

# ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2010

## B.A. IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

### **I. Program's Mission**

The Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs (IA) is an interdisciplinary program, housed in the Department of Political Science and drawing upon the fields of Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, and Political Science in order to best equip our students to excel in an increasingly globalized world following graduation. To this end, the IA Program also places an emphasis on the study of foreign language, requiring 21 credit hours of a single language with the ultimate goal of student fluency upon graduation.

The IA Program addresses the Marshall University goals of:

- Preparing [students] for responsible participation as members of local, regional, national, and international communities.
- Cultivating...those qualities as needed by an educated citizenry to meet the challenges of societal living.

The IA Program is currently home to 51 majors and 16 minors.

### **II. Student Learning Outcomes, Assessment Measures**

Upon completion of various courses within the major, students should be able to...

- Define/critique the process of globalization and identify emerging challenges of a global nature.
- Compare and contrast political, economic, and cultural institutions across states, nations, peoples, ethnic groups, and other social groupings.
- Apply knowledge of political, economic, and cultural institutions across state borders to identify and predict emerging international trends.
- Demonstrate proper social scientific research skills, generating research questions and testing hypotheses.
- Describe how historical, economic, political, social, and spatial relationships develop, persist, and change.

Assessment measures, benchmarks, and timetables for each of these learning objectives are discussed on the following pages.

### ***Student Learning Objective 1***

*Define/critique the process of globalization and identify emerging challenges of a global nature.*

**Measure:** Essay question administered in PSC 209 (Fundamentals of International Relations) addressing globalization and emerging global trends and challenges.

**Benchmarks:**

- 1/4 Student fails to demonstrate an understanding of globalization
- 2/4 Student shows some understanding of globalization, but fails to offer substantive critiques or identify challenges
- 3/4 Student demonstrates an understanding of globalization, critique is underdeveloped or superficial
- 4/4 Student demonstrates an understanding of globalization and effectively assesses both its positive and negative impacts.

**Timetable:** Administered Fall 2009.

### ***Student Learning Objective 2***

*Compare political, economic, and cultural institutions across states, nations, peoples, ethnic groups, and other social groupings.*

**Measure:** Paper assigned in PSC 410 (Post-Soviet Politics) requiring students to compare political, economic, or cultural institutions in two or more post-Soviet states.

**Benchmarks:**

- 1/4 Student fails to demonstrate the ability to apply the comparative method.
- 2/4 Student shows some understanding of the comparative method, but points of comparison are superficial or contain factual errors.
- 3/4 Student demonstrates a solid understanding of the comparative method, identifying substantive similarities and differences between cases.
- 4/4 Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the comparative method and offers compelling explanations for differences or similarities observed

**Timetable:** Administered Fall 2010.

### ***Student Learning Objective 3***

*Apply knowledge of political, economic, and cultural institutions across state borders to identify and predict emerging international trends.*

**Measures:** 1) Essay question administered in PSC 405 (International Organization) concerning the development of international institutions and how they impact global politics. 2) Essay assigned in PSC 406 (International Politics) in which students choose an aspect of modern American popular culture and discuss how it reflects America's place in the world.

**Benchmarks:**

- 1/4 Student fails to demonstrate a significant knowledge of international institutions.
- 2/4 Student demonstrates awareness/understanding of international institutions, but fails to comprehend their significance to international politics.
- 3/4 Student demonstrates a thorough understanding of international institutions, and offers solid analysis of their impact on international politics.
- 4/4 Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of international institutions, their origins, their significance, and their shortcomings.

**Timetable:** Administered Fall 2009, Spring 2010.

### ***Student Learning Objective 4***

*Demonstrate proper social scientific research skills, generating research questions and testing hypotheses.*

**Measure:** Completion of an original research paper in PSC 406 (International Politics), drawing upon proper social scientific research skills.

**Benchmarks:**

- 1/4 Student's research is unoriginal, offers little or no insight, and contains factual errors.
- 2/4 Student's research offers some insight into the phenomena under consideration, but fails to properly demonstrate social scientific methodology in its execution.
- 3/4 Student's research offers valuable insights into the phenomena under consideration and demonstrates a basic understanding of social scientific methods.
- 4/4 Student's research is original, creative, and offers valuable insight into the phenomena under consideration—all while expertly applying social scientific research methods.

**Timetable:** Administered Fall 2011.

### ***Student Learning Objective 5***

*Describe how historical, economic, political, social, and spatial relationships develop, persist, and change.*

**Measure:** Essay question administered in PSC 423 (American Foreign Policy) concerning the evolution of American Foreign Policy with regards to various regions of the world.

#### **Benchmarks:**

- 1/4 Student demonstrates little or no knowledge of the evolution of US Foreign Policy
- 2/4 Student demonstrates some understanding of US Foreign Policy, but fails to place it in a relevant historical context.
- 3/4 Student demonstrates a solid knowledge of the evolution of US Foreign Policy, identifying key historical junctures in its development.
- 4/4 Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the evolution of US Foreign Policy, key historical junctures, and effectively critiques these developments.

Timetable: Administered Fall 2011.

### **III. Assessment Activities**

Two activities were planned for 2010: assessing Student Learning Objectives 2 and 3.

#### **Learning Objective 2 (Assessment Activities)**

**Measure:** For Learning Objective 2 (“Compare & contrast political, economic, and cultural institutions across states, nations, peoples, ethnic groups, and other social groupings”), students in PSC 410, Post-Soviet Politics will complete a research paper that compares a political, social, or economic phenomenon of their choice across two or more post-Soviet states

#### **Benchmarks:**

- 1/4 Student fails to demonstrate the ability to apply the comparative method.
- 2/4 Student shows some understanding of the comparative method, but points of comparison are superficial or contain factual errors.
- 3/4 Student demonstrates a solid understanding of the comparative method, identifying substantive similarities and differences between cases.
- 4/4 Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the comparative method and offers compelling explanations for differences or similarities observed

**Results:** Since Learning Objective 2 will not be assessed until the term papers are collected (December 2) and graded, results are forthcoming and will be submitted to the Assessment Committee as soon as they are available.

### **Learning Objective 3 (Assessment Activities)**

**Measure:** For Learning Objective 3 (“Apply knowledge of political, economic, and cultural institutions across state borders to identify and predict emerging international trends”), students in PSC 406, International Politics, wrote an essay in which they chose an aspect of modern American popular culture (a song, novel, movie, television show, fashion trend, celebrity, etc.) and wrote a short paper discussing how it reflects—either positively or negatively—American values or America’s place in the world.

#### **Benchmarks:**

- 1/4 Student fails to demonstrate a significant knowledge of international institutions.
- 2/4 Student demonstrates awareness/understanding of international institutions, but fails to comprehend their significance to international politics.
- 3/4 Student demonstrates a thorough understanding of international institutions, and offers solid analysis of their impact on international politics.
- 4/4 Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of international institutions, their origins, their significance, and their shortcomings.

**Results:** The mean score on the essay was a 3.64 out of 4.

**Analysis/Planned Action:** The high mean score again suggests that most students demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of cultural institutions and how they shape global politics. Out of 26 total responses, nearly half (12 students) received a score of 4 points on the essay. These students not only identified the impact of American culture on international politics, but also delved into the broader implications of these trends. In terms of planned action, I am overall quite pleased with the current results. That being said, in future semesters, I would also like to assess students’ knowledge of political and economic institutions alongside cultural forces.

### **IV. Overview of Changes Implemented Based on Planned Action in Last Year’s Report**

I noted the following with regards to Learning Objective 1 in last year’s report: “While many students offered a fully-developed critique that assessed both the positive and negative aspects of globalization, there is some room for improvement on this front.” To this end, I have added additional readings and classroom discussion time emphasizing both sides of the globalization debate.

### **V. Changes Implemented Based on Assessment Day Activities**

For Assessment Day 2010, the International Affairs program coordinated with the Department of Political Science to hold a town hall meeting for our majors and allow them to give feedback on the program. Unfortunately, poor turnout by International Affairs students resulted in an activity that failed to yield any useable data. In turn, it is a top priority for IA in terms of assessment to develop a more effective set of Assessment Day Activities for 2011.

## **VI. Assistance Needed**

International Affairs does not currently require any assistance from the Office of Assessment, but feedback on the current assessment plan is always appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason J. Morrissette, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, Director of International Affairs  
Department of Political Science  
739 Smith Hall

Phone: 696-2760  
Email: [morrissette@marshall.edu](mailto:morrissette@marshall.edu)

# ADDENDUM TO ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2010

## B.A. IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The following is an addendum to the 2010 Assessment Report submitted for the International Affairs program. Since an assessment measure was administered after the December 1, 2010 deadline, the data below were unavailable when the initial report was submitted.

### Learning Objective 2 (Assessment Activities)

**Measure:** For Learning Objective 2 (“Compare & contrast political, economic, and cultural institutions across states, nations, peoples, ethnic groups, and other social groupings”), students in PSC 410, Post-Soviet Politics will complete a research paper that compares a political, social, or economic phenomenon of their choice across two or more post-Soviet states

#### Benchmarks:

- 1/4 Student fails to demonstrate the ability to apply the comparative method.
- 2/4 Student shows some understanding of the comparative method, but points of comparison are superficial or contain factual errors.
- 3/4 Student demonstrates a solid understanding of the comparative method, identifying substantive similarities and differences between cases.
- 4/4 Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the comparative method and offers compelling explanations for differences or similarities observed

**Results:** The mean score on the essay was a 3.39 out of 4 (N=32).

**Analysis/Planned Action:** The relatively high mean indicates that most students demonstrated a firm grasp of the comparative method, successfully identifying both similarities and differences between post-Soviet states. That being said, some students had difficulty framing a meaningful comparison; their topics were simply too broad, too vague, or too obvious. Furthermore, many failed to advance a persuasive explanation for the differences or similarities they observed.

In terms of planned action, the IA program will make an effort in future semesters to spend more time introducing the fundamentals of comparative politics and the comparative method in PSC 207 (Comparative Politics), as well as emphasizing the importance of *meaningful* comparison. To this end, additional readings on these topics may be incorporated into the course. From there, we will seek to reinforce these concepts more consistently in exams and written work in our upper-level comparative courses (e.g. Post-Soviet Politics, Asian Politics, Western Democratic Politics, Middle Eastern Politics, Latin American Politics).