

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): International Studies

Department: Political Science

Degree or Certificate Level: BA

College/School: Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): August/2023

Assessment Contact: Dr Nori Katagiri

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected?: 2022-2023

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated?: 2023

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization or subject to state/licensure requirements?: No

If yes, please share how this affects the program's assessment process (e.g., number of learning outcomes assessed, mandated exams or other assessment methods, schedule or timing of assessment, etc.): N/A

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please provide the complete list of the program's learning outcome statements and **bold** the SLOs assessed in this cycle.)

Graduates will be able to apply a variety of methodologies to answer empirical questions about international phenomena.

### 2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail, identify the course(s) in which they were collected, and if they are from program majors/graduates and/or other students. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

For the outcome, artifacts were collected in ISTD4961: International Studies Capstone (St Louis) and POLS4630: The European Union: Politics and Political Economy (Madrid). Instructors relied on the combination of essay questions, exam questions, research paper, and oral and visual presentation for assessing student performance. As before, students in ISTD4961 were all ISTD majors who were graduating in that year. This arrangement allowed them to maintain a relatively small-class discussion setting and gain instructor attention to their research works that marinated all their works in *other* required courses before their senior years. None of these courses was offered online or at any other off-campus location.

### 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report document (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

Instructors filled in rubrics for each student, based on their evaluation of research paper assignments and face to face conversations with students, classroom observations, and presentations. Results were summarized through a Qualtrics survey. Rubrics are appended to the end of this report.

#### 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

Summary results for the question are as follows. Note that the survey in Madrid did not produce any numerical assessment.

| Student is able to:  | Benchmark | Introductory | Developed    | Achieved                      | Exemplary    | Does not apply |
|--|-----------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Identify a variety of methodologies  |           |              | 3 (ISTD4961) | 2 (ISTD4961)<br>24 (POLS4630) | 5 (ISTD4961) |                |
| Compare the effectiveness of various methodologies to answer an empirical question |           |              | 3 (ISTD4961) | 2 (ISTD4961)<br>24 (POLS4630) | 5 (ISTD4961) |                |
| Infer accurate conclusions from empirical evidence                                 |           |              | 3 (ISTD4961) | 2 (ISTD4961)<br>24 (POLS4630) | 5 (ISTD4961) |                |
| Use an appropriate methodology to answer an empirical question                     |           |              | 3 (ISTD4961) | 2 (ISTD4961)<br>24 (POLS4630) | 5 (ISTD4961) |                |

##### What students could do well:

- Students came to class with a good amount of knowledge they had already gained about world events.
- Students came to class with familiarity with world history and politics of some regions of the world.
- They were good writers generally.
- Students were able to follow up from beginning to end a research project.

##### Where students struggled:

- Students had difficulties identifying how theories can be used to formulate research questions and hypotheses.

##### What helped students make progress:

- An instructor reports that they talked to all students individually about their research questions and research methods they planned to use. Face-to-face discussion made students feel visibly comfortable about their projects.
- Another instructor notes that living and studying abroad was central to student success in developing a sensibility towards cultural nuance.

#### 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you? Address both a) learning gaps and possible curricular or pedagogical remedies, and b) strengths of curriculum and pedagogy.

We think it important for us to be aware of the risk of assessing and drawing conclusions from a fairly small number of students (10 in ISTD4961 and 24 in POLS4930) at the time of the pandemic when some of them were affected by Covid-related disruptions to the classroom and their lives, including class attendance and

timely submission of assignments. Some faculty members report on a perceived rise in the number of students suffering mental health issues, which affected their class attendance.

In both classes, students seemed to have done generally well in understanding some of the most important global issues we face. Students also succeeded in keeping their minds open to various methodological traditions, comparing and choosing right methodological tools to understand and answer empirical questions they investigated in their courses. On the other hand, students seemed to have struggled in generating research questions to explore and hypotheses to measure and test.

To overcome these challenges, we think that it is important for students to have opportunities to directly engage faculty instructors to discuss their research questions early in the semester to ensure that they be made aware of course expectations, conduct research in timely manner, and write papers well. We also think it helpful for students to gain a certain level of foreign experiences through study abroad opportunities and gain exposure to various cultures.

## 6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

### A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss the results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

Program faculty met on August 18, 2023 in person to discuss these results and findings. In particular, the faculty discussed:

- Methods for assessing student performance, rubric outcomes, measurement, rubric questions, and focus areas
- Strategies to overcome the challenges that students experienced, described above.
- Courses subject to future assessments
- Options for student and social events and collaboration with career services

### B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

In 2023-2024, we will have four courses subject to assessment. This is consistent with our plan to assess 4,000-level courses, based on the discussion and assessment we conducted in the 2022-2023 cycle.

1. POLS4550: Politics of Economic Development (fall 2023)
2. ISTD4800: Capstone: Seminar in International Studies (fall 2023)
3. POLS4500: Russian Political Culture (spring 2024)
4. POLS4692: Theories of World Politics (spring 2024)

In this academic year, we are teaching ISTD4800 Capstone: Seminar in International Studies in the fall semester, rather than in the spring semester. This is based on faculty preference for ensuring that students graduating a semester early (i.e., in the fall semester) would be able to complete the course. Additional benefits of this arrangement include that interested (and remaining) students would be able to use research

papers that they write in this course as a basis for presenting them at a senior research symposium that is held usually in the spring semester.

In the seminar, instructors will continue to deliver course content in ways consistent with the university mission and policy. In addition, they will conduct close supervision of student work. This is based upon one of this year's assessment findings that, through close mentorship and discussion on research design, data/evidence collection, research conduct, and writing processes, instructors were able to support student efforts to overcome challenges they experienced in research design and conduct phases. It also ensures that instructors be made aware early on of the kind of research topics that students are interested in writing about and make any necessary corrections before it gets too late.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

N/A

## 7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

### A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years **as a result of previous assessment data**?

There are two changes that our program has implemented in recent years as a result of previous assessments. The first change is that this year, we assessed ISTD 4961 International Studies capstone and a 4,000-level ISTD seminar. This is because program faculty members agreed last year that previous assessment results were focused on introductory classes and cultural anthropology and the results produced suggestions for approaches in individual classes. Program faculty also agreed that assessing dedicated International Studies seminars would have the advantage of providing opportunities for more direct engagement with the multi-disciplinary nature of the program and giving majors a greater chance to interact with each other.

The other change we have made is, as reported in this space in the 2020-2021 assessment, not to cross-list the International Studies capstone with Political Science. This change allowed 10 graduating ISTD majors this year to enroll in this course and receive close instructor attention and supervision on their works.

### B. How has the change/have these changes identified in 7A been assessed?

The change had a positive effect of allowing more International Studies students than otherwise to enroll in the seminar/capstone to receive an advanced level training to appreciate the multidisciplinary nature of the field in their senior year. It also allowed more students than before to conduct research in a more focused setting on a topic of their choosing within the curricular expectations. As Question 4 above demonstrates, a high percentage of students in both courses did well, mostly attaining "achieved" and "exemplary" benchmarks.

Indeed, the focus on the upper level seminar for assessment is consistent with our desire to more accurately assess student educational objectives while giving them opportunities to learn some of the most important topics of international studies. Since 2020 when instructors began to teach the capstone seminar, we have kept the central focus of the project unchanged – interdisciplinary across courses that included anthropology, foreign languages, international economics, international politics, and world regions and political, economic, social, and cultural topics. Program faculty believe that we are able to maintain the focus this academic year and that the use of 4,000-level courses, including the seminar, will continue to allow us to better reflect the overall purpose of the program and assess program success more concretely.

**C. What were the findings of the assessment?**

The findings of the previous assessment were that students did generally well in understanding some of the most important global issues we face while aware of the need to pay attention to the importance of contributing to the creation of a just and peaceful society. Students also succeeded in keeping their minds open to various cultural features of the international community, in appreciation of the presence of divergent and competing interests across the globe. Instructors also noticed that their approaches to group discussion, social media, classroom simulations, and other forms of educational creativity had a positive effect on student learning.

We also noted that some students struggled to accept the presence of new ideas and opinions. Some of these challenges were effectively addressed by instructors who adopted such pedagogical tactics as class discussions and ethnographic works to help students obtain a broader grasp of the fields covered in the courses. Instructors also used reading assignments as a way to allow students to learn about economic, social, and ethical aspects of global health issues and conduct regional comparison. In the independent research assignment, students received instruction about how to choose a topic related to global health issues, conduct literature review to set the scope of research paper, carry out research itself, and present findings.

What the past year's assessment indicated was that there was a challenge of using results in introductory-level courses as a means of assessing student learning in International Studies. At this level, low student ratio to enrollment made it hard for us to put results to use effectively for the assessment purpose. This in fact reinforced the need for our proposal last year to focus on 4,000-level courses in this year's assessment cycle.

This year, we consider the choice of assessing 4,000-level seminars, rather than assessing POLS1600 and a cultural anthropology course, effective for the reasons described above. Additional benefits of this arrangement include that instructors were able to know how much students have learned about international studies by taking required courses before they take the ISTD4800 seminar.

**D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?**

We plan to use this reflection of thoughts to inform us of the way we teach the seminar/capstone and other 4,000-level courses. We will also ask instructors to submit a summary of their findings from the rubrics. We will revise the rubrics as needed.

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted/appended into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document. Thank you.**

**Outcome 3: Students will be able to apply a variety of methodologies to answer empirical questions about international phenomena.**

| <b>Student is able to:</b>   | <b>Benchmark</b>   | <b>Introductory</b>   | <b>Developed</b>   | <b>Achieved</b>   | <b>Exemplary</b>  | <b>Does not apply to this class</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Identify a variety of methodologies</i>   | Name at least two methodologies  | Identify and describe at least two methodologies  | Compare differences among methodologies  | Assess significant differences among methodologies  | Evaluate subtle differences among methodologies   | (Not relevant to this course)       |
| <i>Assess the effectiveness of a given methodology to answer an empirical question</i> | Describe a methodological approach that might answer a specific question | Describe criteria for evaluating the efficacy of a methodological approach                    | Evaluate whether a methodological approach would enable the researcher to answer a specific question | Assess benefits and limits to a methodological approach for answering a specific question | Evaluate the efficacy of various methodological approaches                                | (Not relevant to this course)       |
| <i>Infer accurate conclusions from empirical evidence</i>                              | Identify empirical evidence  | Support a conclusion with evidence  | Evaluate whether evidence supports a particular conclusion   | Draw accurate inferences from empirical evidence  | Evaluate what can and what cannot be concluded from empirical evidence                    | (Not relevant to this course)       |
| <i>Use an appropriate methodology to answer an empirical question</i>                  | Identify the evidence that would answer an empirical question            | Describe a methodology that would collect the evidence needed to answer an empirical question | Apply a methodology and draw conclusions   | Apply an appropriate methodology and draw accurate inferences                             | Evaluate the effectiveness of the applied methodology for answering an empirical question | (Not relevant to this course)       |