

School Name The University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX

Course Name American Government and Politics

Course Format Traditional

Key Results Over two semesters I've seen consistent correlations between student success on MyPoliSciLab assignments and success on in-class exams.

Submitted by

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Course Materials: *Essentials of American Government* by O'Connor, Sabato, and Yanus with MyPoliSciLab

The main goal of the American Government and Politics course is for students to understand that the structure of the American political system significantly impacts how people behave as well as the outcomes produced in the form of legislation. When possible, I try to integrate current news and events centering on political issues, actors, and policies.

In the past I assigned the textbook but knew that students were not doing the reading, so I adopted MyPoliSciLab which required them to read their text before coming to class. Now, students are held accountable for learning the basics from the text; this allows me to provide a more interactive and engaging learning experience in class. I can also go into more depth on particular concepts and discuss the meaning and impact of current political events. With an average of 300 students in each of my sections, this would not be possible without MyPoliSciLab.

Implementation

At the outset of the course I tell my students that they cannot pass the course without completing the required MyPoliSciLab chapter exams and media assignments, which make up half of their overall course grade. Students are allowed to take the MyLab chapter exams up to two times, and I count only their highest grade. To encourage students to spend more time studying, I also include four questions from the MyLab study plan post-tests (which are not required) and one question from the media assignment quizzes on my in-class exams.

I also recommend that students use the eText version embedded within MyPoliSciLab. With its additional media activities and other features, it provides a more engaging and interactive experience that students can access anytime, anywhere. In addition, it is a much more affordable option than the traditional printed textbook.

I feel strongly that writing helps students master course content. More importantly, it teaches them to think critically about the material. I assign four essays, each one corresponding to the topics covered in the four major exams, but due to class size, I make these essays optional. Students who choose to write these essays and do them well have extra points added to their in-class exam scores.

Benefits

Students master basic concepts outside of class and come to class better prepared to discuss the course material. This allows me to change the way I lecture: I can focus more on complex topics and current events because students are better grounded in the subject and more engaged.

Students have more opportunities for self-assessment and learn to take charge of their learning.

With more frequent assessments, students have a greater sense of control over their overall course grades.

Student performance on MyPoliSciLab assignments is highly correlated with success on in-class exams, and they understand that if they apply themselves to the MyPoliSciLab assignments, they will do better in the course.

Students enjoy a more engaging and less expensive option with the MyPoliSciLab eText

Assessments

50 percent 4 Exams

50 percent MyPoliSciLab
(chapter exams and media assignments)

“Over two semesters I have consistently seen strong, positive correlations between student performance on MyPoliSciLab assignments and exam scores.”

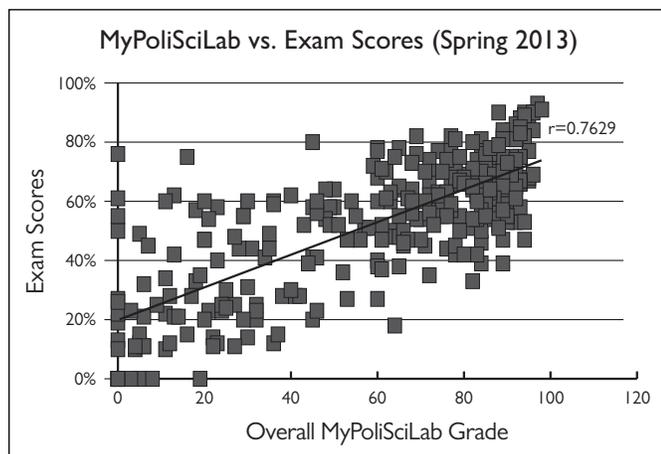


Figure 1. Correlation between overall MyPoliSciLab grades and average in-class exam scores, Spring 2013

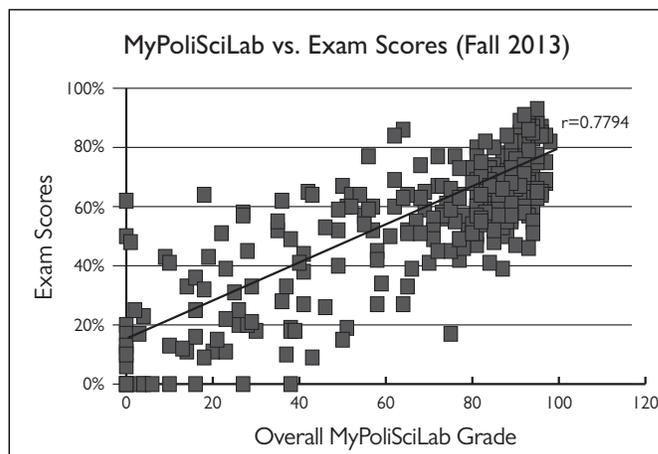


Figure 2. Correlation between overall MyPoliSciLab grades and average in-class exam scores, Fall 2013

Results and Data

Over two semesters I have consistently seen strong, positive correlations between student performance on MyPoliSciLab assignments and exam scores. Figures 1 and 2 indicate that students who perform well on their MyPoliSciLab assignments are more likely to perform well on their in-class exams.

The Student Experience

With MyPoliSciLab students absorb basic concepts outside of class, allowing me to change the way I lecture. I can talk in greater depth about key concepts and illustrative current events, which interest the students and help them become even more engaged in the course.

Conclusion

The chapter exams and media assignments clearly prepare students for success on exams and in the course, and I've been especially pleased with the quality of the assessments in MyPoliSciLab. As mentioned above, this past semester I included optional writing assignments for extra credit. The reality is that most students don't do optional assignments. Figure 3 above suggests that, if writing assignments were required, students would learn more and overall course grades could improve. In future semesters I hope to explore MyPoliSciLab's new Writing Space feature with auto-graded practice writing assignments. With this feature, requiring writing in classes, even for classes with 300 students, could become a real and exciting possibility.

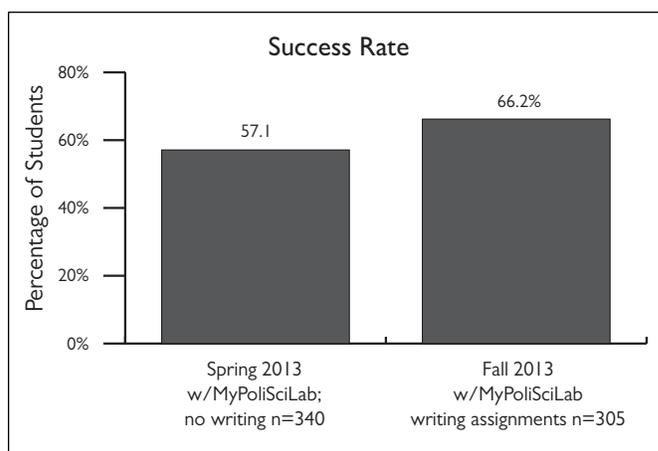


Figure 3. Student Success Rates, Spring 2013 – Fall 2013. (Success rate=the percentage of students who receive an overall course grade of A, B, or C.)