

International Studies Department Assessment Plan and Pilot Outcomes

1. INTL Assessment Plan

In January, 2017, the INTL faculty unanimously approved Dr. Galen Martin, our Undergraduate Studies Director, to teach a 1-credit senior capstone class in spring term on a pilot basis, to be compensated at the going rate. The capstone was to be focused on working with students to write, critique, rewrite and complete an original research paper, which could be either their senior honors thesis if they are writing one, or a paper for another class they might be taking (either a paper required by the class, or a research/writing enhancement of a final class product if the class doesn't require an actual research paper). Such a capstone can offer an intensive opportunity to develop analysis, research and writing skills, regardless of the particular courses that each student happens to be taking, and furthermore, working intensively in this way with students can provide Dr. Martin with thorough, substantive information about the skills level of each student. Thus, this assessment is summative, in the sense that it provides information about how well our curriculum prepares students to fulfill the learning outcomes selected, and also formative, in the sense that it provides students the opportunity to close gaps in their analytical, research and writing skills.

2. Learning Outcomes assessed

The learning outcomes assessed in this pilot round were the following two; a complete list of the INTL learning outcomes can be found in the appendix.

- Employ methods of interdisciplinary social science research: use library databases to find relevant literature, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of academic arguments, and use evidence to support arguments.
- Convey complex information and ideas in English that is clear, robust, carefully edited, well organized, and stylistically engaging and accessible.

3. Results

Dr. Martin offered the seminar Spring term 2017 to an inaugural cohort of 17 juniors and seniors. At the beginning of the term he asked students to submit writing samples, many of which had already been graded as part of a regular course. He reports being surprised by how many juniors and seniors had NOT:

1. Written a standard research paper.
2. Given much thought to the differences between formal and informal writing styles.
3. Received any significant feedback on their writing besides a grade.
4. Used programs such as Zotero and Mendeley to organize their bibliographies.

Nonetheless, he found the students very receptive to one-on-one feedback on their writing. He was able to identify the number of students who met, failed to meet or exceeded expectations in the three learning outcomes when they entered the seminar, and also determine the number of students who improved or did not improve during the seminar, a measure of the effectiveness of the seminar as a way to address the gaps identified. By comparing these numbers, we can see that the class does provide improvement in both learning outcomes, and that of the 17 students, only one still

failed to meet an expectation by the end of the term. Below are the numbers of students meeting/failing to meet/exceeding each learning outcome at the beginning, and then again when the course was completed:

- Employ methods of interdisciplinary social science research: use library databases to find relevant literature, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of academic arguments, and use evidence to support arguments.

at beginning of term:

exceeds expectations	3/17
meets expectations	8/17
fails to meet expectations	6/17

at end of term:

exceeds expectations	10/17
meets expectations	7/17
fails to meet expectations	0/17

- Convey complex information and ideas in English that is clear, robust, carefully edited, well organized, and stylistically engaging and accessible.

at beginning of term:

exceeds expectations	5/17
meets expectations	8/17
fails to meet expectations	4/17

at end of term:

exceeds expectations	7/17
meets expectations	9/17
fails to meet expectations	1/17

4. Future plans

We were pleased by the results, which provided us with substantive feedback about how well our lower division curriculum is preparing students with the skills we recognize as essential. We were also pleased with the way Dr. Martin was able to address the gaps identified. However, we were concerned at the number of upper division students who failed to meet expectations at the beginning of the course, after they had presumably successfully passed through our lower division intro courses. For this reason, we plan to

1) Continue offering the capstone as a 1-credit seminar every term.

2) Enhance the research/writing component of some of our lower division core courses, specifically by assigning them to students in installments, so that they can get feedback along the way, while there is time to make use of it, rather than only at the end of the course. We have already begun this process in INTL 280, which is already a rather writing-intensive course, and therefore lends itself well to this approach.

5. Appendix: Complete list of INTL Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes

Program-level learning outcomes

1. Critical thinking:

-Use analytical/ intellectual tools to examine global issues in the primary thematic areas of the department: international development, culture and globalization, gender and development, environment, global health and development, and crosscultural communication and understanding.

-Critically analyze the complex interrelationships that exist among nations and between peoples and communities in the interdependent modern world.

-Employ methods of interdisciplinary social science research; use library databases to find relevant literature, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of academic arguments, and use evidence to support arguments.

-Adapt and apply a critical and well-grounded understanding of multiple worldviews, experiences, power structures, and ethical and cultural positions in relation to contemporary global problems.

2. Content knowledge:

-Describe, explain and apply basic knowledge of the historic and contemporary role and effects of different international actors in the global system (e.g., multilateral and bilateral organizations, development agencies, nation-states, philanthropic and non-governmental organization).

-Describe and discuss the history, culture, society, geography, and political economy of a major world region.

-Describe, explain and apply basic knowledge of a professional concentration area that maps onto a real-world career objective.

3. Communication:

-Demonstrate receptive and productive proficiency in at least one language other than English.

-Convey complex information and ideas in English that are clear, robust, carefully edited, well organized, and stylistically engaging and accessible.

-Interact with people from a diverse range of cultural, religious, ethnic, national, and other identities in a way that is respectful and informed.

-Use knowledge and skills to develop and advocate for informed, appropriate action to solve complex problems in the human and natural worlds.