

**International Studies Department 2021-2022  
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: Nora Fisher-Onar, Associate Professor & MAIS Academic Co-Director, [nfisheronar@usfca.edu](mailto:nfisheronar@usfca.edu)

**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)**

This set of MAIS PLOs were drafted and adopted by the Faculty Advisory Board in the Spring 2015 semester. They were subsequently revised in tandem with a broader curriculum revision in Spring 2020. As such, this assessment report marks the last time that the below listed PLOs will be reviewed. In the upcoming academic year, the new PLOs will be assessed.

1. Understand the major structural, cultural, and relational shifts that have emerged in response to globalization from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, with a special emphasis on non-state actors.
2. Identify key organizations, institutions, and global and regional norms and how they interact with sub-state forces to shape policy, advocacy, and social movements.
3. Develop an understanding of the diverse aspects of global civil society and the political, economic, legal, environmental, social and cultural forces that are shaping contemporary global issues through the local-global connection.
4. Demonstrate an ability to critically engage categories of cultural difference and diversity and evaluate their influence on contemporary phenomenon.
5. Utilize mixed research methodologies, an interdisciplinary perspective, and community engagement skills to analyze key issues in international studies.

**4. CURRICULUM MAP\***

**TABLE 1. MAIS Curricular Map 2021-2022**

MAIS Course	Program Learning Outcomes				
	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5
MAIS 620 Global Critical Social Theory	D	D	D	D	
MAIS 624 Graduate Writing Seminar					D
Core Concentration Classes (MAIS 621-623)	D	D	D	D	
MAIS 625 Research and Project Design					I
Elective Courses (MAIS 630-636)	I	I	I	I	
Skills Courses (MAIS 650-652)					I
Capstone Project MAIS 626	M	M	M	M	M

\* Key: D = Developing; I = Intermediate; M = Mastery

**5. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Past Assessments: International Studies (MAIS)					
YEAR	PLO1	PLO2	PLO3	PLO4	PLO5
	Understand the major structural, cultural, and relational shifts that have emerged in response to globalization from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, with a special emphasis on non-state actors.	Identify key organizations, institutions, and global and regional norms and how they interact with sub-state forces to shape policy, advocacy, and social movements.	Develop an understanding of the diverse aspects of global civil society and the political, economic, legal, environmental, social and cultural forces that are shaping contemporary global issues through the local-global connection.	Demonstrate an ability to critically engage categories of cultural difference and diversity and evaluate their influence on contemporary phenomenon.	Utilize mixed research methodologies, an interdisciplinary perspective, and community engagement skills to analyze key issues in international studies.
2016/2017					MAIS 613, Direct and Indirect Assessment
2017/2018					MAIS 613 Direct and Indirect Assessment
2018/2019	No Assessment				
2019/2020	MAIS 626 Indirect Assessment	MAIS 626, Indirect Assessment			MAIS 626, Indirect Assessment
2020/2021	MAIS 626 Indirect Assessment	MAIS 626 Indirect Assessment			MAIS 626 Indirect Assessment; MAIS 625 Direct Assessment

2021/2022			MAIS 634 & MAIS 620 Direct Assessment	MAIS 634 & MAIS 620 Direct Assessment	
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In previous years MAIS assessments have principally examined PLO5 via a direct assessment of coursework from MAIS 613 and an indirect assessment via a student survey. MAIS 613 has now transitioned to a new number MAIS 625, but is still the same course (Research Methods). Last year assessment expanded to a new course - MAIS 495, and encompassed new PLOs - PLO1 and PLO2 (as well as PLO5). This year, two PLOs that have never been assessed were subjected to review. The assessment process was operationalized with data from: MAIS620 (the core theory class on Critical Social Theory) and MAIS634 (a second-year elective on Refugees & Migration).

## 6. METHODS

As outlined above in section 5, we opted for a direct assessment via final papers and coursework delivered in both courses.

As indicated in our Curricular Map, we anticipate that MAIS 620 students will have achieved an ‘Developing’ level of competence with the skills embedded in the corresponding PLO, and MAIS 634 student an “Intermediate” level of competence. As this is a graduate program, we believe that mastery of these skills will come through the completion of the master’s thesis or applied project that the student conducts during her or his final semester in the program.

### Direct Assessment for Program Learning Outcome #3 & PLO#4

- PLO3 Develop an understanding of the diverse aspects of global civil society and the political, economic, legal, environmental, social and cultural forces that are shaping contemporary global issues through the local-global connection.
- PLO 4 Demonstrate an ability to critically engage categories of cultural difference and diversity and evaluate their influence on contemporary phenomenon.

For the indirect Assessment, Professor Nora Fisher-Onar assessed the work from the final projects and course work submitted in Fall 2021 for both courses – our core theory class and an advanced elective on migration & refugees. The following rubric was utilized.

### Assessment Rubric

PLO3	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Needs improvement	Below expectations	Not Applicable
<b>a. Comprehension of global civil society and other forces shaping the international environment (e.g. economic, politics, security, environmental)</b> (written work engaging cogently with these themes in a					

theoretically informed fashion with empirical relevance)				
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	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Needs improvement	Below expectations	Not Applicable
<b>b.Evidence of grasp of local/global nexus</b> (written work engaging cogently with the local/global nexus in an empirically engaged fashion)					

PLO4	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Needs improvement	Below expectations	Not Applicable
<b>a.Critical comprehension of categories of social difference and diversity)</b> (written work engaging cogently with these themes in a conceptually informed fashion)					

PLO4	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Needs improvement	Below expectations	Not Applicable
<b>b.Critical application of conceptual framework regarding diversity to contemporary phenomenon)</b> (written work applying the toolkit in an empirically engaged fashion)					

## 7. RESULTS

Based on the indirect assessment of these metrics outlined above, we believe that MAIS students in the 2021-2022 cohort achieved the desired ‘Developing’ level of competence for the first-semester MAIS620 core theory class, and “Intermediate” level of competence for the elective MAIS634 class with some students achieving Mastery.

Nora Fisher-Onar reviewed a total of 23 final papers (17 from Professor Kovacevic’s core theory class and 6 from Professor Giglioli’s seminar).

	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Needs improvement	Below expectations	Not Applicable
<b>PLO3a: Comprehension of global civil society and other forces shaping the international environment (e.g. economic, politics, security, environmental)</b> (written work engaging cogently with these themes in a theoretically informed fashion with empirical relevance)	8(MAIS620) 1(MAIS634)	7(MAIS620) 4(MAIS634)	2(MAIS620) 1(MAIS634)		
<b>PLO3b: Evidence of grasp of local/global nexus</b> (written work engaging cogently with the local/global nexus in an empirically engaged fashion)	9(MAIS620) 3(MAIS634)	7(MAIS620) 3(MAIS634)	1(MAIS620) 0(MAIS634)		
<b>PLO4a: Critical comprehension of categories of social difference and diversity</b> (written work engaging cogently with these themes in a conceptually informed fashion)	8(MAIS620) 1(MAIS634)	8(MAIS620) 4(MAIS634)	1(MAIS620) 1(MAIS634)		
<b>PLO4b: Critical application of conceptual framework regarding diversity to contemporary phenomenon</b> ((written work applying the toolkit in an empirically engaged fashion)	11(MAIS620) 3(MAIS634)	4(MAIS620) 3(MAIS634)	2(MAIS620) 0(MAIS634)		

The assignment for MAIS620 was an applied engagement of an outstanding problem in world politics and included a statement of the problem, situation of the problem in the relevant literature, and an applied assessment or case study, which many students chose to operationalize in first person voice. Given the expectation that work for the first-semester theory class would be at the “developing” stage, the work delivered was of a high quality, mostly “meeting” or “exceeding” expectations as shown in the below chart.

The assessment revealed that in MAIS620, an introductory theory class, 94% of the final papers either met (40%) or exceeded (54%) expectations in terms of critical theoretical/conceptual and empirical engagement of topics pertinent to global civil society, its structuring forces, as well as vis-à-vis how we conceptualize and actively seek to support diversity.

Student interest encompassed a wide range of relevant topics. These included but were not limited to: immigration, the environment, the conflict in Ukraine, indigeneity, national and postcolonial identities, consumerism/sustainability, and gender/sexuality (including its intersections with security; with Muslim majority cultural contexts; and with Chinese and Latin American economic contexts). These findings speak to MAIS's strong resonance with students who have social justice orientations and who are passionate about pursuing transformative change towards a more equitable world. On the basis of these final papers, it appears that the introductory theory class provided them with useful frameworks and theoretical/conceptual tools with which to explore these real-world commitments.

That being said, the final papers were mixed in terms of the sophistication of their engagement with theory and application of course concepts to empirical analyses. This is to be expected, especially in the context of the first semester theory course, and given the interdisciplinary nature of our program and international composition of our student cohort (which means that some students have a much higher level of prior engagement of theory than others, as well as significant disparity in command of theoretical idiom in the English-language). The results nevertheless indicate that students are developing a skillset which will equip them to develop and deliver a master-level capstone project by the end of our four-semester program.

The final papers for the refugee & migration class also reflected an overall thoughtful engagement of this complex and timely topic and its implications for global civil society, diversity and justice. Most of the students were second year/third semester masters students and, on balance, they delivered work commensurate with this level. The final assignment requirements as per the course syllabus were for students to submit a rigorously researched paper on a question of their choice relevant to refugee, migration or asylum. The paper could be academic or policy oriented in thrust. All but one of the students opted for the more applied approach. As a result, their work resonated less with the theoretical/conceptual criteria of PLO3a and PLO4a even as the papers were highly congruent with the empirical engagement dimensions of PLO3b and PLO4b. This resulted in 100% of papers meeting or exceeding expectation of "intermediate" mastery when it came to empirical fulfillment of PLOs3&4. Meanwhile, 67% of the papers met expectations when it came to the theoretical/conceptual dimension, while 17.5% were above expectations and 17.5% were below. This finding reflects the final assignment criteria—which offered a policy-oriented option—more than it reflects any shortcoming in the overall quality of the papers which were well-researched and reasonably well argued.