

Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program International Studies Program

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes for the department's Core courses been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

Yes, formal learning outcomes have been developed. For **INTL 2200 Where on Earth: Foundations in Global History**, the teachable content for the course is listed as:

The course offered beginning International Studies majors an integrated approach to learn how to 'think history globally,' 'consider the world ethically,' and 'render geography visual.' This meant tracing how inequalities along gender, class, race, and ecological lines became deeply embedded in processes of modernity, empire, and capitalism. As a co-taught interdisciplinary course, we approached this by way of a critical geographical perspective on the spatial organization of the world at different scales, which is crucial to any understanding of what we refer to as "international" or "global." The course was structured around four big historical questions that have shaped our world in its interconnections and divisions:

- How have we come to know about space and place?
- How have borders made worlds?
- How have inequalities become systemic?
- How have humans shaped the world's ecological crisis?

In the paired **INTL 2204 Where on Earth: Foundations in Global Culture and Political Geography**, the teachable content for students is listed as:

Where on Earth: Foundations in Political Geography and Global Cultures draws from the discipline of Geography to understand the production of politics and culture on both local and global scales and intertwined with the economic, social, and individual. We will engage with many themes and topics that explore the structural and interconnected causes of global issues: we will look at the histories of colonialism and how they reverberate into the present, at the institutions of borders and nation-states, how economic systems shape our world, how different ideas about race, gender, and class are intertwined with local and global cultural and social forces, global economic development, the science and politics of climate change, and engage with critical questions of environmental and social justice in an ever changing and globalized world. We will not focus on any one region, instead opting for a global survey of cases that will allow us to critically interrogate the uneven production of space and society and strive to understand different approaches to addressing global inequality. This is a core introductory course in the International Studies Program.

- Have a general understanding of the significant ways that geographers and social scientists think about politics and culture on a global scale.
- Gain proficiency in the context and dynamics of some of the most pressing global issues.
- Gain proficiency in key concepts related to political and cultural geography.

- Develop geographic literacy.
- Build collaborative skills and relationships with your ISP cohort.
- Learn how to critically evaluate academic texts, theories, and concepts.

These outcomes will be achieved through:

- Lectures that cover the main thematic, theoretical, and conceptual concerns in this course.
- Discussion sections that will allow for more in-depth engagement with the course content and others in your cohort.
- Reading assignments that present a wide survey of theoretical approaches and topics.
- Group assignments in which you collaborate with others to solve urgent issues.
- Two exams that will each cover half of the course's material.

For **INTL 2501 Introduction to International Relations**, the learning outcomes differ slightly, depending on the instructor's specific expertise.

In Prof. Erikson's version, she listed the following as learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate the critical, mathematical, informational, analytic, expressive, and creative skills that are essential tools of the educated person well-prepared for a meaningful life and vocation.
- Understand the major ideas and methods of inquiry of the scholarly disciplines that comprise the university and be able to use those methods of inquiry as beginning practitioners to address complex contemporary problems.
- Be able to identify and articulate the strengths and limitations of the disciplines and the relationship of the disciplines to one another, and demonstrate an understanding of the breadth and diversity of human knowledge as well as its openness to integration in more comprehensive wholes.
- Be conversant with and able to discuss intelligently enduring questions and issues that are fundamental to human inquiry and that have shaped the traditions from which the university has emerged.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply more than one disciplinary perspective to the same enduring question or complex contemporary problem.
- Be familiar with the scholarly exploration of religious faith and understand how faith and reason are related in the search for truth.
- Demonstrate the ability to examine their values and experiences and integrate what they learn with the principles that guide their lives.
- Be prepared and disposed to use their talents and education as engaged global citizens and responsible leaders in service of the common good.

In Prof. O'Donnell's version, he listed the following as learning outcomes:

- Knowledge about international relations (IR): Students will be introduced to relevant analytical frameworks, theories, and cases concerning the broad discipline of IR, and including core sub-fields of international security, international political economy, and global governance issues.
- Historical context: Students will explore changes and continuities in the history of IR,

and how theoretical explanations for events in world history are developed, critiqued, defended, and modified. Using this theoretical training, students will independently test and critique extant explanations for historical events in IR theories, and variably defend and utilize existing theoretical models; combine extant models; or apply elements of extant models. This training will also instill in students the tools to continuously evaluate the applicability of historical analogies for current events in world politics.

- Interpretation: Students will be able to make interpretive arguments about the causes, salience, and effects of actions, inactions, structures, and forces in international relations.
- Research Methods: Students will be able to understand and explain similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of the disciplines of political science (of which IR is a sub-discipline) and history. They will apply the methods of the IR discipline to evaluate developments in global politics.
- Learning How to Think: Students will become more sophisticated consumers, analysts, and producers of knowledge, developing skills that will continue to serve them as undergraduate students and in life beyond Boston College.
- Learning How to Communicate: Students will learn how to improve their analytical thinking, conduct high quality research, and present an effective argument, both orally and in writing.

- 2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

The learning outcomes are listed to each syllabus for the different core courses.

- 3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the Core requirement?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes have been achieved more or less well?)

The specific assignments are meant to address different aspects or components of the learning outcomes. This is reinforced by the distinct grading rubrics for each assignment, which are shared with students at the outset of the course for clarity on the intellectual and interpretive skills being assessed.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The Director of the IS Program, Prof. Erik Owens, monitors the performance of the instructors (via the course assessments) and the outcomes of teaching.

The IS Advisory Board convenes on a regular (i.e., almost monthly during the academic year) and can discuss any issues that arise. Insofar as there have been any issues, they were dealt with at the Director to instructor level.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** (What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent

changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?)

There were changes made, but the core courses are the changes made to our prior core offerings. We are still in the process of reviewing the outcomes made from subsequent tweaks.

6) **Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

Our latest program self-study was in AY 2019, when we changed the IS core curriculum and concentrations available for students.

Our last external review was in AY 2016, where external reviewers suggested changes that were subsequently (mostly) adopted.