

# **Student Learning Assessment Plan**

International Studies Major  
2015-2016

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The mission statement for the International Studies major is made with reference to Wells College Mission Statement (p.4, 2015-2016 Catalog) and Wells' Institutional and Academic Program Goals (pp. 9-10, 2015-2016 Catalog).

## **1. Mission of the International Studies Major**

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.

## **2. Program Goals of the International Studies Major**

The program goals are aimed at students to:

- (1) Think globally and act locally, the premise upon which the curriculum of international studies major was created and is organized;
- (2) Think critically, internationally and globally, by cultivating a sense of belonging into a real, rapidly and continuously changing world;
- (3) Recognize the reality, importance and values of international connections among all elements of the sub-systems of the world system and their national and regional values;
- (4) Understand fundamentally how international systems as organizations, movements, institutions, agencies, or policies work and what the values of regional and subregional cultural diversities are within these international systems;
- (5) Gain a concrete body of international knowledge in at least two of 5 subregions of the world;

- (6) Develop an international scholarship in focusing on relationships among the classical disciplines and areas studies;
- (7) Understand and appreciate this new scholarship with the values of new conceptualization and methodologies based on multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- (8) Acquire specific policy skills for analyzing and recognizing interconnections as being vital for the progress of the world;
- (9) Develop ethical canons, oral and writing skills, analytical capacity, and efficient assessment capacity in the management of the structures or agencies of the world system; and
- (10) Obtain relevant skills and broad knowledge, which will be needed for professional employment in a competitive economic and political world.

### **3. Updates in the International Studies Major Curriculum**

The current structure of the International Studies Major is new. Since it has been produced about 3 to 4 years ago, no new adjustments or modifications have yet been made to its content. However, the emphasis on global systems and issues, and geo-political cultural areas makes the major more attractive both for employment as well as the pursuit of graduate studies. The major is not too general in terms of knowledge that students acquire and the issues that are examined.

### **4. Learning Objectives (Outcomes That Determine Whether the Goals Have Been Achieved)**

Students who meet the above goals are expected to:

- (1) Be able to understand the complexity of international issues in their totality;
- (2) Be capable to use both qualitative and quantitative analytical thinking and reasoning in order to analyze international or global issues underlying possible or potential problems or solutions;
- (3) Be capable of critically evaluating scholarly literature and research on international affairs;
- (4) Be able of making a rational judgment on, and/or, about, international issues needed in local/national policy-making process;
- (5) Be able to factor and/or project a critical international thinking into a cultural context; and

- (6) Be able to understand the connections between international development needs and environmental and cultural imperatives.

## 5. Measurable Learning Outcomes

Assessment of outcomes takes place through various means as stated below.

- (1) 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; A research methodology course in social sciences is required before the senior year; And 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;
- (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 International Studies major. This experience is administered in all 4 years of study, Freshman through Senior year. The academic components of the internship comprise 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 examination is done orally in the spring semester of the graduating senior. 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 senior, 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 rates.

## **6. Means of Assessment of Outcomes**

The following will be used as standards for the assessment outcomes listed above.

- (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.

- (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.

## **7. How Assessment Data Will Be Utilized**

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, we believe that student's success in the quality of his/her academic performance will sustain his/her professional employment.