

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

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IR prepares students with knowledge and critical skills to meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world. International Relations draws from a variety of disciplines and methods to study global issues and the interactions of governments, global institutions, and social movements worldwide. An International Relations degree provides a great advantage for a successful career in a world that is more globalized every day.

### Learning Objectives

The course of study for the Bachelor of Arts in International Relations has three objectives: to impart knowledge of basic concepts, theories and methods in international relations; to develop in each student at least one area of special individual competence in international relations; and to train students in research, analytical, and presentation/communication skills. Liberal arts educational goals are emphasized but the program seeks also to develop marketable skills appropriate to the field. These include report writing, statistical and computer applications, public policy analysis, oral briefing techniques, and audio-visual production. Utilizing the extensive course offerings in the program and in other departments, students are able, on advisement, to develop individual areas of specialization within geographical, functional (e.g., international political economy), problem-oriented (e.g., arms control), theoretical/methodological, and other categories. Fieldwork may also be part of an area of specialization.

### Outcomes

[Our alumni](#) (please, see our link on our webpage) can be found across the world in non-profit, private, and government positions. These include the US Department of State and other countries' foreign ministries, the City of San Francisco and other local governments, US intelligence agencies, non-profit organizations in the areas of international development, human rights, international labor, environment, and international migration as well in business. A significant number of our graduate students also pursue further professional or doctoral studies at high-ranking academic institutions around the world.

### Assessment of Undergraduate Instruction

The IR curriculum is designed to have students take a sequence of mandatory core classes that build on each other's, leading to IR 550 Pro-Seminar In Foreign Policy Analysis. Typically, students will take IR 308: Fundamentals of International Relations Theories, Issues, and Perspectives and, IR 310 US- Foreign Policy in semester one; IR 312: International Political Economy and IR 309 - Fundamentals of IR- Applications (GWAR) in semester two; IR 550- a six unit course- in semester 3 or 4. A typical syllabus for IR 550 states,

IR 550 is the culminating senior class that enables students to showcase their research, writing, presentation and analysis skills in International Relations. The work in this class is accomplished through various stages and requirements to result in a 45-60-page comprehensive research paper. This paper requires you to engage in rigorous research about an international issue and to present a cohesive argument that analytically brings together theory, substance and well-written prose together. This is not an easy task to

accomplish, as the requirements are numerous and detailed, and the final grade will depend on the quality of writing, the depth of theoretical and issue-oriented research and the quality of the arguments. There will be several presentations associated with this task, as well as many drafts and other materials to be submitted. (Ellis)

Since all students have to take and pass the class to graduate, we believe that a thorough assessment of IR 550 papers provide us with a good measure to gage undergraduate instruction. In 2013, the department first looked at recommendations made in 2010 and their implementation. (A) It then continued the study provided in 2010 and examined sample term papers. We used the same rubrics/criteria in order to ensure consistency, and matched them to our learning objectives faculty member other than the one who taught the student and graded the paper assessed each term paper (B). We provided a summary chart including recommendations for improvement(C).

#### A) Implementation of Recommendations From 2010 to 2013

<b>Use of findings to enhance program quality 2010</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>
Move to smaller sections of undergraduate theory course, IR 308, when new faculty are hired	Done. Our IR 308 class are now capped at 40 to 45 instead of 80 and we try to offer at least two sections a semester plus one in the Summer
Maintain strength of core and popular thematic courses. Introduce stronger requirements of thematic coverage in papers in the research and writing class, IR 309, and in IR 550	Ongoing
Introduce theory testing in smaller IR 308 sections. Smaller 309 sections, with enhanced focus on hypothesis testing	Ongoing
Stress more graphics in IR 309 and IR 550	Varies by instructor
Follow through on smaller IR 309 sections for GVAR	Capped at 25, but budget constraints make it difficult to offer more sections. We are offering one Section in the summer

#### B) Papers' Evaluations

The criteria of evaluation are:

1. Knowledge of IR theoretical literature and debates
2. Detailed knowledge of theories, issues, and data in international political economy, international security, international organization, or other broad themes.

3. Testing hypotheses with empirical research
4. Methodology and epistemology
5. Data analysis and organization
6. Presentation of complex ideas and arguments with graphics
7. Writing complex ideas and arguments coherently, in academic style
8. Political, ethical, legal, and policy argumentation
9. Knowledge of international history
10. Detailed knowledge of IR of some regions

#### Aggregate Findings and Specific Recommendations to enhance quality

- The findings can be summarized by grouping the papers according to grade. We selected, A, B and C papers, reflected in the chart below(C) as Best, Median, and Weakest. The highest-graded papers are mostly not assessed to be excellent on all criteria, but all these are assessed to be excellent on some.

#### Overall Strength

- The topics of some these papers show a remarkable diversity of interests and perspectives, from justice to finances, and spanning all regions of the globe.
- All students, including the weakest, are able to write grammatical and coherent papers of over 10,000 words citing over 30 different sources from diverse sub disciplines
- All students, including the weakest, are able to develop knowledge about their region or issue of focus surpassing that of IR faculty who do not specialize in that region or issue. - The best students are consistently able to perform large-scale hypothesis testing with methodological consistency. Middle ranking students attain methodological consistency and test hypotheses at least implicitly.
- Best and middle-ranking students are sensitive to ethical, policy, or legal concerns.
- Best and middle-ranking students are able to develop large studies of important emerging topics where the IR literature is very limited.

Overall Weaknesses:

- The discrepancy between good papers and weak papers is large, confirming our understanding of the wide range of competences and skills among our students.
- As a whole, reviews of literature are not as strong as is desirable. Students seem to lack understanding of rigorous research methods.

Our recommendation

- Include offering smaller class size and looking at the possibility of adding an undergrad methods class.

C) Summary of Findings

<b>List all major learning objectives for this degree/ concentration.</b>	<b>Summary of findings about student learning</b>	<b>Use of findings to enhance program quality</b>
Knowledge of IR theoretical literature and debates	Best: Uneven Median: Uneven. Weakest: Uneven to weak.	Continue to move to smaller sections of undergraduate theory course, IR 308, when new faculty are hired
Detailed knowledge of theories, issues, and data in international political economy, international security, international organization, or other broad themes.	Best: Strong Median: Uneven Weakest: Adequate quantity of sources but poorly developed	Maintain strength of core and offer more popular thematic courses.
Testing hypotheses with empirical research	Best: Strong Median: Uneven, mostly implicit Weakest: Poorly defined terms	Introduce an undergrad methods class
Methodology and epistemology	Best: Clear method, good implementation Median: Adequate Weakest: Uneven	Same
Data analysis and organization	Best: Good consistency Median: Adequate, but weak at points Weakest: Good quantity. Inadequate relevance to hypotheses	Already adequate
Presentation of complex ideas and arguments with graphics	Best: Mostly no graphics Median: Mostly no graphics Weakest: Mostly no graphics	Stress more graphics in IR 309 and IR 550

Writing complex ideas and arguments coherently, in academic style	Best: Good academic writing, extensive and judicious citation Median: Adequate, needs some improvement Weakest: Significant deficits	Follow through on smaller IR 309 sections for GVAR
Political, ethical, legal, and policy argumentation	Best: Good legal reasoning where relevant, good sensitivity to ethical issues Median: Good consideration of ethical and policy questions Weakest: Mostly poor	Already adequate
Knowledge of international history	Best: Papers do attend to history, with some historiographical skill Median: Good historical background provided Weakest: Weak historical context, especially in the international dimension	Maintain current levels. This would be expensive to improve. Would require more faculty and more units in the major.
Detailed knowledge of IR of some regions	Best: Very good knowledge of relevant area studies Median: Good knowledge of relevant area studies Weakest: Good knowledge of immediate area and topic, need broader regional study	Reflects strength of curriculum in area studies.