

International Studies Major Assessment Plan

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The Mission statement for the International Studies Major supports and expands on the Wells College Mission Statement (see p.4, 2016-2017 Catalog) and Wells' Institutional and Academic Program Goals (see pp. 9-10, 2016-2017 Catalog).

NB: We did not change any part of the curriculum of the International Studies Major during the academic 2017-18. However, in the coming academic year, we intend to change the name of the major to make it more 'appealing' and also to harmonize it with that of the minor.

1. Program Mission Statement

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. It is designed to prepare Wells students to assume professional roles in our complex global environment. This major is essentially global, using interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary methodological perspectives.

By and large, the focus of the major is to teach students how to examine and understand comprehensively, critically and globally interconnections among nation-states, peoples, cultures, and economies and shed light on policy and political implications of these interactions. It also provides broad and specific skills and paradigms that help students to be educated and be informed about the world as a dynamic system.

2. Program Goals aim at students to:

(1) Think globally and act locally, which is the premise upon which the curriculum of International Studies Major was created and is organized (philosophical basis of the major);

(2) Critically understand and appreciate International Studies scholarship with the values of new conceptualization and methodologies based on multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives (critical knowledge about the discipline, its literature, its methodologies and its various perspectives);

(3) Understand fundamentally how international systems and their organizations, economies, politics, social movements, institutions, agencies, or policies work, and how the values of regional and subregional cultural diversities shape these international systems or sub-systems (information about prescribed bodies of knowledge and the issues, policy analysis);

(4) Develop and acquire broad ethical perspectives, and oral and writing policy skills for analyzing and recognizing behaviors and policy outcomes of interconnections in a complex world system (communication skills, synthesis, assessment, appropriation of knowledge and intellectual responses and sharing of the information);

(5) Gain a concrete body of international knowledge in at least two of 5 subregions of the world; (civil engagement,

pragmatism of the discipline).

3. Learning Objectives

Students are expected to:

GOAL (1):

- (a) Learn about the world system as a system of thinking and doing (geography, science; culture, economy and their interconnections);
- (b) Interpret epistemological and phenomenological issues related to international and global studies as an interactive system (exposure to elements and questions of the philosophy of science in relation to the origins of knowledge in international systems).

GOAL (2):

- (a) Learn the concepts and theories of international and global systems or organization multinationals, and non-governmental organizations (substantive knowledge and facts);
- (b) To be exposed to various schools of thought and literatures related to the discipline of the international and global studies. Students will learn about the nature of the relationships between other disciplines in social sciences and the humanities, and the field of international and global studies.

GOAL (3):

- (a) Learn how decisions are made; factors influencing decision making and outcome of decision making (process and critical policy analysis);
- (b) Examine the place and role of cultures and how they influence organizations or institutions;

GOAL (4):

- (a) Acquire normative perspectives and scientific skills for assessing policy outcome and evaluating international and regional projects;
- (b) Learn from practical political analysis experience either within the classroom or outside context;

GOAL (5):

- (a) Learn through, and/or with concrete illustrations of how international systems work from comparativist perspectives of international organization structures and institutions such as the United Nations system and its agencies, regional organizations; illustrations will cover cultural, environmental, financial, economic and religious organizations and movements; they will learn from specific assignments and personal choices of the topics and issues;
- (b) Learn in comparing concretely and historically the dynamics of cultural differences within the major cultural and geo-political regions of the world; each student will identify herself/himself with one cultural region or two regions in her/his thesis writing, or internship.

4. Measurable Learning Outcomes

What are the measurable learning outcomes? I neither made any survey to quantitatively measure the outcome of student learning, nor did I interview any students here. Thus, I am not able to project any causal relations between the content of the courses, their goals and exactly what courses have been accomplished for students.

However, I assess what students learn based on the value of correlative output among the following items:

(1) (a) Fulfillment of International Studies 151 (introduction to international studies) as the pre-requisites for many courses, exposes students to methodological and theoretical issues related to international studies major, and it provides distinctive features of international studies and specific knowledge about the discipline related to these features;

(b) A research methodology course in social sciences is required before the senior year;

(c) Political Science 210 (one credit hour): United Nations Simulation is to support internationalism of the major with the focus on the UN as the most complex model of international organization; and

(d) Finally, International Studies 402 (senior seminar) has to bring together cumulative knowledge into practice.

(2) Examinations, quizzes, and homework sets demonstrate the integration of quantitative and qualitative information and data into written logic, and analytical and critical thinking skills.

(3) Book reviews are required to assess student's performance in the first part of the semester before students start to work on their research projects.

(4) Writing and critical thinking as tools of assessing what is being taught: in all courses in International Studies major students are required to conduct research projects and produce writings, essays, and/or position papers in order to demonstrate scholarly knowledge, research capability and awareness of contemporary issues in the field. Students are expected to understand the guidelines for research papers provided to them in all my course syllabi.

(5) In 300 level courses, class presentations, discussions and debates to demonstrate verbal skills and technological competence, to communicate reasoned point of view, and engage in collaborative practices in the classroom.

(6) Performance in internships: two internships are required in the International Studies major. This experience is administered in all 4 years of study, freshman through senior year. The academic components of the internship are comprised of a public lecture through International Colloquium Series and a writing of a paper on the experience. The student is expected to use theories to explain his/her experiences. The final assessment is based on on-site evaluation and performance and the academic performance.

(7) Comprehensive Exam: in international Studies, comprehensive examinations are done orally in the spring semester of the graduating senior. The student responds to the questions posed by two faculty members for about 75 minutes covering the issues related to the content of the senior thesis and its philosophical foundation within the discipline.

This exam is based on two sources: (1) the content of the senior thesis itself and (2) the courses that students took over the four years related to the topic at Wells College. The comprehensive questions and problems are drawn from all required courses. To prepare for this exam, student develops a literature review apart from that one he/she has used in her/his senior thesis.

(8) Senior Thesis Project: each graduating senior in the major conducts an independent project under the guidance of designated International Studies Faculty. A second reader is invited to the thesis committee based on the student's interests and needed expertise related to the topic. In this thesis presentation, the student has to demonstrate his/her capacity to apply a theory or sets of theories toward an understanding of given international or a global issue. Students must identify international and global relevancy, and policy implications of the thesis. Students must have more than 20 primary sources in the subject matter.

(9) Performance of students after graduation: job placement and graduate school placement.

By and large, students demonstrate what they have learnt through a combination of the performance in the items described above. They exhibit high motivation to take courses at higher level by making innovative efforts to appropriate concepts, theories and interrogate them in their works.

Students demonstrate what they have learnt in integrating main concepts and theories in their senior thesis and the over all learning process.

Finally, students demonstrate what they have learnt in becoming more 'independent' in producing their works and also in 'building confidence.'

NB: With exceptions of International Studies 151 (Introduction to International Studies; International Studies 350 (Environmental Policy Analysis); and International Studies 402 (Senior Seminar in International Studies), its elective courses are mostly from economics, political science, history, sociology and anthropology.

5: Means of Assessment of Outcomes

Goal 1: Comprehensive Exam (Senior);

Goal 2: Extensive writings, oral presentations, and final exams;

Goal 3: Usage of Methodologies; communications, analytical thinking;

Goal 4: Thesis, innovation and appropriation;

Goal 5: Independence and Student's engagement and internship reports.

In relationship to Goals 2 and 3 in International Studies 151, for instance, through a combination of midterm and final exams, class participation, and critics of the textbooks, more than 80 percent of students have a grade of C or higher.

In relationship to Goals 4 and 5, for instance, knowledge acquired is tested in the quality of thesis writing and reports about experiential learning; means of assessment are also about evaluation of the discipline focusing on specificity of regional studies or interests; study abroad; internships; critical thinking; literature review; and scholarship related to, and/or about, the discipline. Though anecdotally, it should be indicated that the International Studies major has always produced excellent final essays/reports such as senior theses or final papers.

The means listed above are used as standards for the assessment outcomes. They are elaborated as follows:

(1) Courses are letter graded as defined in the Wells Catalog from F, D- and A+; in International Studies courses

I generally follow these standards.

- (2) Satisfactory or unsatisfactory within internships;
 - (3) The research on senior thesis is based on original project;
 - (4) This project must have the following elements
 - (a) A clearly articulated research statement;
 - (b) A literature review;
 - (c) A methodological Guidelines and a bibliography;
 - (d) Thesis is publically presented as a form of public defense; this oral presentation is part of International Studies 401, which is a required senior seminar (course).
 - (5) Student makes an oral presentation on her/his senior thesis, which is public. Theories and evidence are important sources upon which this presentation is evaluated. It constitutes about 40 percent of the final grade in International Studies 401. Through this public presentation, student is given the feedback from the community on his/her senior thesis.
 - (6) Comprehensive exam for graduating seniors: The performance is evaluated on analytical skills, literature review, theories and their policy implications. The grade Pass or Pass with Distinction or Fail is assigned to this exam.
- NB:** We intend to remove this comprehensive exam from the senior thesis requirement and leave only the oral presentation of the thesis as student has demonstrated her/his ability in critical thinking and oral communication throughout the process of writing the thesis itself.
- (7) In the seminar courses, I also give one middle term exam, and the remainder of the requirements is assessed between debates and writing research papers. The focus is on oral skills, research abilities and policy-making recommendations and assessment;
 - (8) In international Studies, B or B+ is a very good grade. About 70 percent of students who take my courses designated as International Studies get B or B+ grades; and about 15 percent will get C, C- or C+. And about 5 percent of students get between D and F. The most distinguished student gets between an A and A-. It represents about 10 percent of the final grades.

6. How Assessment Data will be utilized

I hope that faculty members who are offering courses in International Studies will bring their relevant input from this assessment in their courses that would benefit student's learning in International Studies major as a whole.

As for myself, this assessment makes me think further about the future of the curriculum of International Studies major, which should continue to focus on international and global complexity as a way of educating holistically students to be effective, productive and responsible members of the world community. The goal of critical thinking and that of student's engagement should be supported more through experiential learning and academic activism.

Thus, this assessment helps me to pay more attention to the nature of correlations between the goals, objectives, the means of learning and the outcomes. In order to enhance the quality of these relations, I plan to involve students more in participating in International Studies 151, as it is case at 200 or 300 level political science

courses. For instance, some practical projects might be envisaged in the syllabus of International Studies 151 to stimulate and advance the goals 1 and 5 and their objectives.

At the general level, the assessment data will be used annually to examine the overall student's performance in each of the assessment areas. The faculty intends to evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of each section, the quality of knowledge transmitted, and research projects advanced within the required courses of the major as tools which can improve student's quality of learning.

Thus, all the devices used in this assessment such as the quality of senior thesis and the nature of the knowledge it produces, comprehensive exam, public presentations, the internship, analytical works in seminars, debates and exams should prepare a student for professional employment.

Another device that should be used to assess over all student's performance is student's transcript in academic comparative standards. Based on the transcripts, we can have some sense of how well students are prepared for graduate schools.

Although there are no causal-relations between student's academic performance and professional performance, but in terms of the acquisition of knowledge, I believe that student's success in the quality of his/her academic performance will sustain his/her professional employment.