

International Studies Department 2023-2024
Assessment Report for the Master of Arts in International Studies (MAIS)

1. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

- a) Name of Program: Master of Arts in International Studies Program (hereinafter MAIS)
- b) Type of Program: Graduate Program
- c) CAS Division: Social Sciences
- d) Submitter & Point of Contact: John Zarobell, Academic Director, MAIS

2. MISSION STATEMENT

The International Studies Department is a scholarly community that applies global perspectives to foster a more sustainable, humane, and just world. Our mission is to inspire and prepare engaged citizens to have a critical, interdisciplinary understanding of global dynamics.

The graduate program in International Studies provides our students with the skills to not merely examine the world, but also make it better. To achieve this aim, we integrate theory and practice in order to prepare students for further studies and careers in such fields as government, education, human rights, international development, international business, international media and communication, social advocacy, and the law.

3. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (PLOs)

Students will:

- 1. Develop a critical interdisciplinary understanding of the major historical, structural, and cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics.
- 2. Articulate and analyze the differences between diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequities.
- 3. Demonstrate an ability to critically engage cultural difference and diversity and evaluate their significance within contemporary global systems.
- 4. Generate a self-directed, designed and executed interdisciplinary capstone or thesis project.
- 5. Demonstrate practical and professional skills relevant for a global affairs career.

4. CURRICULUM MAP

Program Outcomes	PLO1	PLO2	PLO3	PLO4	PLO5
Upon Completion of the MA in Global Studies, Students will be able to...	Develop a critical interdisciplinary understanding of the major historical, structural, and cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics.	Articulate and analyze the differences between diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequities.	Demonstrate an ability to critically engage cultural difference and diversity and evaluate their significance in the contemporary world.	Generate a self-directed, designed and executed interdisciplinary capstone or thesis project.	Demonstrate analytical and practical skills relevant for working in the field of global affairs.
Courses:					
MAIS 606: Graduate Research and Writing Skills		I		I	I
MAIS 620: Global Critical Social Theory	D	D	M		
MAIS 625: Research Methods and Capstone Prep		D		D	D
MAIS 626: Capstone Class	M	M	M	M	
Required Thematic courses	D	D	D		
Skills Electives					D
Internship Requirement			D		M

5. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2023-2024

Since we missed filing an Assessment report last year (22/23), the new PLO's (beginning AY 21/22) have only been reviewed once in the assessment of that year. At that time, we reviewed new PLO's 3 and 4. Therefore, this year we will assess PLOs 1 and 2.

PLO1: Develop a critical interdisciplinary understanding of the major historical, structural, and cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics.

This will be assessed directly through MAIS 620: Critical Theory in Global Perspective. According to our curricular map, students are supposed to achieve a “developing” level of expertise in this PLO in MAIS 620.

PLO2: Articulate and analyze the differences between diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequities.

This will be assessed directly through MAIS 625: Research and Project Design. According to our curricular map, students are supposed to demonstrate a “developing” level of expertise in MAIS 625.

6: METHODS

Final projects from the MAIS 620 (Fall 2023) and MAIS 625 (Spring 2024) courses will be assessed to determine the level of achievement in PLO1 and PLO2 respectively.

Assessment of PLO1: The way this PLO is worded requires that a reviewer consider whether students have been able to articulate three outcomes in their final projects:

- 1: Has the student articulated an interdisciplinary understanding of the historical power relations that have shaped global dynamics?
- 2: Has the student articulated an interdisciplinary understanding of the structural power relations that have shaped global dynamics?
- 3: Has the student articulated an interdisciplinary understanding of the cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics?

Rubric: The reviewer will consider the final, 15-page papers from the 2023 Cohort (15 examples) from this course. The papers will be assessed on a scale of 1-4, according to the following rubric, for each of the three questions:

- 1: Student has demonstrated an excellent understanding of historical/structural/cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics. Students who have achieved this level are able to make clear connections between the texts they assess and real-life situations in the present day. Evidence is well developed to make a clear account of the power relations in global dynamics, their sources, as well as the outcomes that result. The student is clear about how such dynamics are visible in various disciplines.
- 2: Student has demonstrated a strong understanding of historical/structural/cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics. Students who achieve this level have brought forward relevant evidence and made a case for how power relations feed into global dynamics at this time. While the evidence is not all aligned, the student's understanding of the relationships between actors in the present time is supported through an analysis of theoretical texts. The student employs more than one discipline in their approach.
- 3: Student has demonstrated some understanding of historical/structural/cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics. Students who achieve this level have considered textual and historical evidence and applied it to current global issues but have not been able to present a comprehensive account of the way power relations are functional in global dynamics. Evidence is spotty or not systematic and the student does not demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach.
- 4: Student has not demonstrated an understanding of historical/structural/cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics. Students who are at this level have not been able to formulate the power relations in question in relations to contemporary social problems, their evidence is anecdotal, and they are struggling to develop a perspective from more than one discipline.

For the purposes of this assessment, Category 1 represents a level of "Mastery", Category 2 represents a "Developing" level, Category 3 represents a level of "Introduction" and Category 4 has failed to even get that far. Each question will be assessed for each student and total scores will be tallied to reach a final evaluation of the PLO from the Fall 23 class.

Assessment of PLO2: Here the charge is simpler, for students to analyze and articulate differences between diverse approaches. The reviewer will consider the final assignments from the Research Design course, which consisted of a Literature Review and a Methods Statement for their Capstone projects (11 examples). They will be analyzed according to the following rubric:

- 1: The student has demonstrated an excellent ability to articulate and analyze diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequalities. The student explains diverse social science

approaches in their literature review, articulates the differences between them eloquently and sorts which ones are most effective in the context of their own inquiry.

2: The student has demonstrated a strong ability to articulate and analyze diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequalities. The student signals the existence of divergent social science approaches, articulates differences between them and determines which ones are most interesting.

3: The student has demonstrated an ability to articulate and analyze diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequalities. The writing is not clear enough to provide a clear articulation of diverse social science approaches, does not explain effectively the differences between them, and is not able to determine which are the most effective for use in their research.

4: The student has not demonstrated an ability to articulate and analyze diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequalities. While multiple authors are cited, they cannot evaluate the divergent approaches or make sense of which ones are useful. No critical analysis of diverse perspectives is present.

For the purposes of this assessment, Category 1 represents a level of “Mastery”, Category 2 represents a “Developing” level, Category 3 represents a level of “Introduction” and Category 4 has failed to even get that far. In this case, each student’s work will be evaluated only once based on this rubric, yielding the final scores for PLO2.

7. RESULTS

PLO1: Develop a critical interdisciplinary understanding of the major historical, structural, and cultural power relations that have shaped global dynamics.

Among 15 students, they achieved the following levels on Question 1 (historical power relations):

1: 1
2: 6
3: 6
4: 2

On Question 2 (structural power relations):

1: 5
2: 5
3: 4
4: 1

On Question 3 (cultural power relations):

1: 1
2: 5
3: 8
4: 1

Totals:

1: 7
2: 16
3: 18
4: 4

Analysis of PLO1: There were significant variations in the learning elements that this Program Learning Outcome seeks to encourage. The strongest performance was an understanding of structural power relations, followed by historical power relations and finally cultural power relations. This is a tricky PLO to assess based on the way it is written, but the overall results suggest more students achieved this PLO overall, at or above the level projected (23 out of 45 results) than failed to achieve it. However, the difference is so slight that it is fair to say that the number of students who failed to meet the standards was pretty much equivalent to those that met them.

Drilling down on the various elements, historical power relations were more or less split between students who achieved developing and mastery levels to those who achieved introductory or unsatisfactory levels. However, most of the students (67%) achieved at Level 1 or 2 for structural power relations. Students did worst on cultural power relations. As the instructor of this course, I attribute these dynamics to two factors: course reading selections and the nature of the assignment. While there are significant historical elements in the course, the focus of many texts came down to structural relations of power. Cultural elements were well-represented in the course material, and indeed cultural power is present as part of the conversations on colonialism over two weeks, for example, but these were not the focus of the student papers. So, the nature of the assignment seems to be essential. The assignment asked students to identify a contemporary problem and to employ theoretical texts from the course to analyze it. This led to a range of outcomes in terms of the PLO, because students focused on divergent forms of power relations in their papers and did not often treat them equally. It was rare for a single paper to score at level 2 or above on all three sub-questions. There are two possible responses to this. One is simply to change the assignment so that it better reflects the specific learning goals of the PLO. The second is to change the organization of the course material to focus on these three forms of power relations we want students to understand and to adapt the reading list.

PLO2: Articulate and analyze the differences between diverse approaches to address global injustices and inequities.

Among 11 students, they achieved the following results:

1: 6
2: 4
3: 1
4: 0

The assessment of this PLO was better than expected with the majority of students achieving a level of mastery on their abilities in this domain. In the context of this course, it seems that the assignments were well structured to produce the desired result. Students turned in Literature Reviews and Methods Statements for their final projects and this assignment encouraged students to pursue a variety of different perspectives in the literature and to reconcile those in their Literature Review. Further, in developing a Methods Statement, students were forced to determine which of their methods would be effective to pursue for their own research goals. In short, the course (MAIS 625) and the assignments were well suited to the goals of PLO2. Nevertheless, it is clear on reading the final projects from the class, that students achieved a high level of understanding, articulation and analysis of diverse social science approaches in their work for this class. Thus, there is a strong correlation between PLO2 and the work assigned for MAIS 625, yielding exceptional results (many students surpassed the “developing” level and achieved “mastery” earlier than expected).