

VASSAR COLLEGE

MULTIDICISCIPLINARY PROGRAM IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

2008-2009

This packet is a supplement to the statement of requirements in the Vassar College Catalogue for a concentration in International Studies. It contains guidelines for those students planning to major in International Studies.

CONCENTRATION AND DISTRIBUTION

All students have a great deal of control over their course programs in International Studies, but their programs should be designed to achieve concentrated familiarity with a particular geographic area or areas, a relevant foreign language, and at least two academic disciplines. In addition, you must achieve broad acquaintance with the several areas and disciplines relevant to global questions.

To achieve the goal of concentrated familiarity, you must elect sufficient work to complete advanced courses (300 level) in at least two academic disciplines. It is probable that most students will elect to achieve this goal in at least one of the central disciplines of international studies ^ economics, history, geography or political science ^ but particular interests of some students may suggest greater emphasis in anthropology, sociology, literature, science, or other fields.

Breadth of knowledge means that you must have some exposure to the various disciplines which contribute to international studies. Every student concentrating in international studies will have completed work relevant to international issues at the intermediate (200) level courses in three of the following departments: economics, history, geography, and political science. We further expect that every student concentrating in International Studies will do some course work involving treatment of the less developed world by taking courses focusing on Asia, Africa, and/or Latin America. Also you must complete work in quantitative analysis, ethics and American studies, and should plan for a structured foreign area educational experience. See the Catalogue for details. The emphasis in preparing your proposal should be on internal consistency of the program.

PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION

If you are planning to major in International Studies, you should begin by discussing those plans with the director of the program or any member of the steering committee. This discussion will be more useful if you submit a written proposal, a coursework worksheet (green sheet) and a concentration card (pink card) to be read by the director or steering committee member as background for the discussion. The written statement--not more than five pages long--should discuss your motivation and expectations for a concentration in International Studies, your background and relevant experience, and your plans beyond college to the extent that they are developed. It should also discuss the focus and direction of your specific curricular plans and indicate the relationship between those plans and your preliminary thoughts about your senior thesis. Special attention should be given to providing full explanations of any unusual aspects of your proposal program, and any features, which involve deviation from the requirements and recommendations. (Note that deviations from the requirements are almost never allowed and your circumstances must be very exceptional. Deviations from the recommendations are occasionally permitted but only when they are fully

addressed in the proposal and the reasons are seen as compelling by the panel of advisors.)

The concentration card (pink card) should be completed in pencil to show tentative outline of your planned academic program. Following discussion(s) with the Director or committee member, you will need to submit a revised statement and outline of proposed academic program together with any necessary explanations for approval by the program. The panel of advisors will evaluate your program as described on the cards and in the essay and let you know of their findings in writing. You may need to revise your program.

Once approved your proposal constitutes a contract with the program and you are expected to fulfill the requirements as far as possible to the letter. Small changes may be approved by the Director in consultation with your advisor, but larger changes must be approved once more by the panel of advisors.

REQUIREMENTS

1. **CORE COURSES IN THE PROGRAM:** The International Studies Program offers introductory and capstone core courses ^ International Studies 106, Introduction to the International Studies 305, the Senior Seminar. All majors must complete either International Studies 106 and International Studies 305. Both are program requirements. International Studies 106 should be taken in the second semester of either the freshman or sophomore year. It is strongly recommended that students consider taking Political Science 160, International Politics and Geography 102, Global Geography as these courses are credited to the major.

2. **LANGUAGE COMPETENCY:** Students are expected to be proficient at an advanced level in at least one language other than English. The language or languages studied should be pertinent to the other course work in the major. Proficiency means third-year college language ability. This proficiency must be established by an examination given by one of Vassar's language departments or by successful completion of an appropriately college-level course.

Introductory language work will normally not be counted toward the minimum number of units required for the major. Exceptions may be made by the steering committee on a case by case basis for certain languages not normally taught at the high school level.

Study of more than one foreign language is recommended for persons planning a career in international affairs.

3. **300-LEVEL WORK.** You must complete 300 level work in two disciplines as well as the IS Senior Seminar and writing your thesis. This issue is addressed in the discussion of concentration above, but it is worth re-emphasizing that the 300 level is your choice,

should conform to your interests, should lead towards your thesis work and should show integration and coherence. (Note 300-level work may be taken in the language departments but to satisfy this requirement should be in the study of literature, life or culture rather than language alone.)

4. INTERMEDIATE LEVEL WORK IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. You must complete 200 level work in at least three of the four listed social science disciplines. One MUST be economics; this is because economics is required as an entry condition at almost all of the quality programs in international studies and international relations.

5. DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN LIFE. Although we are within the United States the US is part of the world we study and this requirement is to keep in mind the problem and inequality we face at home as a backdrop to the issues we face abroad.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Take these recommendations seriously. We look to see all of them in a program and if you wish to be excepted from one you must address it head on in your proposal and make a compelling case.

1. STUDY OF THE THIRD WORLD. Even if your focus is Europe you should take a course that addresses societies in Latin America, Asia or Africa. This may be met in a wide number of departments and you must state in your proposal how the course that you have taken meets the goal of this recommendation.

2. RESEARCH METHODS. You are to write a thesis and this involves making a clear statement and marshaling evidence to support or refute it. These courses are designed to help you define a research methodology. Take them in your sophomore year if possible. They may not be available when you are JYA and it is not very useful to take such a course when you are already writing the thesis.

3. ETHICS. We feel that it is important that you develop an understanding of the ethical issues that underlie the global economic and political system. To this end you should take a course in ethics in the Philosophy Department.

4. You should live or study outside of the United States in a structured experience. Normally this will be a JYA program but it may be satisfied by attending High School abroad, or by an approved summer experience.

FINALLY:

WRITE CLEARLY, GRAMMATICALLY AND ADDRESS ALL OF THE REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR

**COURSE SELECTIONS, LANGUAGE SKILLS, FOREIGN AREA EXPERIENCE
AND THESIS FIT TOGETHER AND FORM A COHERENT WHOLE.**

MAJOR ADVISING

After your proposal has been accepted you will be assigned (after consultation) an advisor you will be best fitted to supervise your academic progress in the department. Normally that person will come from one of your two departments of concentration. He/she must be met with before you sign up for courses for the next semester. You must discuss any program changes with that advisor and have them subsequently approved by the Director.