

PSC Academic Program Review Report 2023
Social Sciences

1. **Section One: Overview of Program Offerings**

Major	Option, Concentration, Focus Area or Endorsement	Minor	Degree	Credit Hours
Social Science	History		BA, BS	54
Social Science	Social Science		BA, BS	57
Social Science	History Teaching		BA, BS	39
Social Science	Social Science Teaching		BA, BS	60
Social Science		History		21
Social Science		Social Science		21
Social Science		Political Science		21
Social Science		Ethnic and Diversity Studies		21
Social Science		Public History -Certificate		15

2. **Section Two: Analysis of Program, Including Adequacy of Resources and Related Concerns**

Analysis of Program

Since the last program review, the department has added a faculty line in World History, which appeared to be the major focus of much of the previous program review. The department's strengths noted in the previous study is that our students receive personal and engaging educational opportunities both in and out of the classroom setting, a feature of our program that has only been strengthened in the last seven years. Our students have had the opportunity to present their research at local, regional, and national history and social science conferences. Several of our students in the newly created Public History certificate program have obtained paid internships and employment as a result of the program. We have built partnerships with local historical societies in Nebraska City, Brownville, and Gage County to support our internship program. Several of our courses have been updated to reflect new scholarship and trends in the field, and we have added seven new courses to match offerings in our peer institutions. Library resources and opportunities for student research have been significantly upgraded, but there is still a need for additional critical resources.

In the fall, 2017, the Assessment Committee asked the Social Science Department to come up with new learning outcomes and program goals. The department authored new outcomes and program goals that were more specific than those previously in place, but the targets reflected a model that was used in HIST 425, the capstone class. In the Fall 2017, however, Dr. Kathi Nehls took over HIST 425 and she significantly revised the course to reflect the capstone courses of our peer institutions. As such, the goals and outcomes completed in 2017 needed an additional revision to reflect the goals and outcomes of the new capstone course direction. Dr. Nehls and Dr. Kristin Buscher based the 2020 revision on the American Historical Society's "Tuning the History Discipline" goals and standards, the premier history organization in the United States. The goals, outcomes, targets, and

measures of the 2020 revision are currently in place. Additionally, Dr. Sara Crook and Dr. Jason Phillips worked alongside Dr. Jody Woodworth, to develop a Social Science Area Assessment for the Methods of Inquiry and Explanatory Schema General Studies area, under the direction of Dr. Tim Borchers and Dr. Kristen Buscher.

Over the past two years, the Social Science Department has continually hit its targets based on the capstone course for the annual assessment. The assessment plan in place now has only been in operation for a few years, so the department has no immediate plans to alter or revise it. The Department will continue focusing on collecting data in a timely fashion and use these findings to determine if future revision is necessary.

Enrollment for the Social Science department has been diminishing since the outbreak of COVID-19 and reflects trends in the discipline nationally, at the state level, and on campus, both in terms of the number of Majors enrolled and Student Credit Hours Produced (SCH). The current 5-year average for majors enrolled is 46, our most recent data from Spring 2022 shows only 31 majors enrolled. The current 5-year SCH is 1,786, our most recent data from the 2021-2022 academic year showed 1,598 SCH. However, in the academic year 2020-2021 our SCH was 1,962, an aberration from our typical numbers, likely brought about due to COVID-19 shifting classes around on campus, which has distorted our 5-year average. Our 1,598 in 2021-2022 was higher than the 1,551 produced in 2019-2020. The department would like to return to the 1,700+ SCH that was achieved from 2016—2019. The one consistent over the last several years has been the number of degrees awarded. Our 5-year average for degrees is 6.8, slightly ahead of the number of degrees awarded in 2021-2022 (6) and lower than the number of degrees awarded in 2020-2021 (8). We continue to graduate around 7 students each academic year.

The Social Science Department has several suggestions to increase enrollment, in both Majors and class sizes. We would recommend that history be added to the General Education requirement as a standalone category, analogous to the status held by Speech, English, Mathematics, etc. Currently, the majority of students can graduate from Peru State College without taking a single history course. History is a key foundational discipline of a Liberal Arts education and should be a requirement for all students, The same argument can be made for requiring all students to have one course in political science, especially American Federal Government. Another way to boost class sizes would be to offer Special Topics courses geared towards areas of interest for our non-majors; for example, a course on World War II might attract students who have an interest in history but are non-history majors.

Adequacy of Resources and Related Concerns

The Social Science Department currently relies on adjuncts for anthropology, political science, history, and potentially in the future philosophy and geography. The department is currently operating with two full-time faculty, both historians. The department needs a third full-time faculty member to handle the political science courses. No one in the department has formal education in philosophy, geography, or anthropology, which is why these classes are taught by adjuncts or current faculty with signed "Tested for Experience" forms. It would be better to have faculty only teaching within their field, but that is not always feasible in a small department. Shifting the Geography and Philosophy courses to adjuncts trained in those fields would create more flexibility to grow the Public History program and cut down on adjuncts for history. Additional ways to improve our rotation and adjunct costs would be to lower the number of sections offered for online

HIST 201 and 202. These courses might see increased enrollment if offered only in the summers or less frequently, though we need to have them offered consistently enough to stay current with Rule 24.

We must hire a third full-time faculty member. We are running into problems with our current Political Science minors and scheduling conflicts with the existing course rotation. The search is currently underway and nearing conclusion.

The Social Science Department’s needs are largely being met with the Library. The Library has worked with the Department to acquire full access to J-STOR and additional databases. We would like to see journal and newspaper subscriptions extend to years earlier than the 1970s and 1980s. With the exception of the *New York and London Times*, recent additions to newspapers and magazines are welcome tools for students but, they don’t provide historical depth for students working on research projects that predate the late 20th century. It would be great to have archival access to the Omaha and Lincoln papers. We currently must travel to Lincoln to access these. One additional request would be to swap our current video streaming service of general audience movies to a different provider with credible documentaries.

The Social Science Department’s current physical and instructional needs are largely being met. There are a few areas where improvement could be made, though. The classrooms in Jindra (119, 202, & 205) are inconsistent when it comes to technology, particularly if you want to show a physical copy (DVD or Blu-Ray) of a movie or documentary.

The baseline fiscal needs for the Social Science Department are being met. We have plenty of money for student engagement and faculty resources. The one area where we need additional support is to obtain appropriate instructional materials and a travel allowance for the Certificate in Public History courses.

3. Evidence of Demand and Efficiency (per established CCPE standards for 5-year means)

<u>Number of Degrees/Awards in Program</u>		<u>SCH/FTE</u>
Baccalaureate	7	300
Masters	5	300
Specialist	4	300

		17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	5 yr avg
Student Credit Hours (SCH)		1,794	1,746	1,551	1,962	1,598	1,730
Faculty Full-time Equivalency (FTE)		5	5	4.38	4.09	4.17	4.528
SCH/Faculty FTE		359	349	354	480	383	382
Number of Degrees and Awards	History	3	2	2	4	2	2.6
	Social Science Teaching	2	1	3	2	2	2
	Social Science	2	3	2	2	2	2.2

<i>(list degrees/ awards separately)</i>	History Teaching	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	7	6	7	8	6	6.8
	Public History Certificate	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A

4. Section 4 (Option A): Justification and Evidence of Need

Evidence of Need:

The Social Science program has consistently graduated 6-8 students per year. The most recent year was 6, which dropped the 5 year average to 6.8, just below 7. For Fall 2022, there were 32 students in the major. There were 3 December 2022 graduates with 5 more approved for May and August 2023 for a total of 8 graduates during the year, which would mean that next year’s 5 year average will be 7. The number of graduates has been very consistent in recent years.

Program is critical to the role and mission of the institution

The mission of Peru State College is to provide students of all backgrounds access to engaging educational experiences to strengthen and enrich communities, Nebraska and the world. The Social Science program provides critical information for students to learn about history, political science, geography, and philosophy. These disciplines are important for students to gain a better understanding of their world, think critically, and become leaders in their communities and professions.

Program contains courses supporting general education or other programs

The Social Science program provides courses for the General Studies program in several areas including Social Science and Cultural Literacy, Diversity, and Equity. Courses such as U.S. History and World History require students to articulate the influence of various social science concepts, such as political ideologies, economic structure, social organization, cultural perceptions, individual behavior, and the interrelations of human and natural environments. These courses help students identify how demographic characteristics impact the social sciences. And these courses have students locate reliable sources reflective of current methods in the social sciences for critical analysis and the development of an original thesis.

Courses such as Native American History or Modern East Asian require students to communicate an understanding of how their own cultural identity, experiences, and beliefs impact their worldview and engagement with others. These courses have students analyze and reflect upon experiences and perspectives from diverse worldviews using humanistic, social or scientific perspectives. Courses such as these include an evaluation of the role of socio-economics, culture and hierarchy in human society.

Additionally, U.S. History is required for many Education majors. The program also offers courses that are part of the Ethnic and Diversity Studies minor and the forthcoming International Relations minor.

Alignment to the mission of the College, including strategic plan and institutional outcomes

The Social Science program is an excellent example of commitment to the College's mission and strategic plan. Engaged student learning takes place in their classrooms through activities such as Reacting the Past, which includes role-play of historical situations. Faculty lead field trips to areas such as Washington, D.C. The program hosts History Day each year, which brings hundreds of middle and high school students to campus to showcase their history projects and compete for a chance to go to the state competition. Faculty have been very supportive of having students present research at national conferences and at the College's Research and Creativity Expo. Expanded internship opportunities in public history prepare students for positions in that field. Last summer, three students completed internships at museums in Nebraska and Utah.

Workforce demands for graduates of the program

Social Studies/Social Science education is one of the areas listed on the state's Teacher Shortage list for 2023-24. Last year, there were 18.25 positions in this discipline that were filled by someone other than a fully qualified teacher or were left vacant. Peru State College helps to fill those positions with this program.

Contribution to the larger community and/or region beyond workforce

The Certificate in Public History prepares students for careers in public history. It covers the theory and practice of public history. Students develop an understanding of the ways in which public historians shape public perceptions of the past and the ways in which public perceptions of the past shape public history. Practical application is incorporated in both the course work and through class activities and projects, both in and outside of the classroom, visits to local and regional museums and archives and interaction with museum and public history professionals during required internships. Several of our students in the newly created Public History certificate program have obtained paid internships and employment as a result of the program. We have built partnerships with local historical societies in Nebraska City, Brownville, and Gage County to support our internship program.

An endowed internship provides the opportunity for a student to work at the Unicameral each year.

Strategic plan to grow the program and/or increase its success

The Department is working in tandem with Professional Studies on the creation of a Minor in International Studies, much like the previous Minor in Ethnic and Diversity Studies. The Minor in Ethnic and Diversity Studies, along with adding new classes to incorporate into the existing General Education categories, like HIST 308 Native American History & Culture, have already brought new students into our classrooms.

We will be exploring the creation of a new option in Political Science with the new hire once they begin. This should attract new students to the College, as did the certificate in Public History. This option can be created without requiring significant College resources.

Recruitment and retention initiatives and/or goals.

The annual History Day event provides opportunity for students interested in history to visit the College and learn more about its offerings. History Day 2023 was the first time the event has been held in-person since the COVID pandemic. Once approved, the Political Science option could yield 3 additional graduates per year, based on comparisons with peer institutions. The Social Science program is becoming more visible in the local community, due to expanded internships and the Public History Certificate. These have received media attention and will continue to do so as more students take part.