straightforward; however, finding ways to evaluate the portfolios is more cumbersome. Using all of these to assess student progress, and then using the lessons learned from these assessment tools to change the practices in the DSS is also difficult, and all of these tasks must be undertaken in the future.

While much remains to be done, these courses and the assessment activities we can accomplish with them provide a means of engaging students by ensuring that expectations in the DSS are clear and that students understand some of the tools that will help them achieve in their courses and in their careers.

## REFERENCES

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**APPENDIX A:  
COURSE SYLLABI**

**ENGAGING THE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SSC 101**

**COURSE SYLLABUS  
SPRING 2007**

**Course Information:**

**Meeting Place:** 208 Bailey Hall

**Meeting Times:** Wednesdays, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm (Mar. 7–May 2)

**Instructor Information:**

**Instructor:** Dr. Alan Barton

**Telephone:** (662) 846-4097

**Office:** 37 Ward Hall

**E-mail:** abarton@deltastate.edu

**Webpage:** [http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/)

**Office Hours:**

The instructor holds regular office hours at the following times:

Monday 2:00 – 6:00 pm

Wednesday 10:00 – 11:00 am;

Tuesday 2:00 – 6:00 pm

1:00 – 2:00 pm

If you cannot make one of these times, contact the professor to set up an appointment.

**Course Webpage:**

Additional materials and updated course information can be found on the course webpage:  
[http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/SSC101SP07/SSC101Syllabus.htm](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/SSC101SP07/SSC101Syllabus.htm)

**Course Overview:**

This course is to be taken by all students during their first semester with a major in the Social Sciences (Sociology, Geography, Political Science, Social Science Education, Social Sciences, Criminal Justice).

The purpose of the course is to introduce the various degree programs in the Social Sciences, to complete assessment activities in the Division of Social Sciences, and to better prepare you for academic life at DSU.

**Course Materials:**

You will need two items for this course. First is a **large blue book**, 8.5 x 11", which we will use for in-class writing assignments. The second item is a **2" or 3" binder** that you can use for your portfolio. You can purchase these items at the university bookstore, at a retail stationery store, or at various on-line sources.

## Course Objectives:

- (1) Understand the various degree programs in the Division of Social Sciences.
- (2) Complete all assessment requirements for the Division of Social Sciences.
- (3) Begin a portfolio to collect and highlight the work you complete at DSU.
- (4) Learn about campus resources available to assist you during your time at DSU.
- (5) Develop a plan for completing your degree and strategies for successfully achieving your goals.
- (6) Build a more engaged student body in the Division of Social Sciences and at DSU.
- (7) Meet other students in the Division of Social Sciences.

## Responsibilities and Grading:

Your primary responsibility in this course is to come to class each week, participate and complete all of the assigned work. We will do some in-class informal writing, and you will work outside of class on a portfolio of your work. You will also visit your advisor at least twice during the semester to complete assignments.

Each assignment is worth a certain number of points. There are a total of **100** points available over the course of the semester. If you finish the semester with at least **90** points, you will get an **A** in the course. If you finish with between **80** and **89** points, you will get a **B**. For **70** to **79** points, you will get a **C**, and for **60** to **69** points, you will get a **D**. If you finish with less than **60** points, you will get an **F** in the course and will have to repeat it the following semester.

**YOU are responsible** for your progress in this course, and in all of your courses at DSU. If you miss a class session, you should check with another student to see what you missed. "I didn't know" is **NEVER** a valid excuse. If you don't know something, it is your job to find out.

You are expected to **comply with all academic standards and ethics** as defined in the DSU Bulletin and Handbook. You are expected to do your **own work** in all of your courses. Plagiarism, fraud and other forms of cheating is **NOT** tolerated at DSU. The Division of Social Sciences has an Academic Honesty and Ethics Committee, which handles all cases of cheating in the Division. In addition, DSU's Vice President for Academic Affairs monitors all cases of cheating on campus, and repeat violations will result in severe sanctions, including expulsion.

For more information on academic honesty, see the DSU Library's "**Plagiarism Prevention: A Guide for Students**," available on the library website.

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*16.9% of Mississippians have a college degree; For the U.S., the figure is 24.4% (Source: U.S. Census, 2000). When you finish your degree, you will join an elite group. What is your strategy for finishing your degree?*

*"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). Will you be ready to live up to the responsibilities of a college graduate?*

## **Learning Opportunities:**

You must complete all of the following activities:

### **(1) Attendance (25 points)**

- You must attend all class sessions
- Please sign the attendance sheet at each class meeting; this is the official record of attendance, and you may not receive credit for attending if you do not sign the sheet
- For each class session that you miss, 4 points will be deducted from your attendance score
- You can be excused from one class period for illness or an official university activity that conflicts with the class, if you bring a note from a doctor or administrator verifying the reason for your absence
- If you cannot be in class for any other reason, please notify the instructor in advance, and you will receive half credit; For excused absences, you will receive half credit for additional absences after the first; The best way to notify the instructor is through e-mail

### **(2) In Class Discussion (10 points)**

- You must participate actively in class discussions
- Disruptive and disrespectful behavior is not tolerated
- Make sure all cell phones and pagers are turned off during class

### **(3) Informal Writing (15 points)**

- We will use the blue books for informal in-class writing assignments
- You will prepare essays on assigned topics during the semester
- The instructor will collect and read your essays twice during the semester

### **(4) Working with Your Advisor I (15 points)**

- On March 28, you will be given a sheet with various questions
- You then must schedule a meeting with your advisor, and discuss the questions on the sheet with him or her
- Submit your findings, along with your reflections on the meeting, on April 11

### **(5) Working with Your Advisor II (15 points)**

- Between April 18 and 25, you will develop a plan for maintaining your portfolio over your time at DSU
- You will meet again with your advisor and go over your Portfolio Plan
- At this visit, you will also develop a plan of the courses that you intend to take to complete your degree
- Submit your Course Plan on May 2

**(6) Portfolio Plan (20 points)**

- During your time as a student in the Division of Social Sciences, you will be responsible for completing a portfolio of your work
- The portfolio is required for graduation, and you will not graduate unless you turn in a complete portfolio
- During the semester, you will complete assignments for your portfolio, including:
  - A Statement of Purpose and Objectives for your education at DSU
  - A Bio Statement
  - An assessment of your own learning style and preferences
- Submit your Portfolio Plan on May 2

**(7) Critical Engagement (±10 points)**

- You can earn or lose up to 10 points on your final grade, based on factors such as the motivation, interest, and improvement you demonstrate in the course

Note: ALL work that you submit, except in-class work, should be presented in a professional manner; that is, it should be typed, submitted on time, and if there are multiple pages, they should be attached with a staple or paper clip.

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*An international study of 13-year-olds ... found that Koreans ranked first in mathematics and Americans last. When asked if they thought they were "good at mathematics," only 23 percent of the Korean youngsters said "yes" -- compared to 68 percent of American 13-year-olds. The American educational dogma that students should "feel good about themselves" was a success in its own terms -- though not in any other terms.*

*--Thomas Sowell (quoted in J.M. Henslin, 2004)*

## Course Outline:

Day/Date	Topic	Speaker/Activity/Assignment
<b>Week 1: Course Introduction</b>		
Wed. Mar. 7	Welcome to the Division of Social Sciences	Dr. Albert Nylander
	Engaging the Social Sciences Course Goals and Activities	In-Class Discussion
	Assessment-Based Education	In-Class Discussion <b>Assignment:</b> Review the Chart on Learner-Centered Assessment in Education ( <a href="http://www.assessment.uconn.edu/docs/TeacherCenteredVsLearnerCenteredParadigms.pdf">http://www.assessment.uconn.edu/docs/TeacherCenteredVsLearnerCenteredParadigms.pdf</a> )
Wed. Mar. 14	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 2: The Portfolio</b>		
Wed. Mar. 21	Engaging the Social Sciences Social Sciences Degree Program	Dr. Alan Barton
	Setting and Achieving College and Career Goals	In-Class Essay and Discussion <b>Assignment:</b> Prepare an essay on your reason for being in college and your objectives
	Creating a Student Portfolio	In-Class Discussion <b>Handout:</b> Elements of a Student Portfolio
<b>Week 3: Your Advisor</b>		
Wed. Mar. 28	Engaging the Social Sciences Sociology Degree Program	Dr. Paulette Meikle-Yaw Dr. John Green
	Active Learning Strategies	In-Class Essay and Discussion <b>Assignment:</b> Prepare an essay on your learning style and preferences
	Working with Your Advisor	In-Class Discussion <b>Assignment:</b> Schedule a meeting with your advisor and complete form <b>Due:</b> Statement of Purpose and Objectives

Day/Date	Topic	Speaker/Activity/Assignment
<b>Week 4: Where to Go for Help</b>		
Wed. Apr. 4	Learning Opportunities on Campus	Writing Center Academic Support Lab Roberts-LaForge Library Reference Dept. Technology Learning Center Counseling and Testing Center
	Portfolio	<b>Due:</b> Assessment of Your Learning Style
	Engaging the Social Sciences Geography Degree Program	Dr. Mark Bonta
<b>Week 5: Developing Study Skills</b>		
Wed. Apr. 11	Engaging the Social Sciences Political Science Degree Program	Dr. Garry Jennings Ms. Arlene Sanders
	How to Study in College	In-Class Essay and Discussion <b>Assignment:</b> Prepare a biographical essay
	Working with Your Advisor	Discuss Results of Meetings with Advisors <b>Due:</b> Responses and Reflections on Working with Your Advisor
<b>Week 6: Assessing Social Science Knowledge</b>		
Wed. Apr. 18	Engaging the Social Sciences Criminal Justice Degree Program	Mr. Marv Payne
	Pre-Test on Social Sciences	<b>Test; Bring a Scan-Tron Form No. 882E</b> (Available at the University Bookstore)

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 Learning is least useful when it is private and hidden; it most powerful when it becomes public and communal. Learning flourishes when we take what we think we know and offer it as community property among fellow learners so that it can be tested, examined, challenged, and improved before we internalize it.

~Lee Shulman



| Day/Date                          | Topic                                                           | Speaker/Activity/Assignment                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Week 7: Setting Goals</b>      |                                                                 |                                                                                                                       |
| Wednesday<br>Apr. 25              | Engaging the Social Sciences<br>Social Science Education Degree | Dr. Amy Owen                                                                                                          |
|                                   | What Do I Want to Know?                                         | In-Class Essay and Discussion                                                                                         |
|                                   | Working with Your Advisor                                       | <b>Assignment:</b> Develop Plan for Courses & Graduation and Portfolio Plan with Advisor<br><b>Due:</b> Bio Statement |
| <b>Week 8: Student Engagement</b> |                                                                 |                                                                                                                       |
| Wednesday<br>May 2                | Becoming an Engaged Student                                     | In-Class Essay and Discussion                                                                                         |
|                                   | Maintaining Your Student Portfolio                              | In-Class Discussion<br><b>Due:</b> Portfolio Plan and Plan for Courses & Graduation                                   |
|                                   | Course Evaluation                                               |                                                                                                                       |

### Additional Resources:

#### Roberts-LaForge Library

Reference Desk: (662) 846-4431

#### Writing Center

Bailey Hall 211  
(662) 846-4088

#### Office of Career Services

H.L. Nowell Union 300  
(662) 846-4646

#### Academic Support Lab

H. L. Nowell Union 311  
(662) 846-4654

#### Counseling & Testing Center

O.W. Reily Student Health Center  
(662) 846-4690

#### Office of Information Technology

Bailey Hall 114  
OIT Help Desk: (662) 846-4444

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PREPARATION and PERSEVERANCE are the KEYS to SUCCESS

Be prepared; don't give up

**INTEGRATIVE SEMINAR IN  
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SSC 499**

**COURSE SYLLABUS  
SPRING 2007**

**Course Information:**

**Meeting Place:** 208 Bailey Hall

**Meeting Times:** Wednesdays, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

**Instructor Information:**

**Instructor:** Dr. Alan Barton

**Telephone:** (662) 846-4097

**Office:** 37 Ward Hall

**E-mail:** [abarton@deltastate.edu](mailto:abarton@deltastate.edu)

**Webpage:** [http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/)

**Office Hours:**

The instructor holds regular office hours at the following times:

Monday 2:00 – 6:00 pm

Tuesday 2:00 – 6:00 pm

Wednesday 10:00 – 11:00 am; 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

If you cannot make one of these times, contact the professor to set up an appointment.

**Course Webpage:**

Additional materials and updated course information can be found on the course webpage:

[http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/SSC499SP07/SSC499Syllabus.htm](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/SSC499SP07/SSC499Syllabus.htm)

**Course Overview:**

This course is to be taken by all students with a major in the Social Sciences during their last semester before graduation. The purpose of the course is to provide a venue for integrating material learned in the Social Sciences program, to establish a basis for instituting assessment-based education in the Division of Social Sciences at Delta State University, and to serve as a transition between life in the university and life after college.

Spring semester 2007 is the first time this course is offered, and will serve as a pilot for the future. As a result, you will play an important role in helping us develop and define this course, and what students in the future can accomplish and learn through assessment-based education.

## Course Objectives:

- (1) Prepare for graduation from DSU and for life after college.
- (2) Complete all assessment requirements for the Division of Social Sciences.
- (3) Complete a portfolio highlighting the work you have done at DSU.
- (4) Evaluate the Division of Social Sciences.

## Course Materials:

You will need two items for this course. First is a large blue book, 8.5 x 11", which we will use for in-class writing assignments. The second item is a 1" binder that you can use for your portfolio. You can purchase these items at the university bookstore or at a retail stationery store.

## Responsibilities and Grading:

Your primary responsibility in this course is to come to class each week, participate and complete all of the assigned work. The most important assignment is a portfolio of your work at DSU. We also will do some in-class informal writing, and prepare items such as a résumé and an evaluation of the Division of Social Sciences.

## Course Outline:

Day/Date	Topic	Activity
<b>Week 1: Course Introduction</b>		
Wednesday Jan. 10	Goals and Activities	Discussion
	Assessment-Based Education	Reading on Assessment in Education
<b>Week 2: Creating a Student Portfolio</b>		
Wednesday Jan. 17	Elements of a Student Portfolio	Discussion
<b>Week 3: Preparing for Life after DSU I</b>		
Wednesday Jan. 24	Backpack to Briefcase, with Jason Umfress, Director of Career Services	Discussion and Activities
	Preparing a Résumé, With Jason Umfress, Director of Career Services	Write a Résumé

<b>Day/Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Week 4: Preparing for Life after DSU II</b>		
Wednesday Jan. 31	Preparing for Graduation from DSU	Discussion
	Using Your Portfolio in the Job Search	Working on the Student Portfolio
<b>Week 5: Evaluating the Division of Social Sciences</b>		
Wednesday Feb. 7	Evaluation of the Division of Social Sciences	Completing Evaluation
	How Has Social Sciences Served You?	Discussion
<b>Week 6: Evaluating Your Learning at DSU</b>		
Wednesday Feb. 14	Evaluating Delta State University	Completing Evaluation
	Compiling the Student Portfolio	Discussion
<b>Week 7: Keeping in Touch with DSU</b>		
Wednesday Feb. 21	Life as a DSU Alumnus, with Vicki Fioranelli, Director of Alumni Foundation	Meet at Alumni Foundation House
	Maintaining Contact with the Division of Social Sciences	Creating a Roster of Alumni
<b>Week 8: Completing the Portfolio</b>		
Wednesday Feb. 28	Complete Student Portfolio	Turn in Portfolio

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Roberts-LaForge Library**

Reference Desk: (662) 846-4431

#### **Writing Center**

Bailey Hall 211  
(662) 846-4088

#### **Academic Support Lab**

H. L. Nowell Union 311  
(662) 846-4654

#### **Office of Information Technology**

Bailey Hall 114  
OIT Help Desk: (662) 846-4444

#### **Office of Career Services**

H.L. Nowell Union 300  
(662) 846-4646

#### **Counseling & Testing Center**

O.W. Reily Student Health Center  
(662) 846-4690

#### **Technology Learning Center**

Ewing Hall 130  
(662) 846-4444

## **APPENDIX B: SSC 101 ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Statement of Purpose**

In a brief (1-2 page) narrative, explain what you hope to accomplish in your studies at DSU, and in your professional career. Address the following questions:

- What are your goals in college?
- What do you hope to learn in college?
- What do you plan to do with your college education?

Type up your essay, and submit it in class on March 28.

This essay will go in your portfolio. Keep this version of your essay to turn in with your final portfolio.

### **Learning Preferences**

*Question:* What is your preferred learning style?

*Assignment:* In a brief (1-2 page) narrative, explain how you prefer to learn.

These questions may help you think about your essay:

- How do you like to receive information (e.g. hearing, reading)?
- How do you process information so that you will remember it?
- What conditions are most conducive to you learning and remembering information?
- What types of information are you most likely to remember?

Type up your essay, and submit it in class on April 4.

This essay will go in your portfolio. Keep this version of your essay to turn in with your final portfolio.

### **Interview with Your Advisor**

Contact your advisor and set up a meeting at some point over the next two weeks. It is best if you arrange to meet during your advisor's regular office hours. If you do not yet have an advisor, see Linda Douglas in Bailey 216.

Read over the Advisor Worksheet to prepare for the interview. Your interview should last approximately 15 minutes. Collect information that will help you address the questions on the worksheet. Use a separate sheet of paper to take notes and record the answers. This does not have to be a "formal" interview – it should be more like a conversation with your advisor, and you can talk about any topics you like. At some point during the conversation, however, you should collect information to complete the worksheet.

Note that under the section on "Interests," you only need to ask your advisor two of the five questions listed. You also should come up with two questions on your own, prior to the interview. You should pose these questions to your advisor and record the responses.

Once you have completed the interview, sit down and type up the responses to each question. Turn this in at the beginning of class on April 11.

## **Biographical Statement**

*Question:* What have you done in your life?

*Assignment:* In a brief (1-2 page) narrative, tell the story of your life. Focus on your professional experiences and accomplishments.

These questions may help you think about your essay:

What characteristics define who you are? How did you develop these characteristics?

What experiences have meant the most to you in your life? How have these experiences shaped you?

What are the most important accomplishments in your life? What did you learn from these accomplishments?

Where do you see yourself in five years? How do you plan to get there?

Type up your essay, and submit it in class on April 25.

This essay will go in your portfolio. Keep this version of your essay to turn in with your final portfolio.

## **Courses, Graduation and Portfolio Plan**

**Assignment:** Create a plan for graduation, and review your plan and your portfolio with your advisor

### **Plan for Graduation**

- (1) If you do not have a current copy of your transcripts, acquire a copy from the registrar's office or from your on-line account.
- (2) Using the DSU Undergraduate Bulletin 2006-07, list the courses required for your degree, and note when you have taken or intend to take each course. You should group the courses according to the conventions in your area of specialization, (e.g. General Education Requirement, Special Degree Requirements, Core Requirements, Concentration Requirements and Electives), as discussed in class.

### **Plan for Portfolio**

- (3) Using information presented in class, prepare a plan for your portfolio. Note the types of documents you intend to include in your portfolio at the end of your studies.

### **Meeting with Advisor**

- (4) Arrange a meeting with your advisor, and review your Plan for Graduation, including the courses you intend to take here at DSU. Keep your transcript and a current copy of your Plan for Graduation in your portfolio.
- (5) Take your portfolio and your Portfolio Plan to your meeting with your advisor, and review your Portfolio Plan with your advisor.

Submit a copy of your Plan for Graduation and your Portfolio Plan by the beginning of class on May 2.

**APPENDIX C:  
ADVISOR WORKSHEET**

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Credentials**

Where did your advisor go to school?

What degrees does your advisor hold?

What subjects did your advisor study?

What are your advisor's current areas of scholarship?

What significant scholarly contributions has your advisor made?

**Background**

What is your advisor's home town?

How long has your advisor worked at Delta State?

Where has your advisor worked prior to Delta State?

What types of jobs has your advisor had besides being a professor?

**Interests**

*Ask 2 of the following:*

Who has had a significant influence on your advisor? How?

What sorts of community work and activities is your advisor involved in?

What kind of entertainment does your advisor enjoy (e.g. sports, television, reading, movies, music)? What is your advisor's favorite \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. team, TV show, book, movie, song)?

What qualities does your advisor like to see in students?

What are the characteristics of a good teacher?

*Come up with 2 additional questions on your own, pertaining to your advisor's interests, and ask them during the interview. Make sure your questions are professional in nature.*

## **APPENDIX D: ELEMENTS OF A STUDENT PORTFOLIO**

All students who complete a major in the Division of Social Sciences are required to submit a portfolio of their work prior to graduation. You cannot graduate with a degree in Social Sciences until you turn in a portfolio.

### ***Compiling a Student Portfolio:***

The first task in preparing a portfolio is to retain the necessary papers and other work that you will submit with your portfolio. Each semester, you should keep copies of all of the important work that you do, such as course papers, writing assignments, projects, and the like. Have a notebook where you keep all of these papers. For each item, make sure to note the date and circumstances under which you prepared it, e.g. the course and instructor if it was prepared as a course assignment. Save a copy of the assignment as well.

The second task is to complete the necessary reflective papers at the end of each semester. The various papers are described below, and it is your responsibility to make sure that you complete them in a timely fashion.

In SSC 101, you will meet with your advisor, and prepare a plan for your portfolio. During pre-registration each semester, you should visit your advisor. Bring your portfolio with you to this meeting. Make sure you are keeping up with the work that you will need in order to complete your portfolio before graduation.

### ***Elements of Your Portfolio:***

*The following should be included in a complete student portfolio:*

#### **Title Page**

In addition to the title, this page should indicate the name of the student, the degree program and degree sought, and the dates of attendance at DSU.

#### **Table of Contents**

List each item in the portfolio independently.

#### **Résumé**

Follow a standard format, and present a professional résumé of your academic and professional experience.

#### **Statement of Purpose**

In a brief (1-2 page) narrative, explain what you hope to accomplish in your studies at DSU, and in your professional career. You will complete this during SSC 101, and you should retain this version and submit it in your final portfolio. If you update your statement of purpose, keep the older copies as a record of how your purpose has changed over the course of your studies, and submit the SSC 101 copy and the most recent copy in your final portfolio.

#### **Bio Statement**

Briefly (1-2 pages) describe your biography, highlighting the most significant achievements and activities in your life.

#### **Statement of Values**

Prepare a brief (1-2 page) essay in which you express your values, what you think is important, and the role that your values will play in your education. Prepare a similar



statement at the end of your studies, and include both in your portfolio as a record of the effect of education on your values.

### **Coursework**

Include representative examples of the work you have completed in your courses at DSU. You should include at least two works from each year, and you should aim to provide a variety of different types of work, including but not limited to:

- Argumentative Paper
- Analytical Research Paper
- Book Review
- Reflective Paper
- Informal/In-class Writing
- Practical Project

In addition, you should include at least one work from each semester at DSU.

### **Communications and Critical Thinking**

Prepare a reflective essay that illustrates your ability to think critically and respond effectively to an issue in your field in oral or written communication. You should prepare this essay sometime during your junior or senior year, and include it in your portfolio.

### **Extra Curricular Activities**

Include evidence of participation in outside activities that pertain to your professional development, such as participation in academic conferences, participation and leadership in student organizations, athletics, musical and artistic organizations, honor societies, and community service organizations.

### **Evaluations**

Include examples of evaluations, including some of the following:

- Evaluations of your work from instructors and your advisor.
- A reflective essay that you prepare at the end of each course, in which you state what you think are the most important things you learned in that class, and how the course fits into the program as a whole.
- An evaluation of the quality of each course, including the value of the material covered and the quality of instruction by the professor; Include suggestions for changes and improvement.
- A self-evaluation at the end of each academic year, in which you reflect on how well you did, how hard you tried, your progress in the program, the important concepts and terminology that you acquired, and your plans for the following academic year, including ideas of how you can improve your work and engagement in your program.
- An evaluation of how extra-curricular programs contributed to, advanced, or detracted from your studies.
- An evaluation of the Social Sciences Division as a whole and of the degree program that you completed, to be written at the end of your studies.

### ***Submitting the Final Portfolio***

You will complete and submit a portfolio when you take SSC 499 prior to graduation. The final version that you submit will contain highlights of your work; however, you must compile this work along the way so you will have it to draw on in preparing your final portfolio. You should retain all of the materials, as they will be useful in preparing sample portfolios when looking for jobs, seeking grants or raises, or other purposes. You do not have to include only the best work, rather, you should select a variety of types of work to include.