



To: Rising Senior International Studies Majors
From: Dr. Andrew Oros, Director, International Studies Program
Re: Your Senior Capstone Experience for AY 2019-20 (revised)
Date: August 1, 2019

This memo conveys a few *changes* to the SCE memo circulated on March 18, 2019. In particular:

- The dates for the spring SCE symposium has been updated.
- A definition of what is considered “international” for the international studies SCE requirement is offered.
- A maximum page length for the thesis option has been set at 50 pages of main text.
- Self-designed projects for the SCE are now eligible for honors consideration, and additional guidance for working with your advisor on an honors project is offered.

This memo provides a description of and deadlines for the required Senior Capstone Experience (SCE) for International Studies majors seeking to graduate in May 2020. (There is a different time-line for students seeking a December 2019 graduation.) It is important that such potential graduates read this memo fully and carefully, and keep the memo for consultation over the course of their senior year. A copy of this memo also is posted under the “for our majors” section of the IS web-site: is.washcoll.edu.

- Senior theses & self-designed projects must be completed by **4:00pm Friday, March 27, 2020**.
 - All seniors are required to present the core findings of their SCE projects at the annual IS Poster Symposium on **Wednesday, April 15, 2020, 6:30-7:30pm**.
- ** 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 2020 at the earliest, and will not graduate in May 2020. **
- *Students seeking to complete their degree in December 2019 initiate their SCE projects under an assigned SCE advisor by March 2019, and 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 more deeply questions raised during their coursework and/or study abroad experiences through a year-long, independent project. Beyond further 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. (*See pg. 2 for a working definition of what constitutes “international” for the purposes of the SCE.)

All senior capstones in International Studies should be interdisciplinary in scope, methodology and content. Students may propose research on any question in the broad field of International Studies past or present without limit to any one discipline. For example, it is *not*

expected at they include political, economic, or linguistic components per se; nor is it required that they address a *contemporary* issue – they may be historically focused. Capstone projects are assessed on the basis of Pass/Fail/Honors. Further information about each SCE option is detailed in this memo below.

The default option to complete the SCE is to complete 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 may 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.

For all Spring 2020 graduates, the SCE format choice must be confirmed, and advisor(s) assigned, by September 20, 2019.

Ordinarily students initiate the SCE project together with the required International Studies Seminar (INT 491) during the fall semester of the senior year. The IS Seminar covers topics related to research methodology, theoretical debates in international studies, the process of developing a literature review, and advanced presentation techniques that are related to the start of the SCE project – but the Seminar is a separate four-credit course from the SCE. 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.

What constitutes "international" for an IS SCE? At its essence, "international" connotes crossing an international boundary. Thus, all IS SCEs should engage with a question that relates to an idea or event that crosses international boundaries and that places this question at the center of analysis. Since case studies are a common approach across many disciplines within International Studies, an IS SCE might focus on just one country or even one region within one country, but the issue or question addressed must be directly related in the analysis to a boundary-crossing topic. Some examples that might be single-country focused but address a boundary-crossing topic would be challenges of economic development, gender discrimination, legacies of communism or fascism or conflict, threats to indigenous peoples, or representation of the human condition in art or literature. In such cases, the literature review and some aspect of the analysis must link the specific country or region case to a broader issue within the field of International Studies.

To offer some concreteness to the abstract definition above, below are some topics which have been pursued that highlight the international within a case that generally focused on one country:

- Exploration of gendered language in French by using countries other than France in some aspects of the analysis; other options would include linking to gender studies literature or linking to similar challenges in other languages.
- The re-emergence of extreme right nationalism in Germany by linking to the literature on nationalism and the extreme right available in sociology and political science; other options would include considering the global effects of such a rise on Germany's foreign relations, or exploring similar rises in other states.

- Challenges to economic development in the Philippines by embedding within the literature on economic development and contrasting with other state examples within the analysis; other options would include explicitly contrasting to the challenges or successes of other states.

As with all aspects of an honors SCE in IS, it would be expected that an honors SCE would have even more explicit and developed analysis that crosses boundaries than a typical "pass".

Common SCE Requirements:

Regardless of the SCE option majors elect to pursue, there are **four common requirements** that all majors must complete, including double-majors pursuing a combined thesis option with another department. Items 1-3 are completed in conjunction with the IS Seminar.

1. Proposal. Students must develop a detailed description of the proposed 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 Wednesday, September 25, by 11:59pm.
* SCE advisors are assigned *before* the full proposal is submitted based on initial topic ideas and format preference, ordinarily by September 13.
* Proposals may be re-submitted after consultation with your assigned SCE advisor, no later than Wednesday, October 16, 11:59pm.
Note: Students may not change topics for their SCE after this date except under highly unusual circumstances that must be approved by the Director of International Studies.
2. Annotated Bibliography. Students will present the value of 10 sources to your project through a brief overview of each source and a description of its contribution to your research topic. At least 6 entries should be *scholarly* journals or books. Each entry should begin with a full reference for the work (in the citation style of your SCE, typically Chicago style) and then include a minimum 50-word summary of the relevance of the work to your SCE research. (Further discussion of format and contrast to the required Literature Review will be provided in the IS Seminar.) Due in the IS Seminar on Sunday, September 15 by 11:59pm.
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. A first draft of this literature review is part of the SCE proposal, but is expected to be updated in the final SCE submission.
4. Poster Presentation. Students will present their SCE projects at the annual Poster Symposium on Wednesday, April 15, 2020, 6:30-7:30pm.

Additional Requirements for SCE and Program Honors:

Majors with a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher may elect to pursue honors for the SCE. Completion of an honors SCE, in addition to a major GPA of 3.5, is required to graduate with honors in International Studies. Honors theses have additional requirements beyond the expectation of general excellence. An honors SCE must (a) involve the use of primary sources and/or foreign language material, (b) connect the topic clearly to broader theoretical frameworks or literatures, and (c) reflect an element of originality in analysis, interpretation, or evaluation. In

addition, students pursuing the honors option must (d) successfully complete 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** are strongly encouraged to make their interest known to their SCE adviser at the beginning of the conceptualization and drafting of the SCE. Students recommended by their SCE advisors for honors consideration will be contacted soon after the SCE Poster Symposium to schedule an oral defense and notified of the members of their defense committee. Those students who successfully defend will receive a grade of "Pass with Honors" and be eligible for "program" 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) and a maximum of 50 pages. 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, or world languages and cultures) 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. 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 15: Annotated bibliography due (in the IS Seminar)
- September 25: Thesis proposal due (in the IS Seminar)
- *October 16: revised proposal due (if necessary, in IS Seminar)
- November 18: 18-page minimum draft due to your SCE advisor
- February 21: Complete draft due (directly to your SCE advisor)
- March 20: Draft poster presentation slides due (directly to your SCE advisor)
- March 27: Final thesis due (directly to your SCE advisor)
- April 15: 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.

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 that 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, which should appear under the headings listed below. 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. Double-majors must complete a proposal in this format for the International Studies component of their SCE, but may adapt a proposal from the other major.

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 spend your senior year investigating this question? This section should address both (a) the importance of the topic overall, and (b) the importance of the contribution you seek to make through your research questions and links to existing scholarly literature.

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. A literature review is not an annotated bibliography. Completion of the required annotated bibliography should help students to consider appropriate literature to be discussed in the literature review.

Part V. Methodology (2-3 pages)

This section outlines how you propose to conduct your research. Will you conduct an in-depth analysis of a set of films or novels? Use a case-study methodology to consider a political or historical issue? If so, what is the rationale for proposing to examine these specific films, novels, or cases? (ie, you should explicitly discuss “case selection.”) Will you use a data set or conduct interviews? Use primary sources or utilize secondary literature in a fresh way? Your approach should be explained clearly in this section. If you will employ a methodology that relies on hypotheses and variables, set out clearly how you will measure them and how you could determine if your hypotheses are *incorrect* – ie, how they could be “falsified”. You should also present your vision for the general structure of the thesis, outlining what information will appear in subsequent sections of the thesis.

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
March 27, 2020**

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, or other innovative new idea.

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 25 will be expected to complete an acceptable thesis proposal by October 16.

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

- 1) a clearly stated rationale for the project; (cf. thesis proposal parts I&III)
- 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; (cf. thesis proposal part V)
- 4) a proposed timeline for the project, including a specific completion date;
- 5) a budget of any costs associated with the project;*
- 6) a means of assessing the project; and,
- 7) a bibliography

*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 November 18 at 11:59pm (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 in *draft* form within 10 days of the project completion, with a final version due two weeks after that date but no later than 4:00pm, April 15).
 - 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 20: Draft poster presentation slides due (directly to your SCE advisor)

April 15: Final poster presentation slides due (at the poster symposium)

Sample Title Pages for Self-Designed Project Option – I of II

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

**A Self-Designed Project Introduction & Synopsis
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
November 18, 2019 (or earlier date, if applicable)**

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]

Sample Title Pages for Self-Designed Project Option – II of II

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

**A Self-Designed Project Self-Evaluation and Reflection
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 15, 2020 (or earlier date, if applicable)

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)

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