



To: Rising Senior International Studies Majors
From: Dr. Andrew Oros, Director, International Studies Program
Re: Your Senior Capstone Experience for AY 2015-16
Date: June 5, 2015

This memo provides a description of and deadlines for the required Senior Capstone Experience (SCE) for International Studies majors seeking to graduate in May 2016. It is important that such potential graduates read this memo fully and carefully, and keep the memo for consultation over the course of one's senior year. A copy of this memo also is posted at is.washcoll.edu.

- Senior theses and self-designed projects must be completed by **4:00pm Friday, April 1, 2016**.

- All seniors are required to present the core findings of their SCE projects at the annual IS Poster Symposium on **Tuesday, April 12, 2016, 6:30-7:30pm** in the Toll Atrium.

** Students who do not meet these deadlines will fail the SCE course, will be eligible to re-register for the course (for a fee) in Summer 2016 at the earliest, and will not graduate in May 2016. **

Students seeking to complete their degree in December 2015 must already have initiated their SCE projects under an assigned SCE advisor, and will follow different deadlines for completion.

The International Studies SCE is designed to provide majors with the opportunity to enrich their academic experience through the development of an original research project and accompanying presentation. The capstone project allows students to explore questions raised during their coursework and/or study abroad experiences through a year-long, independent project. Beyond exploring a topic on an international issue of interest, the IS capstone is designed to help students further develop their research, writing, presentation, and organizational skills.

The traditional course to complete the SCE is to submit a 30-page minimum research-based thesis written in English, followed by a poster presentation that highlights the main findings of the research. By application and under the direction of a willing capstone advisor, majors alternatively may propose a self-designed capstone project that could take different forms, such as a performance, exhibition, web-site, or advocacy project – but which also must include a written component and a poster presentation that highlights the main findings of the research. Double-majors may complete a combined thesis or self-designed project with approval of advisors from both majors; double-majors with a modern language may complete a thesis written in French, German, or Spanish under the direction of a willing capstone advisor.

Ordinarily students initiate the SCE project together with the required International Studies Seminar (INT 491) during the fall semester of the senior year. Students will be registered for the INT SCE (which earns four credits) by their SCE advisor for their final semester at Washington College, when the capstone is expected to be completed.

The senior capstone should be interdisciplinary in scope, methodology and content. Capstone projects will be assessed on the basis of Pass/Fail/Honors. (Self-designed projects are not eligible for honors.) Further information about each SCE option is detailed below.

Common SCE Requirements:

Regardless of the option majors elect to pursue, there are four common requirements that all majors must complete. Please note that items 1-3 are completed in conjunction with the IS Seminar in the fall semester.

1. Proposal. Students must develop a detailed description of the capstone project that will serve as a blueprint for the SCE. Proposal format will vary based on SCE option chosen. See guidelines in Appendix A & B. Due in the IS Seminar on Monday, September 28.
* September 28 is the deadline to propose a self-designed project; some submitted proposals may be rejected, requiring a re-submit of a thesis proposal option.
* Proposals may be re-submitted after consultation with your assigned SCE advisor, no later than Monday, October 19.
Note: Students may not change topics for their SCE after this date except under highly unusually circumstances that must be approved by the Director of International Studies.
2. Annotated Bibliography. Students will evaluate the value of 10-15 sources to your project through a cursory overview of each source and a description of its contribution to your research. Due in the IS Seminar on Monday, September 28.
3. Literature Review. Students will develop a literature review based on their annotated bibliographies, which will be updated for inclusion in the final written product of the thesis or self-designed project written component.
4. Poster Presentation. Students will present their SCE projects at the annual Poster Symposium on Tuesday, April 12, 2016, 6:30-7:30pm in Toll Atrium.

Additional Requirements for SCE Honors:

Majors with a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher may elect to pursue honors for the **thesis option only**. Students pursuing the honor's option will be required to participate in an oral defense where they will respond to questions and criticism by a three-member faculty committee that will include the Director of International Studies, the thesis advisor, and one additional faculty member. **Students who wish to attempt an honors thesis** must make their intention known to their SCE adviser no later than **February 5, 2016**, though earlier discussion of this intention is *strongly* recommended. It is expected that an honors SCE will involve the use of primary sources and/or foreign language material, link the topic to broader theoretical frameworks or literatures, and reflect an element of originality in analysis, interpretation, or evaluation. A student who has decided to attempt honors may withdraw that declaration at any time. **No one, however, will be permitted to select the honors option after February 5, 2016.** After that date, those pursuing honors will be contacted to provide an updated proposal for their SCE that will be circulated to honors committee members for feedback prior to the oral defense. Candidates for honors will sit for the oral examination on a date scheduled after the annual Poster Symposium. Those students who successfully defend will receive a grade of "Pass with Honors" and be eligible for "departmental" honors. Students who do not earn honors will receive a grade of "Pass."

Capstone Options

Ia. The Thesis. The International Studies thesis is a work of original research that investigates a significant political, economic, historical, or cultural issue in international studies in an interdisciplinary manner. Students will develop their topic in consultation with a faculty advisor, though the thesis is generally intended to be an independent research project. A senior thesis in International Studies must embody three aspects: the descriptive, the analytical, and the evaluative. It must describe a *question* to be researched (not just a *topic*), analyze existing answers to the question (including through a formal literature review) and evidence in support of a hypothesis developed by the student, and evaluate one's own claims versus those of others. While appropriate length should be determined by the nature and scope of the topic, theses are required to be a minimum of 30 pages (excluding preliminary pages, bibliography and any appendices). Students will present an overview of their theses as a poster presentation at the poster symposium. Additional information about the thesis option is available in Appendix A.

Ib. Students who are double majors may opt to write a **joint thesis** with the other major, provided they can satisfy the requirements of each major in a single thesis and identify a willing advisor(s). Students who double-major with one of the constituent disciplines of International Studies (anthropology, business management, economics, history, modern languages, or political science) typically work under the direction of a single SCE advisor who will represent both majors, though in unusual cases dual advisors will be assigned.

Ic. Students who are **double majors with one of the modern languages** may opt to write a joint thesis in that language, provided they can identify a willing advisor. In that case, the thesis must be accompanied by a 1,500-word synopsis in English. Presentations for the International Studies portion of the capstone must also be prepared in English. Students pursuing honors in International Studies who are double majors with one of the modern languages are required to prepare a 2,500-word synopsis in English and will defend their thesis in English.

II. The Self-Designed Project. Self-designed capstones combine academically informed research with an applied, practical project. In integrating research with practice, students may pursue a variety of different projects. Possible projects might include an art installation, documentary or short film, social justice campaign, ethnography, or volunteer project. Students double-majoring in IS-ANT may pursue a combined project with the permission of the Director of International Studies and the Chair of Anthropology. Beyond the common requirements for all IS SCEs (outlined above), there are two written requirements for this option: 1) a 2,000 word synopsis of the project due at the end of fall semester (or prior to the execution of the project, whichever comes *first*) and 2) a 2,000 word self-evaluation of the project due following the completion of the project. Further details about this option are available in Appendix B.

*Note: This option is only recommended for those students with strong organizational skills and requires that majors identify an advisor willing to supervise the project.

Appendix A - The Thesis Option: Additional Details and Interim Deadlines

The IS SCE thesis is completed in stages over the course of the student's senior year, typically beginning in the fall and ending in the spring, with initial topic formulation completed in the summer or semesters prior to the senior year. [See interim deadlines set out below.] Initial topic ideas will be discussed on the first day of the International Studies Seminar, and a formal thesis proposal completed in conjunction with the International Studies Seminar in the early fall (and re-worked and re-submitted after consultation with one's assigned SCE advisor if necessary). [See thesis proposal guidelines on the following page.]

Students are reminded that **plagiarism** in any form – including in “draft” work submitted for feedback to your SCE advisor – will be severely punishable. Any evidence of willful plagiarism will be grounds for failure, which, at minimum, would require the pursuit of a new senior thesis under a new advisor and could lead to expulsion from the College without a degree.

* The thesis must be properly documented with footnotes and it must include a bibliography at the end (alphabetized and in proper format). Consult with your thesis adviser about the specific citation style appropriate to the disciplinary approach of your thesis topic. **A senior thesis that does not demonstrate competence in scholarly citation will not pass.**

First-semester seniors who plan to complete their studies in December, and **any senior who will not be in residence during the second semester of the senior year**, should consult with the Director of International Studies to set a revised time-line for completion of each stage of the thesis.

The thesis must contain a **title page**, which includes the full statement of the Washington College **Honor Pledge** and **your signature**. A sample title page is attached to this document; please adapt it for your use. The thesis document must also contain an **abstract** that includes separately listed **keywords**.

Thesis deadlines:

- September 28: Thesis proposal due (in the IS Seminar)
- *October 19: revised proposal due (if necessary)
- Nov 9: 10-page minimum draft due, *beyond proposal text* (in the IS Seminar)
- December 17: 20-page minimum expanded draft due (in the IS Seminar)
- February 26: Complete draft due (directly to your SCE advisor)
- March 25: Draft poster presentation slides due (directly to your SCE advisor)
- April 1: Final thesis due (directly to your SCE advisor)
- April 13: Final poster presentation slides due (at the poster symposium)

Pass / Fail / Honors: Your adviser will inform you of whether or not your thesis and poster have passed by the last day of spring classes, and provide feedback using a **standardized rubric** available at is.washcoll.edu. Students may fail the thesis option by missing deadlines, not appropriately citing work, not submitting acceptable work, and/or not completing an acceptable poster presentation.

The Program Director can take no responsibility for the acceptability of theses prepared without regular use of the adviser's counseling and without adherence to the published deadlines.

If a student wishes to pursue a joint thesis, s/he should coordinate with the Director of International Studies and the head of the other program or department involved. If the senior capstone project in the other department is also a thesis, and that department chair agrees, the student may pursue a joint project which results in either one thesis acceptable to both departments/programs or two overlapping versions of the thesis, tailored for the respective departments/programs..

The Thesis Proposal: An Overview

[**Note:** Further instruction about the thesis proposal will be provided in the IS Seminar]

There are seven parts to your thesis proposal. A good proposal sets the tone for a successful thesis. Your proposal should clearly outline your research agenda and demonstrate the importance of your research. Ultimately, an adapted version of this proposal will become the first section of your thesis.

Part I. Topic Introduction (1-2 pages)

This section should summarize your thesis topic. Remember: this is the first thing that a reader will read about your research. It should be engaging and direct.

Part II. Research Questions or Hypothesis (1-2 pages)

This section introduces the subject matter that your thesis will cover. If you have hypotheses, they should be clearly stated here. If not, then your research question(s) should be clearly stated – what is the as yet unanswered question related to your topic that you seek to answer through your research?

Part III. Importance of Research (1-2 pages)

This section of your proposal should justify your research. What is it about your research that is significant or important? Is there a void in the literature? Has some authority in the field stated that there is need for this research? Why should you spent your senior year investigating this question?

Part IV. Literature Review (5-6 pages)

This section discusses significant prior research related to your topic. You should conduct a fairly extensive search on your topic, summarizing the major themes and findings on your subject. You should also draw attention to any holes or flaws in the existing research. This section should generally be limited to discussion of *scholarly literature* on the topic – not data sets, news articles, or government documents.

Part V. Methodology (2-3 pages)

This section outlines how you propose to conduct your research. Will you be using a questionnaire? Conducting interviews? Using primary sources? Your approach should be explained clearly. You should “operationalize” any key variables here (ie, set out clearly how you will measure them). You should also present your vision for the general structure of the thesis, outlining what information will appear in subsequent sections.

Part VI. Tentative Conclusions (1-2 pages)

This section allows you to offer tentative conclusions on your research. What do you expect to find? What are the possible problems with your research design?

Part VII. Bibliography (10-15 sources *minimum*, with the final thesis bibliography much longer)

Your bibliography is an extremely important part of your thesis, and should not be an afterthought. All works consulted and cited in your research should appear in your bibliography.

Sample Title Page for Thesis Option

**Title:
Sub-Title (if one)**

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the International Studies Program in
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Arts**

Abstract: [insert 100-150 word abstract here]

Keywords: [insert 4-6 keywords here]

By

(Your name)

**Washington College
April 1, 2016**

Adviser: Dr. (insert adviser name)

**I pledge my word of honor that I have
abided by the Washington College Honor
Code while completing this assignment.**

(Your signature)

[Note: the Title Page should *not* be page numbered]

Appendix B - The Self-Designed Project Option: Additional Details and Interim Deadlines

The self-designed project allows students to integrate course material and their experiences abroad with a project that spans the senior year. The subject matter should address a significant issue in international studies from an interdisciplinary perspective. Students must demonstrate the intellectual merits of the project by linking it to theoretical or scholarly literature. Projects might include a public awareness campaign, an art installation, documentary or short film, social justice campaign, ethnography or volunteer project.

Students wishing to pursue this option must identify a faculty advisor who is able and willing to supervise the project. Students must also demonstrate the appropriate skill set to accomplish the proposed project. Project proposals must be developed in conjunction with a chosen SCE advisor *and approved by the Director of International Studies*. Students who do not submit acceptable self-designed project proposals by September 28 will be expected to complete an acceptable thesis proposal by October 18.

The self-designed **project proposal** must contain (in about 10-12 double-spaced pages):

- 1) a clearly stated rationale for the project;
- 2) an explanation of the intellectual basis for the project, including a literature review;
- 3) a discussion of the feasibility of conducting and completing the project;
- 4) a budget of any costs associated with the project;*
- 5) a proposed timeline for the project, including a specific completion date; and,
- 6) a means of assessing the project.

*Modest funding may be available for pursuit of a self-designed project from the International Studies program, the Goldstein Program, or other campus resources, but the pursuit of such funding is the responsibility of the student.

Beyond the common requirements for the IS SCE, there are two additional written requirements for this option:

- 1) a 2,000-word synopsis of/introduction to the project due December 17 at 4:00pm (or two weeks prior to the execution of the project, whichever comes *first*);
 - Students are encouraged to think of this synopsis a written guide to the project for those who attend/experience/view the completed project.
 - Students may utilize/adapt language from the proposal into this synopsis, and indeed may find the proposal a useful starting point for conceptualizing the synopsis.
 - The form of the synopsis will vary based on the project, but must include scholarly references to a body of literature in international studies and a bibliography.
- 2) a 2,000-word self-evaluation of the completed project (this should be submitted within 10 days of the project completion, but no later than 4:00pm, April 11).
 - This self-evaluation should contain, at minimum, two components: (1) “lessons learned” from completing the project – that may include reflection on logistical and on subject-matter issues; and, (2) a self-evaluation of how successfully the project was executed, including specific commentary on perceived strengths and weaknesses.
 - The self-evaluation may be written in a first-person narrative, and need not include scholarly references (though works referred to should be appropriately cited).

Poster Presentation deadlines are identical to the thesis option:

- March 25: Draft poster presentation slides due (directly to your SCE advisor)
- April 13: Final poster presentation slides due (at the poster symposium)