

ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2011

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.

As of December 2011, the IA Program is currently home to 44 majors and 15 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, Fall 2011.

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 Spring 2012.

III. Assessment Activities

Three assessment activities were conducted in 2011: assessing Student Learning Objective 1, assessing Student Learning Objective 4, and conducting an online Assessment Day survey of IA majors.

Learning Objective 1 (Assessment Activity)

Measure: For Learning Objective 1 (“Define/critique the process of globalization and identify emerging challenges of a global nature”), students in PSC 209, Fundamentals of International Relations, completed a paper that required them to identify a contemporary global issue, discuss its impact at multiple levels of analysis, and assess both the strengths and weaknesses of efforts to address the issue under consideration.

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

Results: The mean score on the paper was a 3.0 out of 4.

Analysis/Planned Action: The relatively high mean score again suggests that most students demonstrated what I would consider a satisfactory understanding of the challenges posed by globalization. Nearly half of the students (22 out of 45) received a score of 4 on the paper. These students not only successfully identified the impact of globalization, but also delved into the broader implications of these trends—specifically, the difficulties of addressing global issues in an international system based around the principle of state sovereignty.

In terms of planned action, I am relatively content with the assessment results—especially in a class that includes a large number of freshmen. That said, in future semesters, I plan to also assess this learning objective at the 400-level (most likely in PSC 405 or PSC 406) in order to gauge reinforcement and mastery. I anticipate a higher mean score as our students move through the major, and subsequent classes continue to address these concepts along the way.

Learning Objective 4 (Assessment Activity)

Measure: For Learning Objective 4 (“Demonstrate proper social scientific research skills, generating research questions and testing hypotheses”), students in PSC 429, Politics of Conflict and Revolutions, wrote a term paper in which they chose either an interstate or intrastate conflict and tested a hypothesis concerning the origins of that conflict.

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

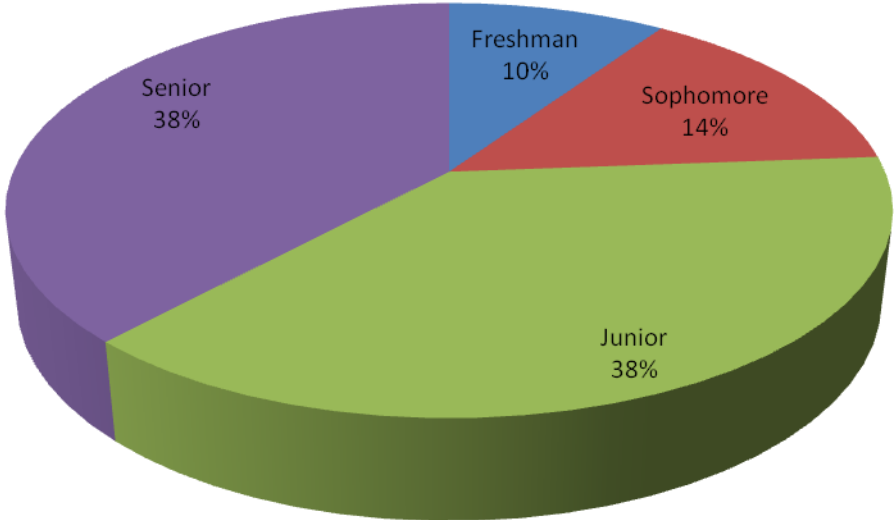
Results: The mean score on the essay was a 3.20 out of 4.

Analysis/Planned Action: The relatively high mean score indicates that most students successfully framed and tested their hypotheses and demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of social scientific methods. Out of 29 total responses, 13 students received a score of 4 points on the paper. These students not only framed interesting research questions, but also demonstrated exceptional skills in testing their hypotheses. That said, the learning objective was assessed in a 400-level course—at which point I would argue that more students should demonstrate mastery of these important skills.

In terms of planned action, I plan to devote more class time to reinforcing proper social scientific research skills alongside “substantive” course content—not just in PSC 429, but throughout IA courses at all levels. In turn, I hope to see improvement in future semesters.

International Affairs Assessment Survey Results, 2011 (N=21)

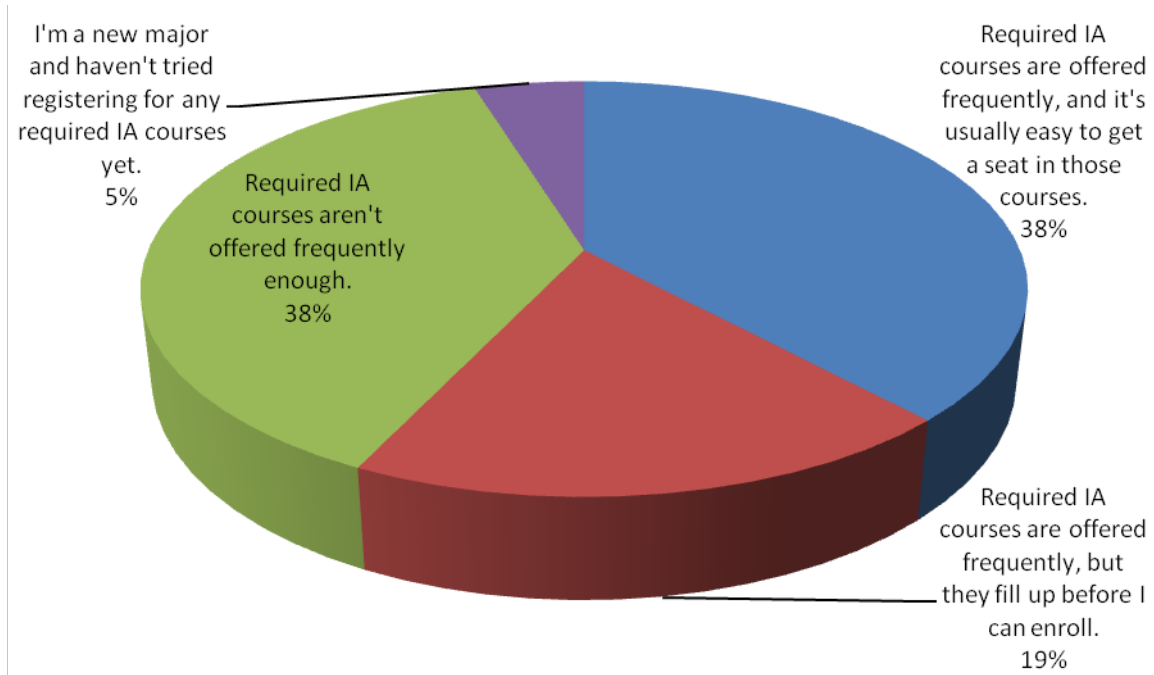
1. As of Spring 2011, I am a...



2. Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the International Affairs major?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
IA classes have helped me develop my critical thinking skills.	38.1%	<u>52.4%</u>	4.8%	4.8%	0%
IA classes have helped me develop my writing skills.	<u>52.4%</u>	28.6%	14.3%	4.8%	0%
IA classes have helped me develop my research skills.	33.3%	<u>42.9%</u>	14.3%	9.5%	0%
IA classes have helped prepare me for my future career.	23.8%	<u>42.9%</u>	23.8%	9.5%	0%
Academic advising in IA is helpful for planning classes, etc.	<u>42.9%</u>	38.1%	9.5%	4.8%	4.8%

3. Which of the following statements most closely reflects your personal experience with scheduling required International Affairs (IA) courses?



4. What do you feel is the greatest strength of the International Affairs major?

Knowledge of how the leaders of nations think and interact with each other. The "why" of policy.

The 21 hours of a foreign language requirement and the economics programs.

I like the options of the program. You are not limited to one particular focus or capstone class so it allows you to stay in IA yet still work towards your area of interest.

It requires to take classes in a lot of areas that are really helpful to future careers, and is also really easy to double major with in other areas.

All the classes are interesting. IA is not something I was interested in before college, but I am so happy that I changed my major because I always look forward to going to the classes.

The well-rounded mixture of economics, political science, history, and foreign language provides a great understanding of the world from different disciplinary perspectives.

Even though I can not classify it as a great strength I have learned a lot from the history courses I have taken re: international politics. Would be nice to see more re: present politics and how they have evolved on the world stage.

Flexibility. Being an IA major has allowed me, to some extent, to tailor my degree. Which I feel is almost a necessity since some of the required courses are offered so infrequently. Thankfully, I have had a wonderful experience when substituting courses to fill in those gaps.

I have not yet had a class that I haven't really enjoyed. They have all challenged me.

is different from almost any other degree program in that the curriculum is so extensive; it covers international political science, history, and economics, just to name a few.

The good quality professors.

still haven't found it yet

The course requirements are well tuned.

It is very broad-based, and allows students to focus in one particular aspect if they desire

I think the International Affairs major gives one of the most well-rounded experiences that Marshall University offers. I feel that this is largely due to the fact that required IA courses aren't all mostly just in one subject area; there is a wide variety of courses you must take.

The versatility that is taught from all the different aspects of the major

The teachers for this major are very helpful and you can tell that want you to succeed.

The variety of relative subjects that you are exposed to.

Offering a variety of areas of study

The diverse subjects that require you to learn many skills as a student.

The diversity of the requirements.

5. In what areas does the International Affairs major need improvement?

I would like special topics classes, such as International Terrorism, Drug Trafficking, and more area studies that can help a student specialize in an area of study.

There needs to be a Capstone for our major. It is ridiculous to take another majors capstone because it puts us at a disadvantage. There also needs to be an internship class where we can gain credit and more 'real world opportunities.'

I think a required study abroad experience would definitely add to the program. It is one thing to learn about different cultures and societies, but no in class experience can replace what you learn while you are abroad. It could be 2 weeks or a year but it is worth the time and effort.

I haven't really had to register for some of the required courses, but I'm not sure how often the required history courses are offered? I've heard they're not offered that frequently so that makes me a little nervous.

My biggest problem so far has been course substitutions for classes that aren't offered.

It would be nice to have more concentrated tracks- for example, in Africa or the Middle East or Europe. Also, a lot of the electives are online, which isn't preferable.

I would have liked to see more concentration of study about different areas in the world and not just brief overviews in the history courses or political science courses. For example, it would have been nice to see more re: the culture of Western/Eastern Europe, China or the Middle East in todays world and not just from a historical view point. My Spanish 204 course with Dr. Lopez really gave me an international view of Latin America in the present and the past.

Direction. The greatest strength of IA, flexibility, is also a weakness, because it means that there isn't really a clear goal, in the sense of, when I get my IA degree, I know I have A,B, and C career choices. As a soon-to-be graduate, I am feeling a bit of trepidation about my career options, for the simple fact that I'm not entirely sure what they are. In IA we study Econ, Poli Sci, and History, but where does that take me? Perhaps it is my own failings in looking into my own future that have brought me here, but I think that greater guidance could be explored.

Larger variety of options for classes.

a wider variety of classes to choose from would be a start, but it is pretty solid as it is.

In many of my classes there are not enough seats for everyone. It would be nice if we had bigger class rooms.

keep it how it is

I just wish there were more options available as far as directing career choices but I realize this is more hard in West Virginia and there is not much that Marshall can do. Political Science courses should be offered both spring and fall semester, it makes it more difficult to graduate on time. Studying abroad should be required and assistance should be available.

The major is very fragmented into different fields, and those departments do not talk to each other.

I think it is often difficult to make up semester schedules once you get so far into the IA major, especially with the history courses. I know that substitutes can be offered, but I think more courses should be available for an IA major to choose from so scheduling isn't so difficult, and people won't have to go through the annoyance of trying to find substitutes.

Classes need to be offered more often. The amount of hours that is required for the major is also extreme. Along with the extreme amount of foreign language.

Well I am a freshman so I haven't taken much classes yet for the International Affairs major. I think they need to offer more classes for first year students.

Just making sure that certain courses are offered more than once a year.

Updating the requirements for the major.

I would like to see more general international classes offered.

None

6. If you could create an entirely new International Affairs course on any topic, what topic would you choose?

Either International Terrorism, Drug Trafficking, or a class on the study of Globalized War, Arms Deals/Trafficking, Interpretations of Current Events, etc.

Understanding world religions in the context of current world affairs.

Perhaps something based on cultures and overcoming stereotypes. It is astonishing how many misconceptions are out there when you travel to different cultures. I don't believe you can truly understand the politics, economy, or history unless you can learn how to detect misconceptions and consider the actual facts about a group of people. I have no idea what subject this would be under but I do think it would be valuable. I had a class similar to this in Spanish and it was really beneficial.

development/developing countries. I don't know of any Marshall courses specifically on that topic, but I think it's an interesting and important one.

I think an elective on the function of the United Nations would be an interesting upper-level course. International business or cultural practices might also be a useful course.

More about different culture around the world. I have not had any classes explaining Japanese culture or what has made China the main supplier in the capitalist country. We should have an opportunity to research our area of interest and have it critiqued by an expert. Would be nice to communicate with today's technology with professors and students in other countries on an academic level, To be able to do a project with someone in another country would be nice.

Some sort of practicum course. I'd like to know what IA majors do after they graduate, look at that, and do it in the classroom to get some idea of what to look forward to or to dread.

a class on philanthropic international affairs would be a nice alternative to the terrorism class. but maybe both should be required so as to not receive a flawed sense of reality.

Middle Eastern Politics

traveling to a nation and learn their style of government

Popular culture and politics

How international affairs is applied in day to day life. Or a current events class

I don't really know all the classes offered for the major so far so I can't really request any.

7. Other comments about the International Affairs major:

I love this major, and I picked it before I came to Marshall. Dr. Morrisette has helped me keep my interest by giving an interesting personality to the major. I would like more specialized courses, but I have enough knowledge now to apply to what I am interested in as it is.

There should NOT be an integrated science and technology course requirement. It is useless.

I think it is a great program. The faculty is great and I could not have made a better choice. My only other suggestion is that there be more consultation for what happens after graduation. I feel that I have learned a lot in this program but I don't know what jobs I qualify for. There is a "list" at career services, but almost all of these programs require much higher qualifications than a bachelors degree can give in solely IA. More guidance would make this program even more appealing.

I've really enjoyed this major! I feel like it has helped me be more well-versed than some other majors would have.

Dr. Morrisette is the best! :)

In general, a great major. I enjoy my classes and the variety of liberal arts I can indulge in.

keep it going at all costs.

none

Analysis/Planned Action: The results of the survey are encouraging overall. A sizeable majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their IA classes helped develop their critical thinking, research, and writing skills. The survey suggests, however, that course scheduling in the IA major needs improvement. Approximately 38% of the respondents stated that IA courses are not offered frequently enough, and 19% noted that while the courses were offered in a timely manner, they filled up before the student had a chance to enroll.

In response to this feedback, I have already started coordinating with IA's constituent departments to review the curriculum and ensure that it reflects both current course offerings and students' needs as closely as possible. This will likely result in the reconsideration of certain "hard-to-get" courses with an eye toward either increasing the presence of these courses in the rotation or rethinking their place in the curriculum.

IV. Overview of Changes Implemented Based on Planned Action in Last Year's Report

I noted the following with regards to Learning Objective 3 in last year's report: "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, I noted that 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, I plan to discuss the possibility of incorporating additional readings on these topics with Dr. Shawn Schulenberg, who is teaching PSC 207 in Spring 2012. From there, we will seek to reinforce these concepts more consistently in both exams and written work in our upper-level comparative politics courses (e.g. Post-Soviet Politics, Asian Politics, Western Democratic Politics, Middle Eastern Politics, Latin American Politics).

V. Changes Implemented Based on Assessment Day Activities

As noted above, a review of the IA curriculum and course rotation is underway in response to the Assessment Day survey results.

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,

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