

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number 3919S
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Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

APC Doc 32 (POLS):

Change prerequisites for POLS 290 and 490

Effective Date: Fall 2019

1. Add: On page 263, a prerequisite for **POLS 290:**

Prerequisite: one course from POLS 220, 235, 240, 261, or 281.

2. Add: On page 268, a prerequisite for **POLS 490:**

Prerequisite: POLS 290.

Impact Statement: The addition of prerequisites for POLS 290 and 490 affects major requirements for political science, as both courses are required for the major. POLS 290 is the department's research methods requirement designed to prepare students for upper-level classes and the department's senior research capstone course, POLS 490. The prerequisite of at least one course from POLS 220, 235, 240, 261, or 281 (i.e., any one of the department's gateway courses to the major) will prevent first semester freshmen from enrolling in POLS 290. The POLS 290 prerequisite for POLS 490 will prevent students from taking the methods requirement and the thesis class out of sequence. We anticipate that the former change will improve students' first year experience and retention. The latter change will improve students' ability to navigate the major and complete the senior thesis project. Neither change is anticipated to affect other university requirements, or the department's staffing needs, as both courses are already offered every semester.

Rationale: POLS 290 is designed as the department's only research methods requirement. The course prepares students for upper-level coursework, and specifically for the senior capstone project and thesis requirement. We expect students to have had some exposure to substantive course work, specifically the concepts and theories introduced in the major's 200-level gateway courses. This change essentially ensures such exposure. Additionally, we have found that in Fall semesters, first semester freshmen tend to register (or are registered) for this course having had no prior substantive background in political science. POLS 290 is not designed to serve as a student's first exposure to the discipline and we advise students to complete this requirement in their sophomore year.

POLS 490 fulfills the political science department's major competency requirement. All students are required to complete an original research project or thesis. POLS 290 prepares students for this task and ought to be taken before, rather than concurrently with or after POLS 490. Every year about one or two students end up taking POLS 290 and POLS 490 out of order or concurrently and each time students report that they wish they had taken POLS 290 before POLS 490. While some of this can be remedied with proper advising, and given that one or two students a year is arguably a minor problem, we do believe this change will improve the experience of future majors.