**ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**IDENTIFYING INFORMATION**

### ASSESSMENT AREA: International Studies Major

**ACADEMIC YEAR:** 2009-10

**ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS:**   
Yi-Li Wu, Associate Professor of History & Chair, International Studies Program  
Midori Yoshii, Assistant Professor of International Studies

**Section 1: Learning goals**

The mission of the IS program is to provide an academically rigorous, yet flexible curricular structure for students who wish to pursue in-depth knowledge of global, transnational, and international issues. IS courses are selected from menus of courses offered by existing departments. Because of its interdisciplinary nature, the program services students with a variety of academic and career goals. We offer both a major and a minor.

The IS Major:  
The goal of the IS major is to train students to understand and think critically about international and global issues and to acquire the interpersonal and experiential skills needed to operate effectively in a globalized, multi-cultural, multi-national environment. At the same time, we aim to have students understand how their own experiences and experiences of their home country are enmeshed in international, transnational, and global networks.  
  
Through a combination of coursework, off-campus study, and competence in a second language, the IS major aims to help students attain the following specific learning outcomes:  
  
1)  Acquire a solid base of knowledge about a variety of important international, transnational, and global phenomena.  This knowledge base includes not just factual knowledge, but also knowledge about the analytical models and frameworks that people use to investigate and analyze these international, transnational, and global phenomena.

2) Increase students' level of cross-cultural competency.  "Cross-cultural competency" comprises three intertwined dynamics:  a) possessing a significant level of knowledge about a range of cultures, societies, and countries outside the student’s own culture/country, b) knowing how to analyze and understand cultural differences, and c) having the ability to objectively analyze one's own culture from the standpoint of an outside observer.

The IS Minor:  
Because the IS minor was created only in the Spring of 2008 and has only had a couple of students, it is not feasible to carry out a meaningful assessment program at this time.

**Section 2. Quantitative Measures and/or Qualitative Indicators**

**Growth of the IS program**The IS program and its learning goals have proven extremely attractive to students. The rapid growth of our program can be seen in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year of graduation | Number of majors |
| 2001-02 | 1 |
| 2002-03 | 3 |
| 2003-04 | 6 |
| **2004-05 Midori Yoshii starts at Albion** | **0** |
| 2005-06 (students who were juniors when MY started) | 0 |
| 2006-07 (sophomores when MY started) | 2 |
| 2007-08 (first-years when MY started) | 7 |
| 2008-09 | 7 |
| 2009-10 | 6 |
| 2010-11 (entering senior year in Fall 2010) | 12 |
| 2011-12 (entering junior year) | 12 |
| *2012-13 (entering sophomore year; many undeclared)* | *4* |

**Direct and indirect assessment**As described in the International Studies Assessment Plan, the IS program is in the process of implementing a comprehensive set of assessment tools for the IS major. These tools are intended to measure the student learning outcomes described below.

1) Student learning outcomes in required IS courses  
The required courses are the IS gateway course (INTN 130: Introduction to International Studies) and the IS capstone course (INTN 370: Building on Your International and Cross-cultural Experiences). In Fall 2009, we began piloting direct assessment tools in INTN 130 to measure learning in that course. This present report contains our assessment findings for INTN 130 for Fall 2009.

We will begin piloting similar assessment instruments in INTN 370 during the Fall 2010 semester. At present, therefore, we do not have direct assessment data for this course.

2) Student learning outcomes as a result of completing the entire IS major.   
Beginning in the Fall 2008 semester, we put into place a set of indirect assessment tools, consisting of student questionnaires administered in INTN 130 and INTN 370. Our intention is to compare the answers that students gave in these two classes, in order to measure longitudinal changes in students' self-perceptions and skills. At present, however, we do not have a complete set of data, simply because insufficient time has elapsed. Since we only started collecting this data in Fall 2008, we will not have a complete set of longitudinal data until 2011-2012, when the students who took INTN 130 as first-year students start to graduate.

Meanwhile, we have been using INTN 370 surveys to measure student satisfaction with the IS program. Owing to unforeseen circumstances, we were unable to collect data in Fall 2009 and collected only partial data in Spring 2010. However, the data that we do have is summarized later in this report.

**ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING IN INTN 130, FALL 2009**

**I) Learning goals for INTN 130: Introduction to International Studies**Based on the catalog description of the IS major and its courses, we can see that there are two main learning goals at the core of INTN 130: (1) students will acquire a solid grasp of the social, political, economic and historical forces at work in the world and (2) students will acquire the ability to identify and discuss concrete examples of the ways that “the world is increasingly interdependent and that many of the challenges to humanity are global in scope.” To measure student learning in these areas, we have developed the following assessment matrix:

A) Awareness of global scope  
The student is aware that the world is increasingly interdependent and that many of the challenges to humanity are global in scope.

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory  
4 3 2 1

B) Ability to identify and discuss specific examples  
The student is able to demonstrate his/her understanding of cross-cultural, cross-national or transnational phenomena with specific examples.

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory  
4 3 2 1

C) Quality of knowledge  
The student demonstrates depth and breadth of knowledge about the social, political, economic and historical forces at work in the world.

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory  
4 3 2 1

Criteria A and B of the matrix are assessed via in-class student questionnaires. The specific question that is used to judge their learning is “What international issues are important to you?” Criterion C of the matrix is assessed by comparing student answers on the mid-term and final examinations. The improvement in their answers over the course of the semester is used to evaluate and measure increases in the student’s depth and width of knowledge.

**ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING IN IS MAJOR AT LARGE**

**I) Learning goals of the IS major**

See section #1 of this report.

**II) Assessment instrument**The IS program administers a questionnaire to graduating seniors to assess their level of satisfaction with the program. The first part of the questionnaire consists of open-ended questions, asking students to describe their reasons for pursuing an IS major, its ability to help them meet personal and professional goals, and what they perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of the IS program. The second part of the questionnaire uses a numerical scoring matrix to elicit student feedback on how well they attained the specific learning goals of the IS program. Three of the eight graduating seniors this year responded, and a summary digest of their answers are given in section 3.

**Section 3: Summary of Evidence Collected**

Our assessment shows that INTN 130 is extremely effective in achieving its learning goals. Furthermore, students feel that they learn a great deal in IS, and thus there is a high level of student satisfaction with the IS program as a whole.

**I) Assessment results for INTN 130, Criteria A and B (questionnaires)**

**Criterion A: Global Scope**   
Students showed marked improvement. At the beginning of the semester, they scored an average of 1.4 (1 being unsatisfactory, 2, satisfactory, 3, good and 4 excellent) in awareness of global issues and their interconnectedness. At the end of the semester, the average had improved to a 2.8, an increase of 1.4 points. This reflected not just improvement at the individual level, but a real increase in knowledge in the class as a whole. For example, at the beginning of the semester, the majority of students (16 of 24) scored 1 (unsatisfactory) for criterion A, but by the end of the semester, only one student scored “unsatisfactory.” Conversely, at the beginning of the semester, only one student out of 24 scored a 3 (“good”) or better, but by the end of the semester 13 students (over half) scored a 3 or better.

**Criterion B: Specific examples of international issues:**Students showed marked improvement. At the beginning of the semester, they scored an average of 1.9 in their understanding of cross-cultural, cross-national or transnational phenomena. At the end of the semester, the number was 2.6 points, showing 0.7 point improvement. This reflected not just improvement at the individual level, but a real increase in knowledge in the class as a whole. For example, at the beginning of the semester, six students scored 1 (unsatisfactory) for criterion B, but by the end of the semester, only three did. Similarly, at the beginning of the semester, no student scored a 4, and only four students scored a 3. But by the end of the semester, six students scored a 4 and five students scored a 3. In other words, the number of high performing students doubled.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **A. Global Scope** | |  |  | **B.Specific Examples** | |  | |  | Before | After | Change |  | Before | After | Change | |  | 1 | 4 | 3 |  | 2 | 4 | 2 | |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 2 | 1 | -1 | |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 1 | 1 | 0 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 2 | 4 | 2 |  | 3 | 3 | 0 | |  | 2 | 4 | 2 |  | 3 | 3 | 0 | |  | 2 | 2 | 0 |  | 2 | 1 | -1 | |  | 1 | 4 | 3 |  | 2 | 4 | 2 | |  | 4 | 4 | 0 |  | 3 | 4 | 1 | |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 1 | 3 | 2 |  | 1 | 4 | 3 | |  | 2 | 4 | 2 |  | 3 | 4 | 1 | |  | 1 | 3 | 2 |  | 2 | 3 | 1 | |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 1 | 3 | 2 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 2 | 2 | 0 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 2 | 4 | 2 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 2 | 2 | 0 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 1 | 3 | 2 |  | 1 | 3 | 2 | |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 1 | 1 | 0 | |  | 1 | 3 | 2 |  | 1 | 3 | 2 | |  | 1 | 4 | 3 |  | 1 | 4 | 3 | |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 2 | 2 | 0 | |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 1 | 2 | 1 | | **Average** | **1.40** | **2.80** | **1.40** |  | **1.90** | **2.60** | **0.70** | |  |  |

**II) Assessment results for INTN 130, Criterion C (Examination scores)**

As a class, the students generally showed noticeable improvement from the midterm to the final. Their depth and width of knowledge as measured by their exam scores improved from an average 83.4 points out of 100 to 86.3 by the end of the semester with 2.9 points increase. When looked at individually, almost half the students (11 of 24) demonstrated improved performance on their final examinations. The improvement is particularly noteworthy given the existence of externalities that can inhibit student performance on final examinations.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **C. Knowledge** | |  |
| mid-term | final | difference |
| 82 | 81 | -1 |
| 74 | 63 | -11 |
| 83 | 82 | -1 |
| 84 | 93 | 9 |
| 89 | 83 | -6 |
| 88 | 87 | -1 |
| 62 | 86 | 24 |
| 85 | 86 | 1 |
| 90 | 88 | -2 |
| 95 | 97 | -2 |
| 83 | 71 | -12 |
| 94 | 93 | -1 |
| 83 | 91 | 8 |
| 80 | 96 | 16 |
| 85 | 83 | -2 |
| 84 | 94 | 10 |
| 95 | 98 | 3 |
| 91 | 84 | -7 |
| 72 | 81 | 9 |
| 52 | 71 | 19 |
| 86 | 90 | 4 |
| 85 | 97 | 12 |
| 93 | 82 | -11 |
| 86 | 93 | 7 |
| **83.375** | **86.25** | **2.875** |

**III) Assessment results for IS program (Senior Questionnaires)**

**A) General comments**

Respondents all expressed great satisfaction with their choice of major. Students were attracted by the interdisciplinary nature of the major and appreciated the required IS courses and the types of foundation courses offered. They also expressed appreciation for IS faculty. Suggestions for areas that needed improvement focused primarily on expanding the types of courses that could be used for the major. One student aptly noted, however, that recent contractions in the college budget would make such expansion difficult.

**B) Learning goals**

IS students also expressed high levels of satisfaction with the educational quality of the program, as shown by their ability to meet specific learning goals. Students were given a list of eight learning goals and asked how much they agreed that they had achieved these learning goals. They were asked to rate their experiences according to a scale of 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree). All but one response was a either a 1 or a 2. IS majors often enter the program with strong interests in language and/or other countries. Thus it is especially significant that all three strongly agreed that they had significantly increased their depth and breadth of knowledge as a result of the IS program. They also strongly agreed that they had increased their ability to interact effectively and comfortably with people from cultures different from their own. For a digest of student comments and their scores, see the appendix at the end of this report.

**SECTION 4.**

**CONCLUSIONS**

Fundamentally, the IS program is doing a very good to excellent job in providing our majors with a quality educational experience that endows them with global and cross-cultural competencies. The curricular and institutional structure that we have put into place has proven an effective way to maintain the flexibility needed to accommodate the varied interests of students, while also ensuring coherence and academic rigor. The program is very attractive to prospective and incoming students.

**IMPROVEMENTS** **AND CHALLENGES**

**Our main challenge is maintaining the diversity and availability of IS-related courses.** Because IS is an interdisciplinary program, the quality of its curriculum depends greatly on the quality of the college curriculum at large. Given the budget cuts at Albion College, our greatest challenge for the coming years will be to maintain a diverse menu of courses, especially “IS core courses”, that is large enough to meet our students’ needs. Over the past few years, for example, we have lost courses in Art History and African History. The recent loss of a German position will also weaken the diversity of our European curriculum. It also remains to be seen how the loss of adjunct positions will affect our curriculum.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Our main recommendation is to continue the development and refinement of assessment tools.** As mentioned above, we will be introducing direct assessment into INTN 370 starting in the Fall 2010 semester. Our immediate task for this summer and the coming year will therefore be to develop a practical tool that provides meaningful assessment data.

**APPENDIX: IS Senior Questionnaire Digest of comments, Spring 2010**

**(A) Part One: Narrative assessment:**

**1) Why did you decide to major in IS?**a) I decided to major in IS because I have always had a strong connection to the world via traveling. Other cultures, politics, religions, histories have always interested me. My international connection lies heavily with Russia, a major world player so I knew I could learn more about it via IS. Also, I really liked that there was a study abroad requirement. It’s not really a requirement to me, it’s more like an adventure really, and the fact that my trip abroad could count towards a degree while also gaining me extraordinary experience was really appealing.

b) Interest in International Relations, but from more of a cultural perspective; wanted to study abroad

c) I’ve always been interested in foreign countries and cultures

**2) Did you do an area studies track or a transnational track? Why and how did you pick the track you did?**a) I chose a Russian Area track. Since I was really young I’ve been fascinated with Russia, it’s culture, language, politics, but especially its history. Like I stated above, I wanted to be able to learn more about it via IS.

b) Area studies – Africa; Honestly, not quite sure! Originally aimed for a study abroad program based on potential grant funding, and African countries were on that list. Coupled with my coursework, discussed with Prof Wu about becoming an Africanist.

c) Area studies—Europe, because I wanted to study France and I was already a French major

**3) How does the IS major fit with your personal or professional goals?**a) Well, the ideal job for me is one that allows me to travel the world! I’m not sure exactly what I will do in the future, but I want to do something that involves world affairs, or more specifically Russian/European affairs. I am also and English with Creative Writing major and my truly ideal job would be to be an author of some sort—international experience can really only sharpen my writing and allow me to shed lights on world affairs and themes going on today that are important to all of us.

b) Personal: allowed me to study abroad for the entirety of my junior year; granted me a way to live in an area outside of France (my other major). Professional: (South) Africa became my “lab” for ethnographic research and my thesis; connected my other coursework and strengthened my understanding of working with and within other cultures

c) I would like to go into International Relations or diplomacy so IS gives me a great background of perspectives to start from.

**4) Thinking back to your first year of college, how much awareness did you have of international or global issues and their relevance to your life? How did you view your home country and its relation to the rest of the world?**a) I had a fair understanding of world affairs, I was an avid watcher of the news starting in my high school years. A few trips abroad before college also helped sharpen my interest in world affairs. At that point in my life I wasn’t quite so cynical about the US’s place in the world because George W. Bush was still in the midst of screwing everything up for us. I was very conscience of being an American during trips abroad before coming to Albion, but once I experienced world affairs here, I began to realize that we do affect the world in some negative ways.

b) Awareness strong (because of participation of HS Model UN); Relevance relatively strong (because of status as immigrant🡪 American citizen + French language skills); Upon returning, more critical view of the U.S.

c) I was aware of other countries but not the vast interconnectedness of global issues. I thought about the U.S. unilaterally and not as part of larger human affairs.

**5) Has your view of the world changed as a result of fulfilling the requirements of the IS major? Has your view of your home country changed? If so, how?**a) I started to answer this question above. The view of my homeland has changed because of talking about US relations in class and hearing other students’ stories about going abroad. But my own experience abroad, in Russia, changed my views the most. Many places in the world place a lot of blame on the US for their own misfortunes, and while yes, that is very true sometimes, we also need to work on changing our image here at home. Many countries really watched us at the 2008 Election and supported us in our decision to elect Obama. I think once health care reform gets going and our economy turns around we can prove to the world we are an able country and still relevant in the world, and as long as we maintain peaceful dialogue and actions, we can really improve our relations. While the Bush administration left me cynical and hopeless, seeing the 2008 Election abroad and seeing this country slowly (and hopefully) turning around, I’m far more hopeful than I was.

b) View of the world hasn’t “changed,” but has more so been enhanced because of the requirements. My entire Albion College degree (including IS) has permitted me the opportunity to study North America (US and Canada), Europe (France, alongside visit to Italy), Africa (IS- South Africa), and Asia (IS- Power/Culture in Asia-Pacific). While the majority of my area studies courses were from South Africa, one of my foundation and area studies courses were from Art History; definitely allowed me the opportunity to survey quite a bit of Africa without having formal “African” history courses available. View of home country: as noted above, much more critical; confirmed favor of other countries over the U.S., while still valuing and holding onto American identity and citizenship. The program itself has confirmed my identity as more of a global citizen, as opposed to strictly an American one

c) I have learned about many different countries as a result of my IS courses, places I had never learned about before. I have learned so much about the U.S. from a different perspective by being abroad. Also, I have learned intercultural communication through this major.

**6) What are the strengths of the IS major, in your opinion? Were there any courses or experiences that you found particularly valuable, and if so, what?**a) I really found Building on Your International Experience extremely valuable, specifically because of the 20-page paper students were required to write. I felt it was preparing me to think about far bigger ideas than I was used to. It was almost like writing a mini-thesis. Learning about other peoples’ experiences abroad was also interesting but really enlightening. The language requirement, while it was kind of a pest to me (thank you, Yi-Li for helping me achieve this one!!), still pushed me hard to balance both my coursework and outside studying of the language to meet the 2-year requirement. I will never be able to explain how my experience abroad affected me. But take my word for it, it was one of the most challenging, enlightening, and exciting experiences of my life. Finally, the IS department has some really great professors. They go above and beyond to help you achieve your goals. They are personable and friendly, and can become great friends too. Their classes are challenging but enjoyable, many classes at Albion can be grueling to go to, but I always went to my IS classes eagerly!

b) Strengths: foundation course requirement from different departments. Courses valuable: interesting to take capstone IS in same semester as IR (foundational), as this revealed more clearly to me differing approaches and some symbiotic elements; History of African Art (area studies): as no other African courses were available since my return to Albion, this course was especially important for completing the track; Power/Culture in Asia-Pacific

c) The interdisciplinary nature of the major has been very valuable and has allowed me to study the world in different ways.

**7) In your opinion, what are the areas in which the major could be improved?**a) I was very impressed with the IS department, I really wouldn’t change much. I’m hoping the department can expand a bit more, but at this point, the college is probably not equipped for such a thing. In all honesty, keep doing what you’re doing! Thank you so much for everything!

b) Make more required knowledge of a language an integral component of study abroad site. Offer an option/recognition of additional acquisition of second/third language in conjunction with a study abroad site. Work with students to find graduate schools that place heavy emphasis on IS. Attend IS conferences

c) Maybe making one more IS course instead of one of the foundation courses. It’s difficult sometimes to find the specific course with the specific professor.

**(B) Pedagogical goals**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strongly agree** |  | **Agree** |  | **Strongly disagree** |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I know about a significantly broader and larger number of international, transnational, and global issues than I did before. | XX | X |  |  |  |
| I significantly increased my ability to analyze, critique, and explain new international, transnational, and global issues that I had not formally studied in a classroom situation. | XX | X |  |  |  |
| I significantly increased my knowledge about a wide range of cultures, societies, and countries outside my home country. | X | XX |  |  |  |
| I learned how to be comfortable interacting with people who do not speak my native language. | XX | X |  |  |  |
| I learned strategies for increasing my knowledge of a foreign language. | XX | X |  |  |  |
| I learned strategies for interacting with people who do not share my cultural assumptions. | XXX |  |  |  |  |
| I increased my awareness of the differences and similarities between different cultures. | XXX |  |  |  |  |
| I conducted an independent research project that significantly deepened my understanding of international, transnational, or global issues. | XX |  |  | X |  |