

Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program International Studies Program

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes for the department's Core courses been developed? What are they?**
(What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

Yes, formal learning outcomes have been developed.

For **INTL 2200 Where on Earth: Foundations in Global History**, the teachable content for listed as: The course offered beginning International Studies majors an integrated approach to learn how to 'think history globally,' 'consider the world ethically,' and 'render geography visual.' This meant tracing how inequalities along gender, class, race, and ecological lines became deeply embedded in processes of modernity, empire, and capitalism. As a co-taught interdisciplinary course, we approached this by way of a critical geographical perspective on the spatial organization of the world at different scales, which is crucial to any understanding of what we refer to as "international" or "global." The course was structured around four big historical questions that have shaped our world in its interconnections and divisions:

- How have we come to know about space and place?
- How have borders made worlds?
- How have inequalities become systemic?
- How have humans shaped the world's ecological crisis?

In the paired **INTL 2204 Where on Earth: Foundations in Global Culture and Political Geography**, the teachable content for students is listed as:

Students learned to read, interpret, and contextualize historical maps and to make their own using ArcGIS. They used maps and a variety of online documentation as primary sources to begin and articulate links between past and present and engage with the historical roots of contemporary challenges: the kinds of meta-geographical assumptions that tends to color how we conceive of global relations; empire and the nation-state in the making and crossing of borders and borderlands; the social and cultural legacies of settler colonialism; and the historical processes that have led to the human epoch we now call Anthropocene.

To test the material for the above, the following assignments or tasks were devised:

- "Locate" their chosen project with respect to agency/authorship, geographical and political context of its inception, intended audience/recipient, stated goals
- Critically assess its "politics of place," i.e. how it links the local with the global and suggest improvements if applicable
- Critically assess its sense of historical context, i.e. how it links historical with current injustices and with justice for future generations; suggest improvements if applicable

For **INTL 2501 Introduction to International Relations**, the learning outcomes differ slightly, depending on the instructor's specific expertise.

In Prof. Erikson's version, she listed the following as learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate the critical, mathematical, informational, analytic, expressive, and creative skills that are essential tools of the educated person well-prepared for a meaningful life and vocation.
- Understand the major ideas and methods of inquiry of the scholarly disciplines that comprise the university and be able to use those methods of inquiry as beginning practitioners to address complex contemporary problems.
- Be able to identify and articulate the strengths and limitations of the disciplines and the relationship of the disciplines to one another, and demonstrate an understanding of the breadth and diversity of human knowledge as well as its openness to integration in more comprehensive wholes.
- Be conversant with and able to discuss intelligently enduring questions and issues that are fundamental to human inquiry and that have shaped the traditions from which the university has emerged.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply more than one disciplinary perspective to the same enduring question or complex contemporary problem.
- Be familiar with the scholarly exploration of religious faith and understand how faith and reason are related in the search for truth.
- Demonstrate the ability to examine their values and experiences and integrate what they learn with the principles that guide their lives.
- Be prepared and disposed to use their talents and education as engaged global citizens and responsible leaders in service of the common good.

In Prof. Krause's version, he listed the following as learning outcomes:

- Knowledge about terrorism: Students will be introduced to relevant analytical frameworks, theories, and cases concerning terrorism, insurgency, and related forms of political violence; they will learn about the potential and pitfalls of theories of political violence through constant analysis and engagement with the history of terrorism and insurgency.
- Historical context: Students will explore changes and continuities in history of terrorism and the relationship of terrorism to other forms of violence. They will explore the pursuit of non-violence and responses to fear.
- Violence in the world: Students will learn to reflect on the meaning of violence in their own lives and in the world more generally. They will come to a clearer understanding of their own relationship to terrorism and be able to explain the positions they hold.
- Interpretation: Students will be able to make interpretive arguments about the legitimacy, justification, and rationalization of violence.
- Research Methods: Students will be able to understand and explain similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of the disciplines of political science and history. They will apply the methods of these scholarly fields to the complex problem of terrorism.
- Learning How to Think: Students will become more sophisticated consumers, analysts, and producers of knowledge, developing skills that will continue to serve them as undergraduate students and in life beyond Boston College.
- Learning How to Communicate: Students will learn how to improve their analytical thinking, conduct high quality research, and present an effective argument, both orally and in writing.

2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

The learning outcomes are listed to each syllabus for the different core courses.

- 3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the Core requirement?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes have been achieved more or less well?)

Instructors mentioned that GPA was a rough metric at best. As one instructor noted:

I presume that they (i.e., the form's question) mean that students' final grades are an indication of their success, but the key is how those grades are determined. As I lay out in my syllabus, I determine a student's ability to research, analyze, and express themselves through participation in class, exams, and a research proposal and final paper. By assessing each of those components, I have a good sense of students' mastery of the content and skills from the course.

As another instructor observed, the specific assignments are meant to address different aspects or components of the learning outcomes.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The Director of the IS Program, Prof. Erik Owens, monitors the performance of the instructors (via the course assessments) and the outcomes of teaching.

The IS Advisory Board convenes on a regular (i.e., almost monthly during the academic year) and can discuss any issues that arise. Insofar as there have been any issues, they were dealt with at the Director to instructor level.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** (What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?)

There were changes made, but the core courses are the changes made to our prior core offerings. We are still in the process of reviewing the outcomes made from subsequent tweaks.

- 6) **Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

Our latest program self-study was in AY 2019, when we changed the IS core curriculum and concentrations available for students.

Our last external review was in AY 2016, where external reviewers suggested changes that were subsequently (mostly) adopted.