

October 18, 2021

To: Irene Shabazz, Manager, Undergraduate Curriculum Services

From: Paul Kubicek, Director, International Studies Program

Re: Ten Year Self-Study Report

The International Studies Program (ISP) is due to submit its ten-year self-study. To the best of my knowledge (I have served as ISP director since 2011), this is the first time ISP will be submitting such a report. In preparation for this report, I have consulted with our faculty to obtain their input, particularly with respect to student success and their own professional accomplishments. I have also consulted with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to obtain data about our programs. This report will briefly introduce the main features of ISP, discuss enrollments in its majors and minors, discuss accomplishments as well as on-going challenges to ISP, and discuss what options to improvement, growth, or consolidation we have moving forward.

Introduction

The ISP has a longstanding history at Oakland University. Exposing students to the wider world through global studies classes has long been a priority of the university, and we believe the ISP's focus easily fits into the mission and vision of the university to create a diverse community that will be impactful in terms of teaching, scholarship, and community engagement. Specifically, the ISP has long been a key part of the university's and the College of Arts and Sciences desire to develop more global awareness and inter-cultural knowledge and perspectives. For many years, the ISP had a near monopoly on General Education "Global Perspective" (GEGP) classes, most of which adopted a specific-area focus (e.g. Perspectives on China, Perspectives on India). The ISP also offers area-focused inter-disciplinary majors and minors, with the 200/2000 level GEGP course serving as a "gateway" to the major. The ISP, not being a fully-fledged academic department, does not have its own full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty, although it does employ part-time or adjunct faculty members (Lecturers/Special Lecturers) to teach many of its GEGP courses. A list of all full-time ISP affiliated faculty as well as all current Lecturers/Special Lecturers is in Appendix 1. The ISP encourages innovative, high-impact teaching among its faculty as well as community engagement.

Most of the courses in the ISP remain the 200/2000 level GEGP courses, although since the mid-2000s the ISP has lost its hold on GEGP to other programs and departments. As of 2021, only 10 of the 34 GEGP courses are under ISP, with Political Science, History, Economics, and Religious Studies all offering multiple GEGP courses. Overall enrollment in the ISP's GEGP courses has, as seen in Appendix 2, declined over the years. Many of our courses are now taught completely or partially on-line (this was true even pre-COVID). At the same time, various departments that used to have a faculty member contribute a course or two to the ISP GEGP courses have pulled back, meaning that few of the ISP's "full time" faculty teach ISP courses. Furthermore, as will be

discussed throughout this report, departments are hiring fewer and fewer “area studies” faculty that might be able to contribute to ISP, and are not, with a couple of exceptions, developing courses that can be used to ISP majors and minors.

The general structure of the ISP, particularly that of its majors and minors, is that of “area studies,” which is reflective of both the historical period in which these programs developed as well as its roots among the anthropology department with an attendant focus on culture. While there are still prominent “area studies” centers at major universities that offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees, (e.g. University of Michigan, Michigan State University, University of Wisconsin), many would argue that area-studies is far less fashionable in academia today—there is more emphasis on cross-regional, comparative work within particular thematic topics (e.g. economic development, human geography, democratization, global health, human rights)—and a strong area-studies major can be quite demanding given the need for a robust language requirement. We have developed some “thematic” courses at the 2000-level, and the IS/GEO/AN 2000 course “Global Human Systems” (essentially human geography) continues to enroll well, in large part because it is required for students in the School of Education. However, as will be discussed below, the ability to revamp the program to move away from an area-studies focus—should that be what we think best—and offer a truly “global” major or minor within ISP is likely quite limited.

Program Description (Majors and Minors)

The ISP’s majors and minors are all area-focused (e.g. Japanese Studies) and are inter-disciplinary. In practice, this means a student would take one GEGP course directly through ISP and then take courses (in History, Political Science, Music, Art History, Anthropology, Religious Studies etc.) in other departments. At present, we offer three majors (Japanese, Chinese, and Latin American Studies) and minors in all of these areas plus African and African-American Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Russian and East European Studies, and South Asian Studies. The majors require three years of language study (8 credits/2 courses at the 3000 level “count” toward the major). They are also rather uniquely structured, meaning students take 24 credits (including a 4 credit independent study/directed research course) in their “primary” area but then must take an additional 12 credits in a “complementary” area. For example, a Japanese Studies major would take 24 credits in Japanese-oriented courses (plus 3 years of Japanese language) and then 12 credits in either Chinese or South Asian Studies. For the Latin American Studies major the complementary area is African and African-American Studies. I confess I never fully understood the rationale or value of the “complementary area”, as it waters down the substance of the major itself (which, as I’ll address below, may already be problematic). My suspicion is that the reason is we lack faculty resources to teach sufficient and a diverse enough array of courses in each “primary” area—another issue I’ll address more below. The net result for all majors is 44 credits (24 primary, 12 complementary, 8 language) and 20 credits for each minor, which does not have a language requirement (although 8 credits of language can be applied toward it).

Enrollment in both the majors and minors is quite small, and it has been that way for some time. Appendix 3 presents data since 2010. I might add that in the 2010s we eliminated African and African American Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, South Asian Studies, and Russian and East European Studies as majors because they were not really viable in terms of the number of courses we could offer (and, in the case of the last two, Oakland no longer offered a regional language and course offerings remain so limited that the minor is not really viable either). At present, there are only two (!) students at Oakland University who are ISP majors, reflecting an even more dramatic decline in our numbers.

Thus, while the Gen Ed component of ISP is weakened (in terms of overall enrollments) but still significant, the area-studies majors are, frankly, moribund. As director, I have participated in numerous recruiting events (e.g. Go for the Gold, Major/Minor Fairs), but have sensed little to no interest in area-studies majors. There could be numerous reasons for this: they are somewhat “niche” majors that require a strong pre-existing commitment/interest to a particular world region and most students are therefore rather unlikely to even consider them; students can develop an “area interest” through language and other classes but still major in another field (e.g. History, Political Science) that they may perceive as more marketable; study-abroad opportunities are now more diverse and often do not even require foreign language skills; the ISP is not a full-fledged department and thus lacks the visibility and resources that might attract students; the three-year language requirement may seem onerous; study-abroad (which is available and would be very useful for all majors) is costly; job prospects may seem vague to many students. It is worth noting that the Political Science Department developed a more general (non-area focused), social-science oriented International Relations major in 2008 (it requires two years of language) and it has done well. This program, in part, responded to perceived student demand for a more globally-oriented degree, and because it is housed in a single department it may be better placed to provide student services (e.g. advising, clubs/extracurriculars) than the more de-centralized ISP. Furthermore, and unfortunately, from the point of view of the ISP, the International Relations degree is now what many students think of or see when they think of an “International Studies” degree. This program, which is also inter-disciplinary, has effectively boxed in the ISP in terms of moving away from area-studies degrees, as it is very unclear how we could develop, with existing faculty resources and little perceived student demand, a “global studies” degree that would be significantly different from that offered by Political Science.¹

An additional issue is lack of classes for ISP majors. In theory, students can take a wide variety of classes offered by various departments to fulfill their degree. In practice, this requires departments to offer those courses. In many cases, departments are not offering such courses: for example, Political Science has not offered an “Asian Politics” class for many years, and History has not offered a South Asian or Russian/East European History class for over twenty years. A few years ago, when History was not offering any classes in Japanese history, it was no longer even possible to obtain a Japanese Studies degree by taking courses on campus (one had to study abroad). This has since been remedied, but the flexibility for all of our majors—but in particular for Japanese

¹ I note that I raised the possibility of creating a “Global Studies” degree under ISP with the then-director of ISP in the early 2000s when I first came to Oakland University. He was not enthusiastic about this idea, and I was chair of Political Science when that department developed its IR degree.

Studies majors—is quite limited. Part of the issue, simply, is that departments are not hiring or replacing “area studies” faculty. This has been the case with Anthropology (China) and Political Science (Latin America). Part of the issue is that some departments (Sociology) offer only thematic classes which do not fit into our area-studies approach. Furthermore, whereas some departments (e.g. Communications and Journalism, Sociology) might hire someone with “area” expertise, they are unwilling to develop a particular “area-studies” courses (e.g. “Labor in Asia”, “Communications in Latin America”) because there is lack of clear student demand and/or departments have other priorities for their faculty.

One further issue that I believe is worth noting is that the content of many classes listed as appropriate for our majors may, in fact, be lacking. For example, a Japanese Studies major can take a class in “Arts of Asia and the Islamic World” or “Introduction to Asian Literature” and there is no guarantee that the class will have any Japanese content (the same holds for the Chinese Studies major, as these classes count for both majors). Given that students only have to take 24 credits in their “primary” area, I am concerned (particularly for the Japanese Studies majors) that their “Japanese” content, outside of the language, may be rather minimal, certainly not worthy of a major.² A solution to this issue—and one that would eliminate the primary/complementary area structure—would be to offer an “Asian Studies” or “East Asian Studies” major, and give students a choice between Japanese and Chinese language but count any course with clear “Asian” or “East Asian” content. This—as opposed to separate Japanese and Chinese Studies majors—is the approach offered at Wayne State University and University of Toledo.

Accomplishments/Strengths

While noting some of the limitations of the existing ISP programs, it is worth highlighting some of our strengths. To this end, I asked all ISP faculty to submit something they do in terms of student success, community engagement, or scholarship that furthers the goals of the ISP. We also sent out a survey (via post and via email) to post-2015 majors (n = 18). Alas, very few (2) were returned, which is quite unfortunate.

Several items are worth reporting. First, ISP has sponsored or co-sponsored numerous events on campus to discuss global events and foster inter-cultural dialogue and understanding. Often, these are panel discussions around a particular topic (e.g. populism, the Arab Spring, women’s rights, elections in a particular country) but have also included films and cultural events. Some have involved students as speakers. This is a means both to publicize some of our programs, highlight our faculty, and build community, including with individuals from off-campus.

Many faculty members noted their dedication to teaching, experiential learning, and student success. Indeed, our IS faculty meetings typically focus on teaching strategies and sharing of best practices or new technology that might be incorporated into our teaching. In particular, faculty

² It is notable that in one of the few alumni surveys that we received, a Japanese Studies major both noted the lack of available courses and commented that he/she learned more about Chinese History/Art than Japanese History/Art.

highlighted the care they take in constructing writing and presentation assignments to foster research and communication skills. Several faculty members have invited speakers into their classes (both face-to-face and over Zoom or Skype) to offer their students different perspectives and in-depth expertise on a particular topic. Others have organized field trips to local museums or concerts or other events to bolster cultural knowledge as well as making students more aware of resources and institutions available in the metro Detroit area. Several ISP faculty have worked with our majors to complete an independent study/capstone project³, and in most cases this has required use of the student's foreign language skills. Some of these projects have been presented at undergraduate research conferences such as Meeting of the Minds.

Since we are not an academic department that grants tenure and rely heavily on part-time instructors, we do not emphasize scholarship/research. Nonetheless, some of our part-time faculty have been active on this front. Greg Allar, for example, has presented multiple times at the Lily Conference on Teaching and Learning, and William Londo has presented work in Oakland's "History Comes Alive" series. Among the full-time affiliated faculty, several have published books and/or scholarly articles⁴, and most have gained tenure and promotion in their academic departments.

The ISP also oversees several scholarship programs, most of which are dedicated to study abroad opportunities. In addition to individual student study programs, we have used these funds to support larger projects (e.g. a group of theater students went to Ukraine to study and perform, a group of Model UN students all represented India on various committees at a MUN conference) as well as independent research (e.g. a photo journalism in project in Ukraine that was displayed at the Ukrainian-American Museum in Hamtramck).

Unfortunately, we had a poor response to our alumni survey. However, the responses did indicate a belief that the programs strengths included the language component (respondents indicated they are using their language skills in their current job) and engaging and worthwhile classes. A notable complaint was lack of sufficient classes (which I also noted above) and a "neutral" view on advising within the ISP, which I will address more below.

In terms of diversity and inclusion, another university priority, the ISP fares well. Given its very nature, ISP exposes students to diverse viewpoints and cultures. All of our faculty are either from the region they teach or have extensive experience in the region. Of our 20 full-time affiliated faculty, 9 are women and 8 are non-Caucasian (Black, Asian, Latina). Among our nine part-time faculty, 5 are women and 2 are non-Caucasian (Asian).

³ Oakland University requires a "capstone" experience for all majors, and since ISP majors are so small in number we are unable to offer a seminar-style class, although such a class does exist in the catalog. An independent study/directed research option was the most viable choice as a "capstone".

⁴ Examples of books published in this review period include Aldona Pobutsky, (Spanish), *Pablo Escobar and Narco Culture* (University Press of Florida, 2020); Elizabeth Shesko (History), *Conscript Nation: Coercion and Citizenship in the Bolivian Barracks* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020); Henri Gooren (Anthropology), ed. *Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions* (Springer, 2019); Paul Kubicek (Political Science), *Political Islam and Democracy in the Muslim World* (Lynne Rienner 2015); and Getnet Bekele (History), *Ploughing New Ground: Food, Farming, and Environmental Change in Ethiopia* (James Surrey, 2017).

Program Needs/Possible Reforms

The most serious issue affecting ISP is the low number of majors. As noted, there are several possible reasons for this, and for some of these issues there may be little we can do. One could argue that the “area studies” structure is outmoded and that one should perhaps abandon it in favor of a “Global Studies” degree (which is offered by Wayne State, for example). However, it is highly uncertain this would attract students, we likely lack the faculty to develop new courses that would be necessary for such a major, it is very unclear how any such program would be significantly different from the International Relations major⁵, and it would require a buy-in across numerous university departments and require heavy lifting to get it through university committees. Given costs/benefits, such an approach seems unwise.

We can, certainly, continue to publicize our offerings and do more in the “gateway” classes to perhaps recruit students to become majors or minors. In particular, we could work with departments such as History and Political Science to publicize our minors as a supplement to students majoring in their departments. However—and here I think we need to be honest—students genuinely interested in area-studies programs would likely do far better to enroll at a major research university that has more courses and resources in these areas. Our offerings simply do not compete, and it may even be the case that such students are self-selecting and not coming to Oakland because they can find better programs elsewhere.

Of course, we could try to strengthen our programs, primarily by hiring more faculty and developing and offering more courses. However, lacking clear student demand, it is uncertain if such courses would enroll, and most of these courses would have to be developed in other departments, which face their own limitations (e.g. declining/flat enrollments prevent Political Science from hiring full-time faculty from teaching Latin American or Asian Politics; History has not made hiring a full-time faculty in Japanese History a priority; Anthropology has small enrollment and thus seems unlikely to make numerous hires) and other priorities (e.g. Art and Art History is more focused on developing Studio Art and Graphic Design programs than Art History, which has been its traditional contribution to ISP). We could, however, seek to work with departments to support their hiring of faculty who might contribute to ISP courses, in particular with an eye to them developing courses that would be useful for our majors and minors. Better communication between ISP and departments in the College would be helpful in this regard.

I do think one area we can improve is advising of students in our programs. In the past, I have reached out to students to let them know of my availability and point them to advising resources in their geographic area of interest. We could do more to ensure that students actually meet with advisers and feel that they have an academic “home” at the university (I imagine that for most ISP

⁵ I had discussed with the previous dean a model in which students would take 5 “area studies” courses and 5 more general “global” courses (e.g. Political Development, International Migration) and create a “Global Studies” degree with an area concentration in lieu of the area-studies major. However, it quickly became apparent that students could pursue this within the existing International Relations degree offered by Political Science.

majors they identify most strongly with the language department). We could also reach out to the majors and find venues for them to present their work at ISP events. I think a student “exit survey” from our majors would also be useful in learning both about their assessment of their experience as well as how they intend to use their degree.

The easiest reform we could make—which would be of benefit to students in terms of improving choice of courses—would be to consolidate the Japanese and Chinese Studies into an Asian Studies major. This would also allow us to abandon the “complementary” area component of this major. Ideally, I would like to eliminate the “complementary” area for Latin American Studies as well, but at present our offerings are too thin to offer a strong 44 credit major that would only include courses with Latin American content.

Faculty in the ISP have had several discussions in recent years about how to improve our course offerings and overall program. We are certainly open to new ideas that might generate growth and improvement. With this in mind, I look forward to feedback on this report.

Appendix 1 Full- and Part-Time Faculty in the ISP

Full-Time (Tenured or Tenure-Track) Affiliated Faculty (Home Department in Parentheses)

African and African-American Studies

Getnet Bekele (History)

Dewitt Dykes (History)

Matthew Fails (Political Science)

Mark Stone (Music)

China

Hsiang-hua Chang (Chinese)

Alan Epstein (Political Science)

Yan Li (History)

Mingming Liu (Chinese)

Chiaoning Su (Communications and Journalism)

Yu-Chuan Chen (Art and Art History)

Japan

Stephen Filler (Japanese)

Latin America

Henri Gooren (Anthropology)

Aldona Pobutsky (Spanish)

Cecilia Saenz-Roby (Spanish)

Elizabeth Shesko (History)

Russia & Eastern Europe

Cristian Cantir (Political Science)

Paul Kubicek (Political Science)

Middle East

Kellie Hay (Communications and Journalism)

Paul Kubicek (Political Science)

Laura Landolt (Political Science)

Weldon Matthews (History)

Lecturers/Special Lecturers (Non-Tenure Track)

Greg Allar (Russia and Eastern Europe, Global Health)

Dennis Burin (Global Human Systems)

Annalie Campos (Global Human Systems, Global Cities)

Secil Pacaci Elitok (Middle East)

Carol Hart (Russia and Eastern Europe)

Shalini Jayaprakash (South Asia)

William Londo (Japan)

Helena Riha (China)

Janusz Wrobel (Russia and Eastern Europe)

Appendix 2 Enrollment in ISP GEGP Courses

	Fall 2010	Winter 2011	Fall 2015	Winter 2016	Fall 2020	Winter 2021
Total 200/2000 level GESP Sections	21	20	14	15	16	16
Sections Taught by FT Faculty	4	4	5	5	3	3
Total Enrollment	823	666	274	305	299	351

Appendix 3 ISP Majors/Minors 2010-2021

[illegible]