Evidence of Effectiveness, POL 306: Constitutional Law I: Institutional Powers, Summer 2022

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Achievement of Course Goals

The syllabus for my Constitutional Law I course lays out five broad goals:

1. An ability to trace noteworthy constitutional arguments and the cases that shaped them
2. Critical assessment of these legal, political, and social arguments
3. Effective and clear communication of these assessments
4. Understanding of the intricacies of important Supreme Court cases and rulings
5. Recognition of the political influences and social implications of rights and liberties holdings

In an effort to determine if students meet these goals, I used a goals survey to assess pre- and post-course achievement of these goals. For instance, a student was asked how much she agreed, on a 5-point, strongly disagree to strongly agree scale, with items such as "I am able to apply legal precedent." Students were asked a total of 9 items designed to tap various aspects of the course goals. A summary of both pre- and post-course responses can be found in Figure 1.

Along the vertical axis is each survey item. The red triangles represent the average response (from 1-5) on the pre-course goals survey, and blue circles the post-course goals survey; horizontal likes are 95% confidence intervals around those values. For all 9 items, the post-course response average was higher than the pre-course average to a statistically significant degree (at the $p < 0.05$ level).
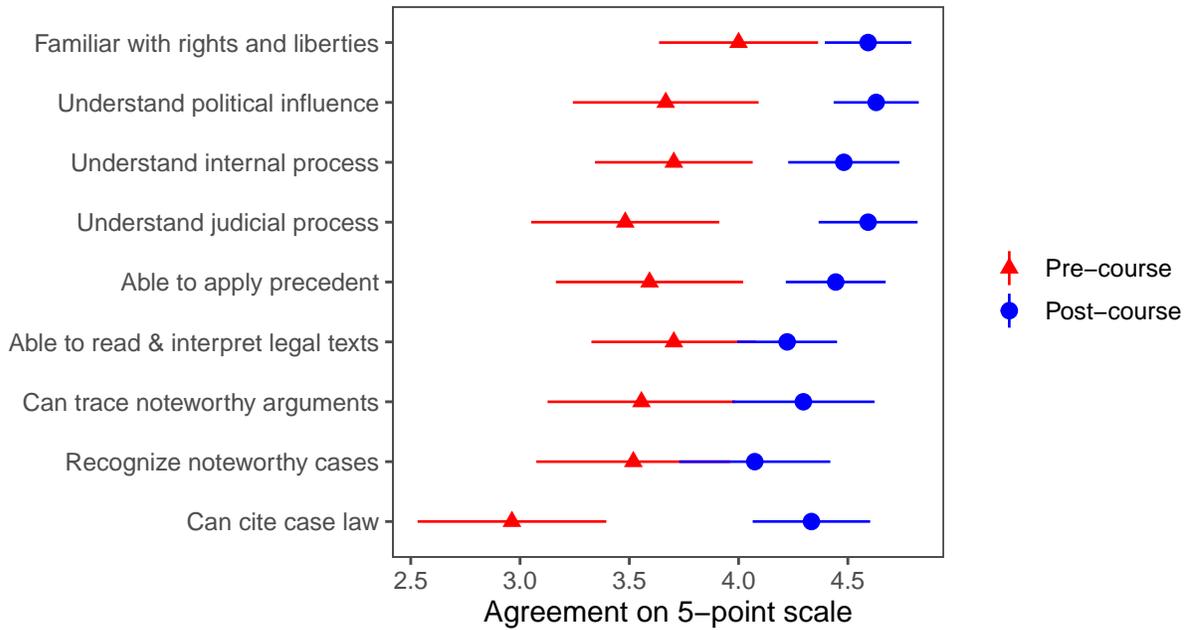
Figure 1: Average response to course learning goals, by pre- and post-course.

As can be seen, students assess their skills to be higher after the course than before it. Overall, my instruction appears to be meeting the fundamental course goals. Nevertheless, quantifying goal achievement allows me to retool the course to focus on those goals that aren't so readily being met.