

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES MAJOR
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STATUS

International Studies major is still in transition. The faculty approved the last course, which is part of its new curriculum, in Spring 2014. The new focus is based on cultural and geo-political regions.

In the past few years, we have substantively revised the curriculum of the International Studies major. The new curriculum has not been fully implemented yet. Thus, we do not know how students are reacting to it. Although some students have expressed interest in International Studies major while taking the required course of International Studies 151, no student has officially declared within the new major to me. Thus, in terms of the students' performance and appreciation of the major, this assessment remains generalized and very much anecdotal.

How to achieve effectively the main mission of the International Studies major and its goals? What ought to be done to increase the enrolment? What should be done for the curriculum to be consistent and realistic in our course offering so that we do what we say we are, based on the resources in our possession? These are some of the questions that guide the interpretation of this assessment.

This assessment is a combination of the projection of what we think students are likely to learn, how they are learning and the planning for the future. As indicated earlier, this assessment is not based on any empirical data in correlating student's actual interests and the curriculum. The interpretation is an anecdotal attempt at clarifying what we offer, how we offer it and how to plan for the future.

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES MAIN GOALS

“The major in international studies introduces students to contemporary international systems, the complex political, economic, environmental and cultural factors that affect relations among nation-states and peoples globally. Students majoring in international studies will acquire knowledge of particular global and international issues and paradigms, as well as the ability to work effectively, innovatively, and creatively, in at least two geo-political and cultural areas of the world. Familiarity with a language other than one's native tongue and a balanced cultural knowledge are important components of this major. The major is designed to prepare Wells students to assume professional roles in our complex global environment.” These geo-political and cultural regions are: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Indigenous areas of the world.

By and large, International Studies major's goals are to help students:

- (1) Understand the basic concepts within the studies of interactions among peoples and nation-states within their environments;
- (2) Apply theories, research and concepts intelligibly and holistically in analyzing the world's events, actors and organizations;

- (3) Possess critical thinking skills needed to retain, manage and synthesize complex information and ideas. (See the report made on International Studies Program's Goals based on the guidelines from Goucher College). **Nota Bene:** Although Goucher College does not have International Studies, their goals are similar to those of Political Science and International Relations.
- (4) And acquire a concrete knowledge that is relevant and functional in the contemporary world.

HOW TO ACHIEVE THE ABOVE GOALS?

In terms of how the main goals of the major are actualized, the distribution of the requirements is more flexible and highly decentralized as compared to the old international studies. Apart from the general requirements, which are fulfilled in taking International Studies 151 (3 credit hours), Political Science 210 United Nations Simulation (1 credit hour), INTL 290/390: Internships (3-4 Credit hours), OCS 271 Cross-Cultural Preparation and OCS 272 Cross-Cultural Reflection each with .5 semester hour and INTL 402 (senior seminar), students' choices of other courses across the disciplines of social sciences and the Humanities vary.

In selecting courses, students are advised to be close to their respective interests in one or two geopolitical and cultural regions that they have chosen to focus on.

Furthermore, the main goals are actualized also through the avenue of senior experience, which includes the senior thesis, study abroad and two internships among which one must be at international or foreign level.

As stated in the past assessment: "This new cultural and geopolitical orientations are reflected in all the aspects of the senior experiences: senior seminars, senior theses, internships, comprehensive exams, public presentations and study abroad."

Student must take one course from each of the following 4 categories: Economics, International Studies and Political Science; Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology; Environmental Studies; and History, Religion, Philosophy and the Humanities.

Two courses from the category of Global systems and Issues reveal and support the global dimension of the major.

FEATURES OF THE NEW REVISED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

As compared to the old curriculum in which there was a small core of faculty members who taught the required courses in International Studies, the new curriculum does not have such core faculty members. Several faculty members are involved through their courses in their disciplines. The choice for selecting or picking up the courses is broad and flexible. However, students must work closely with their advisors to plan a curriculum that makes sense for the area in which they wish to specialize.

PLANNING

We intend to continue to use more effectively Political Science 210, International Studies Colloquium Series and the National Model United Nations Conference in New York City as means of recruitment.

In terms of planning for the future, we have to fully actualize the revised curriculum first, and then within a year or so, we will assess the level of interests and the number of students who have declared majoring in international studies. We think that by that time, we might be able to use more effectively the EPC guidelines to assess the evolution of the major. We might envision another model to actualize the mission of the international studies major in respect to the national trends within small liberal arts colleges of how international studies are organized and taught. One geo-political and cultural area that is important but is missing is the Middle East Studies. We will continue to explore the possibility of covering courses in this area.