

International Studies Department 2016-2017 Assessment Report for the Master of Arts in International Studies

October 23, 2017

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: Christopher Loperena, Ph.D. Assistant Professor & MAIS Academic Director, cloperena@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, development, technology, international business, international media and communication, social advocacy, and the law.

3. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

The MAIS PLOs were drafted and adopted by the Faculty Advisory Board in the spring 2015 semester.

Upon completion of the graduate program in International Studies, students will be able to:

1. Understand the major shifts that have emerged in response to globalization from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, with a special emphasis on non-state actors.
2. Identify the key organizations, institutions, and global and regional norms and how these 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.
4. Demonstrate an ability to critically engage categories of cultural difference and diversity and evaluate their influence on contemporary phenomena.
5. Utilize mixed research methodologies, an interdisciplinary perspective, and community engagement to analyze key issues in international studies.

4. Curriculum Map

	PLO1	PLO2	PLO3	PLO4	PLO5
Themes, Theories	D	D	D	D	
History & Politics	I	I	I	I	
HR&IL		D	D	D	
Research Methods & Thesis Writing				D	D
Capstone (Thesis or Applied Project)					M
KEY: (I) Introductory (D) Developing (M) Mastery					

5. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR

For the 2016-2017 academic year we assessed only PLO 5. We selected this PLO because we were able to assess for all students in the program through the Research Methods & Thesis Writing class, and regardless of any future changes to the MAIS PLOs, this outcome will remain allowing us to begin collecting longitudinal data. Program Learning Outcome 5 states: *Students will be able to ... Utilize mixed research methodologies, an interdisciplinary perspective, and community engagement to analyze key issues in international studies.*

All students in the MAIS program take the Research Methods & Thesis Writing class in the spring semester. We assessed their acquisition of methodological skills in two different ways.

For *direct assessment*, we collected the final research proposal assignment to assess student understanding of the different components of PLO 5. The guidelines for the final assignment are attached in Appendix I.

For *indirect assessment*, the students were given a survey that was created by the professors for the course. They were asked to respond to a series of questions to assess their familiarity with mixed research methodologies, community engagement, research ethics, and the use of an interdisciplinary approach to research. The survey is available in Appendix II.

6. METHODS

As outlined in our Assessment Report dated July 1, 2016, we choose just one PLO for assessment in the Spring 2017 semester. PLO 5 states that, upon completion of the program, students should be able to: *“utilize mixed research methodologies, an interdisciplinary perspective, and community engagement to analyze key issues in international studies.”*

As indicated in our Curricular Map, we anticipate that MAIS students will have achieved a ‘Developing’ level of competence with the following skills upon completion of the Research Methods & Thesis Writing course:

- Identify a broad range of methods and accompanying theoretical paradigms in the social sciences;
- Know how to formulate a research question, operationalize the concepts that have been developed, conduct library research, evaluate secondary research sources, draft an annotated bibliography, write a literature review and ultimately craft a strong thesis;
- Understand the ethical and political dimensions of research, and demonstrate how to conduct community engaged research.

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 students conduct during their final semester in the program (and was not a part of assessment this year).

To assess student acquisition of the skills outlined in PLO5, we conducted both direct assessment and an indirect assessment. Each is described in more detail below.

Direct Assessment

The direct assessment was comprised of a review of the final research proposal submissions of the students.

The guidelines that were handed out to the students for this assignment are included in Appendix I. The assignment was created jointly by Professors Cantero, Dowd-Uribe and Gifford, who were the professors for the three sections of this course.

At the end of the semester, the students were asked to upload their final assignments to Canvas for review. Sample assignments were reviewed by Professor Christopher Loperena to measure the following:

- Does the proposal identify a topic pertinent to International Studies?
- Does the proposal draw on literature and ideas from at least two different fields, thereby meeting the 'interdisciplinary' requirement?
- Does the proposal either utilize or provide a justification for not utilizing mixed research methods?
- Does the proposal include a plan for community-engaged research, and, if so, does it adequately identify the ethical issues that might come into play?

Indirect Assessment

Given the extremely difficult nature of assessing interdisciplinary courses and work, we also decided to conduct indirect assessment through a survey that was handed out to the students in one section of Research Methods and Thesis Writing at the end of the semester. The survey is included in Appendix II.

The results of the survey were compiled by Professor Christopher Loperena and are included in the 'Results' section below.

8. RESULTS

Through the use of both the direct and indirect assessments described herein, we believe students are achieving a 'Developing' level of competence for PLO 5.

Direct Assessment Results

As the author of this report, Christopher Loperena reviewed a total of six sample final proposal assignments. In the future, once a definitive rubric is created, procedures will be established for the course professors and the graduate academic director to complete a more robust review of the assignments for the areas of competence outlined below.

As stated above, each of the 5 sample proposals were reviewed for discussion of the following:

- Does the proposal identify a topic pertinent to International Studies?
- Does the proposal draw on literature and ideas from at least two different fields, thereby meeting the ‘interdisciplinary’ requirement?
- Does the proposal either utilize or provide a justification for not utilizing mixed research methods?
- Does the proposal include a plan for community-engaged research, and, if so, does it adequately identify the ethical issues that might come into play?

In line with the assessment methods established by Dana Zartner last year, a simple yes/no system was utilized for each paper that was reviewed. The overall results are as follows:

	Yes	No	Unclear
Does the proposal identify a topic pertinent to International Studies?	6 (100%)		
Does the proposal draw on literature and ideas from at least two different fields, thereby meeting the ‘interdisciplinary’ requirement?	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	
Does the proposal either utilize or provide a justification for not utilizing mixed research methods?	4 (67%)		2 (33%)
Does the proposal include a plan for community-engaged research, and, if so, does it adequately identify the ethical issues that might come into play?	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	

Based on my assessment of the assignments, all of the proposals identified a topic pertinent to International Studies, and 83% demonstrated an interdisciplinary approach, while 33% included a plan for community engaged research. Finally, 67% used mixed research methodologies, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, and ranging from discourse analysis to ethnography and survey research. In sum, the final MA proposals for MAIS 613 show mixed methodologies and interdisciplinarity.

A brief discussion of each *measure and what they may be understood to mean follows:*

- (a) Identifying a topic pertinent to International Studies: This is defined as a topic that is of global importance, brings in multiple states or global actors, or has clearly outlined global implications.
- (b) Drawing on interdisciplinary literature: Students were considered to have done this if they clearly identified literature from different fields or sub-fields as being pertinent to their research. This could come

in the form of specific discussion of different approaches to an issue (i.e. sociological, political, economic, etc.) or through clear discussion of key authors who have different disciplinary backgrounds. We need to ensure all students understand how to adequately demonstrate evidence of interdisciplinary research moving forward. More concise guidelines can also be provided to the students in the future so they can identify the multiple disciplines themselves.

(c) Mixed-Methods: As mentioned above, many students clearly discussed mixed methodologies in their ‘Methods’ sections. It was very clear that their training in the course had provided them with the knowledge necessary to think about all the options of qualitative and quantitative research, and students selected a wide variety of methods.

(d) Community-engaged research: The final component of PLO5 was the most difficult to capture with this direct assessment. The first issue we will have to address for the future is what we mean by demonstrating understanding of ‘community-engaged research’. In the International Studies context this could take on many different aspects, and it was very hard to judge the proposals this time because this definition is unclear. Once we have the definition, then we can frame the assignment to better capture whether students are engaging this component of the PLO. This is also a component that may be better served through a different assignment.

Indirect Assessment

The indirect assessment was conducted through an end of course survey handed out in-class. The results below only include one of the three sections (12 students).

In general, the students rate their own comprehension of the different components of PLO 5 very highly, definitely meeting the ‘Developing’ phase we would hope to see for this PLO through the Research Methods & Thesis Writing class.

The results are as follows:

After this course, I feel adequately prepared to use multiple research methods of data collection for interdisciplinary research on key issues in International Studies.

Strongly agree 4 (33%)

Agree 7 (58%)

Neither agree nor disagree 1 (8%)

After this course, I feel adequately prepared to understand the role of community engagement in interdisciplinary research on key issues in International Studies.

Strongly agree 7 (58%)

Agree 4 (33%)

Neither agree nor disagree 1 (8%)

After this course, I feel adequately competent to assess the ethical conditions of my research.

Strongly agree 8 (67%)

Agree 4 (33%)

Neither agree nor disagree 0

After this course, I feel like I understand the interdisciplinary nature of International Studies.

Strongly agree 7 (58%)

Agree 5 (42%)

Neither agree nor disagree 0

After this course, I feel adequately prepared to understand the politics around how research is produced on key issues in International Studies.

Strongly agree 6 (50%)

Agree 6 (50%)

Neither agree nor disagree 0

As with the direct assessment, the indirect assessment questions can be refined as we move forward to both better reflect the PLO and the assignments given in the course. That said, the results are very positive, and in many ways support the results of the direct assessment. For example, understanding of mixed methods and interdisciplinary research is ranked very highly by the students in the indirect assessment, and this is reflected in the direct assessment.

9. CLOSING THE LOOP

As a result of the Program Review we completed during the 2016-2017 academic year, we have decided to draft a new curriculum for the graduate program, which, pending approval by the deans, will commence in fall 2018. As a result, we did not make changes to our assessment plan, other than provide some definitional clarification for both assignments and definitions in PLO 5 as described above.

We will have to revisit our PLOs accordingly and assessment strategy this spring as we continue to concretize the new MAIS curriculum.

Appendix I: Direct Assessment Assignment

Guidelines Final Proposal Rubric for MAIS 613 Research Methods & Thesis Writing

1. Introduction and Background to Topic/ Problem (~1-2 pages)

This overview should discuss the problem and research question, giving your reader insight to the general trajectory of your research. This should start broad and then focus more directly on the topic/problem. It should clearly state the research question. If using a hypothesis, this should be included here.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework (~5-7 pages)

This section draws from relevant bodies of literature to outline the major debates on the topic from both a practical and theoretical standpoint. Some theses will require a conceptual framework. If you will be drawing from a theoretical or conceptual framework please begin with this and segue into the literature on the topic. This section should demonstrate (1) a command of similar research relevant to your topic / question and (2) identify a gap / problem in the literature that will be filled by your research. Note that if part of your method involves discourse analysis here is where you will build what you will be analyzing discursively, too.

3. Methodology and Research Design (~2-3 pages)

This section will detail the design of the research project and the particular methods used to collect data. It will go in to great detail of how data will be collected, stored and analyzed. It will detail how the data set will be analyzed to answer your research question.

4. Limitations, Broader Impact and Significance (~1 page)

Here you will address the wider significance and importance of your study along with limitation of your scope and research. What is the ‘value-added.’ What will you not be able to answer given the constraints of your methods / time / other factors?

5. Works Cited (pages as necessary)

Format:

- 9-13 pages - Standard Proposal Length

- Times New Roman
- Double Spaced
- inch margins
- Chicago or APA citation style, consistent

Appendix II: Indirect Assessment Survey

MAIS 613

Research Methods and Thesis Writing

Name (optional):

1) After this course, I feel adequately prepared to use multiple research methods of data collection for interdisciplinary research on key issues in International Studies.

- a. strongly agree
- b. agree
- c. neither agree or disagree
- d. disagree
- e. strongly disagree

2) After this course, I feel adequately prepared to understand the role of community engagement in interdisciplinary research on key issues in International Studies?

- a. strongly agree
- b. agree
- c. neither agree or disagree
- d. disagree
- e. strongly disagree

3) After this course, I feel adequately competent to assess the ethical conditions of my research.

- a. strongly agree
- b. agree
- c. neither agree or disagree
- d. disagree
- e. strongly disagree

4) After this course, I feel like I understand the interdisciplinary nature of International Studies.

- a. strongly agree
- b. agree
- c. neither agree or disagree
- d. disagree
- e. strongly disagree

5) After this course, I feel adequately prepared to understand the politics around how research is produced on key issues in International Studies.

- a. strongly agree
- b. agree
- c. neither agree or disagree
- d. disagree
- e. strongly disagree

Current Curricular Map

	PLO1	PLO2	PLO3	PLO4	PLO5
Themes, Theories	D	D	D	D	
History & Politics	I	I	I	I	
HR&IL		D	D	D	
Research Methods & Thesis Writing				D	D
Capstone (Thesis or Applied Project)					M

MAIS PLOs:

Upon completion of the Master of Arts in International Studies program, students will be able to:

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.