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MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of International Relations focuses on the myriad and complex interactions of human beings across state boundaries. It aims to provide students a global perspective on the origins of the current international system, the salient concerns in international relations today, and the emerging challenges humanity will face in the years ahead. These goals can best be achieved through an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on the theoretical insights and empirical knowledge of several disciplines, including economics, geography, history, and political science. IR majors are expected to complete a course of study that includes introductory core courses in each of these fields, a course in research methods, as well as advanced courses in a number of more focused tracks. They are expected to attain a level of proficiency in a foreign language that will allow them to do basic research in it. They are also encouraged to study abroad during their junior year. The IR Department strives to educate informed citizens and thoughtful leaders for our emerging global society.

By majoring in International Relations, students should gain an understanding of

1. the key concepts and approaches in the study of modern history;
2. the key concepts and theories of international relations as a subfield of political science;
3. the key concepts and theories of international economics;
4. the key concepts and theories of world geography;
5. how these disciplines inform the study of the evolution of the modern international system and particular issue areas in contemporary international relations, such as international security, international political economy, international law and organizations, and protection of the environment;
6. basic research methods in history and the social sciences, including both qualitative and quantitative methods;
7. a foreign language at least to the intermediate level of proficiency.
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR

Credits
• A minimum of 40 credits
• 12 credits must be at the 300 level and undertaken in at least two disciplines.
Disciplines are economics, geography, history, politics, and other fields. IR is not a
discipline; most IR courses are politics courses by discipline. These courses must be taken
at Mount Holyoke or another of the Five Colleges. Only 4 credits of independent work
can count toward the requirement for courses at the 300 level.

Courses
The following courses are required:
• One of the following: Economics 213: Economic Development or Economics 218:
  International Economics. Please note that the Economics Department requires Economics
  110: Introductory Economics as a prerequisite for Economics 213 and 218.
• One of the following: Geography 105: World Regional Geography or Geography 206:
  Political Geography. Students with high school preparation in geography should take
  Geography 206.
• One of the following: History 151: Modern and Contemporary European Civilization or
  History 161: British Empire and Commonwealth
• Politics 116: World Politics

These introductory courses provide the foundation for more advanced coursework in the
IR major. Therefore, they should all be completed within the first five semesters at Mount
Holyoke.

• IR 200: Research Methods – intended for IR majors in their sophomore year.

Focus
• Each student’s major must have a focus, consisting of at least 12 credits in two different
disciplines, only 4 credits of which may be independent study. Students may elect one of
the following five foci: global commons, international institutions, international peace
and security, international political economy, or international ethics. They may also
design a focus, with the approval of their advisor and the chair.

Foreign Language Requirement
• Each student is expected to possess or acquire proficiency in a foreign language up to
the intermediate level. This ordinarily requires two semesters of language study beyond
the minimum requirements of the college, or four semesters in total.

Study Abroad
• Students are encouraged to spend at least one semester studying abroad during their junior year. A suitable program and course of study should be chosen with the help of the student’s advisor.

Honors Work
• The IR Department reserves its honors for majors who successfully complete a thesis in their senior year. Seniors writing a thesis must enroll in IR 395: Independent Study for two semesters.

Other
• Students should read this handbook carefully for more information on all requirements listed above.

• Soon after declaring their major, students should plan individual programs of study in consultation with one or more members of the faculty committee, one of whom will be designated the student’s academic advisor.

• Exceptions to the requirements above will be made only in rare cases and require the approval of the chair.

• The IR Department does not cross-list courses in other departments that satisfy the major’s requirements. Generally, all courses taught by members of the IR Department Committee count toward the major. For courses offered by other faculty, the policy of the department is to accept any course in any department that is directly pertinent to the student’s focus in her major. Thus, for example, a student whose focus is global commons could conceivably count courses offered by the Geology or Biological Sciences Departments. Or a student focusing on international ethics could use certain courses in the Religion or Philosophy Departments to satisfy her requirements in the major. Any questions concerning the appropriateness of a particular course can be answered by the advisor or the department chair. It is important for the student to verify that the course in question will count toward her major before she takes it.

• The IR major focuses on global issues and institutions, and relationships across regions and nations. This does not preclude students from developing expertise in a particular region or nation; indeed, part of the study of international relations is how global issues find local expressions. But students whose primary interest is in a particular area of the world should elect a more appropriate major, such as Latin American or Asian Studies.

• International Relations is an interdisciplinary major. Students who pursue an interdisciplinary major automatically fulfill the college’s “outside the major” requirement. In other words, if you major in IR, you don’t need a minor.
**Requirements for the Minor**

The minor in international relations is the Five College Certificate in International Relations. This program offers students an opportunity to pursue an interest in international affairs as a complement to their majors. The program provides a disciplined course of study designed to enhance understanding of the complex international processes—political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental—that are increasingly important to all nations. The certificate program consists of a minimum of eight courses covering the following areas of study.

- Introductory world politics
- Global institutions or problems
- The international financial and commercial system
- A modern (post-1789) history course relevant to developing international systems
- Contemporary American foreign policy
- A contemporary foreign language up to an intermediate level of proficiency
- Two courses on the politics, economy, and/or society of foreign areas; one must involve the study of a third-world country or region

No more than four of these courses in any one department can be counted toward the certificate, and no single course can satisfy more than one requirement. Students who complete the required courses with a grade of B or better (no pass/fail options) will receive the certificate.

To design a course of study for the minor and to verify that specific courses count toward the IR Certificate, please consult with the chair of the IR Department.
**CORE COURSES**

The core courses in the IR major are those that students must take to fulfill the four required introductory courses in each discipline. In economics, they are either Economics 213: Economic Development or Economics 218: International Economics; in geography, either Geography 105: World Regional Geography or Geography 206: Political Geography; in history, either History 151: Modern and Contemporary European Civilization or History 161: British Empire and Commonwealth; and in politics, Politics 116: World Politics. In addition, IR 200: Research Methods is considered a core course.

The specific content of each core course will depend naturally on the instructor teaching it. But because each of these courses is vital to the overall curriculum of the IR Department and to ensure a basic level of consistency across instructors, the faculty has agreed on the following more detailed guidelines for the content of each course. These guidelines should be considered the minimum goals or expectations for the course.

**Economics**

Economics has several applications within the IR major because economics intersects so many areas of past, present, and future international relations. These areas are broadly covered in two courses, Economics 213: Economic Development and Economics 218: International Economics, which deals with international trade and finance. The overarching goals for both classes include reviews of basic economic theory, applications of theory to international settings, and basic empirical literacy (how to read tables and graphs, how to interpret common statistics, and how to link theory with empirical evidence). The specific applications of economics for IR majors will depend on whether the student chooses the International Economics or Economic Development route. Topics and goals covered in each course are listed below:

*Economics 213: Economic Development*

- The meaning and measurement of economic development
  - (a) structural change
  - (b) economic growth
  - (c) increased human well-being
- The determinants of (a) –(c)
- The role of state and market in bringing about (a) – (c): competing perspectives
- What accounts for differences in development among the different developing regions?
- The role of international economic interactions in the development process: competing perspectives
  - trade
  - aid
  - foreign direct investment
- capital flows
  • Sustainable development: economic development and the environment
  • The role of key international institutions (WTO, World Bank, IMF, regional
development banks) in shaping development strategies.

_Economics 218: International Economics_
Traditional trade models including welfare and distributional impacts of free trade among
trading countries
  • Applications of models to real world scenarios including agriculture, migration,
environment, FDI, exchange rate, EU, etc.
  • Critiquing policy and models
  • Macroeconomic effects of economic crises for different types of countries
    (developed, developing, transitional).
  • Goals and history of WTO, other free trade agreements, World Bank, and IMF
  • Significance and implications of the euro, common currencies, etc.

_Geography_
Geography is a discipline that studies the relationships among people, places, society, and
the environment. Physical geography focuses on the study of the natural environment,
and human geography deals with people’s interaction with this environment. Because
human beings have struggled over land and resources since the beginning of history, the
study of geography is in many ways the starting point for the study of international
relations. The salience of such issues as climate change, sustainable development,
resource conflicts, and international migration in contemporary international relations
highlights the continuing importance of geography. Both courses below introduce
students to key concepts and methods used by physical and human geographers. Students
with high school preparation in geography should elect the more advanced Geography
206: Political Geography.

_Geography 105: World Regional Geography_
  • World regions: how they developed through time, their dynamic features and
    locational attributes.
  • The notion of cultural landscape; how humans have transformed space into
distinct places that are unique and heavily loaded with meaning and symbols of
identity.
  • How geographic diversity comes in conflict with globalization and how
    globalization in different places is contested, renegotiated, protected, or preserved.
  • Basic themes in the study of population: distribution, structure, population
    change, movement and migration, and the question of overpopulation and
    overconsumption and examination of the implications of these factors for the
    future of countries and regions.
• Relationships between people and their environment, with technology as a mediating force between them, and exploration of how human activities affect natural systems and how natural systems may limit human opportunity.
• Critical issues that are shaping regions, including migration within and across national boundaries, cultural conflicts within and across state boundaries, food security, and the relationships among population growth, scarce resources, and environmental degradation.
• Basic principles of economic location—why economic activities take place where they do—and discussion of each region’s participation in the world-system or global economy.
• Modes of production, distribution of livelihood resources, and patterns of resource uses and misuses.
• Extent and causes of gender-based inequality in livelihood resource distribution and social amenities and its consequences on development efforts in developing regions.
• Contemporary urban processes and the social, economic, political, and environmental problems of increasing urbanization.

Geography 206: Political Geography
• The concept of human territoriality: the “conditions” of human territoriality, the “levels” of territoriality, and how territorial “influence” is carried out.
• The concept of living space and organic state and its ideological underpinning.
• The geographical bases of national states and nationalism and the processes of political nation-building.
• How the territory of the state is acquired and boundaries are defined, delimited, and demarcated.
• The legacies of boundary superimposition as sources of contemporary territorial conflict.
• How and why the political-territorial basis of the modern state system is changing.
• The pressures on state primacy (globalization, transnational corporations, international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, international migration, nationalist and separatist movements).
• The rise of ethnic conflicts as a major development in global political disputes and the roles major regional and global political powers play in those conflicts.
• Transboundary resources and resource scarcity as growing sources of conflict.
• Factors behind regional economic/political integration initiatives (for example, the EU, AU) and the geographical circumstances that have facilitated those factors.
• Ways in which the international law of the seas treats coastal waters, exclusive economic zones, and the high seas, as well as the presence of—and reasons for—jurisdictional conflicts.
• Landlocked states and the international law of the seas.

History
History contributes to the IR major in large part through its attention to change and continuity over time, and through its insistence that explaining how things came to be helps us to understand their essences and trajectories. It offers rich insight into the modern state system and global economy, as well as into the disciplinary array—including political science, economics, and geography—through which we now study them. History also contributes to International Relations by straddling the social sciences and the humanities. Historians use data and scholarly methods to build theories, but they also seek out theory-breaking specifics and construct narratives so nuanced as to defy abstraction or modeling.

IR majors are required to take one of two courses as their core course in history: History 151: Modern and Contemporary European Civilization or History 161: The British Empire and Commonwealth. Common to both courses are the following themes:

1. The historical development of the modern state and of the modern state system
   • explanations for the rise and spread of the sovereign state
   • historical political philosophy
   • types, uses, and implications of state power
   • interactions among states

2. The historical development of national, racial, and other ideologies or legitimacies
   • relationship to the state
   • types of nationalism: ethnic, civic, revolutionary, progressive, conservative, reactionary, secular, anti-modernist, etc.
   • historical and social underpinnings

Politics
Politics, according to one famous definition, is who gets what, when, and how. We might add “at all levels of human interaction, from the local to the global” to the end of this definition. Politics is deeply implicated in all forms of international relations, whether the actors are states or other organizations, and whether the interaction is cooperative, competitive, or conflictual. Political science attempts to provide a framework for analysis of why groups of people behave the way they do at the international level.

Politics 116: World Politics
This course provides an introductory survey of international relations (IR) as a subfield of political science. After completing World Politics, students should know the central concepts, contending approaches, and influential theorists in IR. They should be familiar with the key historical events cited by IR theorists to support their arguments, ranging from the Peloponnesian War to the cold war. They should have an overview of how the
current international system evolved, beginning with the global dissemination of the European state system through imperialism, followed by decolonization after the two World Wars, and the development of international law and organizations. In its final weeks World Politics should lay the basis for advanced courses by outlining some of the key issues in international relations today.

1. Key concepts and theories:
   • realism, liberalism, constructivism
   • state, international system, international society, anarchy, security dilemma
   • war, three images – causes of war
   • hegemony, hegemonic wars
   • imperialism, nationalism, core vs. periphery
   • balance of power
   • containment, nuclear revolution, nonaligned movement
   • sovereignty, regionalism
   • interdependence, international regimes
   • dependency, dependent development

2. Historical events
   • Peloponnesian War
   • Peace of Westphalia
   • old imperialism, new imperialism
   • World Wars I and II
     - causes of the world wars
     - Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations
   • Cold War
     - superpower rivalry and containment
     - nuclear proliferation
     - decolonization
     - nonaligned movement’s emergence and weaknesses
     - development of UN
   • Post-cold war
     - subnational and transnational challenges to sovereign state
     - international political economy
     - environmental politics
     - interdependence and globalization

IR 200: Research Methods
This course is intended to develop skills in writing expository essays and to introduce basic research methods in disciplines vital to the study of international relations. The course provides a foundation for writing research papers in advanced courses, as well as an honors thesis. It also provides the basis for more advanced coursework in quantitative and qualitative research methods, which are highly recommended for any student considering graduate study in history, the social sciences, or interdisciplinary fields such as international relations/affairs, public policy, and public administration. It is limited to IR majors and should be taken in the sophomore year.
The course is divided into three components: (1) the art of writing essays, (2) quantitative methods, (3) qualitative methods. The main points covered in each section are as follows:

1. The art of writing essays
   - structure of an essay
   - formulating an argument
   - causation and correlation
   - marshaling evidence
   - good prose

2. Quantitative methods
   - critical assessment of quantitative data
     - tables and graphs
     - survey and polling data
     - internal and external validity
   - calculating and interpreting basic statistics
     - mean, median, standard deviation
     - standard error, confidence intervals, and test-statistics
   - regression analysis and interpreting regression results

3. Qualitative methods
   - finding sources
   - evaluating sources
   - analyzing sources
   - comparison and case studies
   - interviews
   - participant observation

Taken together, all three segments of the course contribute to the aim of training students to think critically, research systematically, and write persuasively.
FOCUS

Each student must have a focus within her course of study in the department. The purpose of the focus requirement is to give students a more in-depth, interdisciplinary understanding of important issues in international relations. The focus also provides the foundation for advanced independent study, including the writing of an honors thesis that applies the focus’s broad international themes to more specific cases. Ideally, students should elect one of the following five foci at the time they declare their major and begin coursework in it.

The five foci along with suggested courses in each are listed below. The list of courses within each focus is not exhaustive and is merely illustrative. Students may elect other courses at MHC, the other Five Colleges, or from study abroad with the approval of their advisor. A minimum of 12 credits from at least two different disciplines must be taken in a student’s chosen focus, only 4 credits of which may be independent study. Courses required for the major may not be used toward this 12-credit requirement.

Students may design their own focus in consultation with their advisor and with the approval of the chair. The proposed focus should be (1) interdisciplinary in nature and (2) substantially different from the foci listed below.

Global Commons: focuses on international cooperation and conflict over natural resources and protection of the environment; population growth and international migration; urbanization; international health

- Econ 203: Environmental Economics
- Econ 225: Health Economics
- Econ 312: Seminar in International Trade
- EnvSt 210: Political Ecology
- EnvSt 340: Political Economy of International Conservation
- Geog 204: Human Dimensions of Environmental Change
- Geog 311: Global Movement: Migrations, Refugees, and Diasporas
- Geog 319: Africa: Problems and Prospects
- Geog 212: Global Economic Geography
- Geog 312: Seminars: Resource and Conflict
- Geog 313: Third World Development
- Hist 206: African Cities
- Hist 256: Interpreting Nature
- Hist 284: History, Ecology and Landscape
- Hist 301: History, Globalization, and Environmental Change
- Hist 301: Food and Famine in African History
- IR 241: Global Resource Politics
- IR 262: Transnational Social Movements and World Politics
- Pol 366: International Migration
- RES 242: Oil and Water Don’t Mix: Geopolitics, Energy, and the Environment
**International Institutions**: focuses on the evolution of sovereign statehood and the modern state system; challenges to it from transnational and subnational forces; international law and organization

*Econ 204: Human Agency and Historical Transformation: Pivotal Moments in the Development of Capitalism*

*Econ 314: Economic Development in the Age of Globalization*

*Econ 349: The Political Economy of the G-20*

*Hist 260: From Habsburg to Hitler*

*Hist 264: German History in the Modern World*

*Hist 301: Nationalism and Nation Building in East Asia*

*Hist 301: States and Sovereignty in the British Empire*

*Hist 301: The Indian Ocean World*

*Hist 301: Nationalism and Nation Building in East Asia*

*Hist 331: Asian History: Imperial Japan 1868-1945*

*Hist 341: East African History*

*Hist 386: Central America: Reform, Reaction, Revolution*

*Hist 390: South Asian Nationalisms*

*IR 262: Transnational Social Movements and World Politics*

*IR 362: European Public Debates in Times of Crisis*

*LAS 278: The Fiction of History: Historical Truth and Imaginative Invention in the Latin American Novel*

*RES 330: Nationalism*

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**International Peace and Security**: focuses on formal diplomatic relations among states and more informal nonstate interactions across state boundaries; the sources of conflict and cooperation in international relations; the history of war and its changing nature today; means of conflict resolution

*College 250: War: What Is It Good For?*

*EurSt 316: Foreigners Within, Foreigners Without: Europe and Its New Neighbors*

*Hist 240: The Holocaust*

*Hist 260: World War I*

*Hist 264: German History in the Modern World*

*Hist 301: Germans, Slavs, and Jews 1900-1950*

*Hist 301: World War I and the Making of the Twentieth Century*

*Hist 301: Race, Gender, and Empire: The US and the World*

*Hist 381: Race, Nation, War*

*IR 214: War and Propaganda*

*IR 222: The United States, Israel and the Arabs*

*IR 224: The Unites States and Iran*

*IR 270: American Foreign Policy*

*IR 319: The Unites States and the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights*

*Pol 357: War and Peace in South Asia*

*Pol 380: The Politics of Ethnic Conflict*

*Pol 385: International Security*

*RES 241: Russia and the West*
International Political Economy: focuses on the evolution of the global economy; current international economic relations and institutions; economic development; international trade and finance
Econ 202: East Asian Economic Development
Econ 204: Human Agency and Historical Transformation: Pivotal Moments in the Development of Capitalism
Econ 312: Seminar in International Trade
Econ 314: Economic Development in the Age of Globalization
Econ 321: Comparative Economic Systems
Econ 326: Economics of Cyberspace
Econ 349: The Political Economy of the G-20
Geog 212: Global Economic Geography
Geog 313: Third World Development
Hist 214: History of Global Inequality
Hist 389: Agrarian America: Sugar, Cotton, Coffee, Wheat
IR 240: International Political Economy
RES 312: Silk Roads: Old and New

International Ethics: focuses on normative conceptions of order and justice in world politics; ideologies and intellectual movements; human rights
Geog 313: Third World Development
Hist 101: Talking About a Revolution: Intellectuals in Modern China
Hist 223: Religion and Politics in Modern India
Hist 230: History and Law
Hist 301: Education in Middle Eastern History
Hist 365: Modern Europe: The Twentieth Century: Minority Rights in Modern Europe
Hist 365: Minority Rights in Modern Europe
IR 112: Speaking and Arguing: The Rhetoric of Peace and War
IR 237: International Human Rights
IR 262: Transnational Social Movements and World Politics
IR 305: International Society
IR 333: Just War and Jihad: Comparative Ethics of War and Peace
IR 341: Political Islam
IR 343: Law and Religion
IR 362: European Public Debates in Times of Crisis
IR 365: Ethics and International Relations
RES 313: The New Democracies
RES 330: Nationalism
RES 350: Revolutions
Deciding to Write an Honors Thesis

Deciding to write an honors thesis is one of the most important and consequential decisions an IR major can make. There are many compelling reasons to undertake this enterprise, and a few compelling reasons not to.

If you want to graduate with honors in International Relations, you will have to write a thesis. According to college legislation, all students entering the honors program must have maintained a cumulative average of 3.00 in their college work or a 3.00 in their major field prior to their senior year. Seniors who successfully complete a thesis are recommended by the IR Department for honor, high honor, or highest honor in International Relations. These honors recommendations are reserved for IR majors, and only IR majors may write and submit a thesis within the IR Department. The department’s recommendations for honors are simply that; the final rankings are determined by the Academic Administrative Board.

You cannot graduate with honors in International Relations if you do not write a thesis, but you may still graduate cum laude or magna cum laude from the college if you maintain the required minimum cumulative GPA. Summa cum laude requires both a minimum GPA and a highest honor recommendation for a senior thesis. For more information on the college’s honors program, see http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/deans/22262.shtml.

Many students think that writing a thesis will help them get into graduate school. In some cases, this may be true. An outstanding thesis certainly provides an additional and significant credential on your c.v. when applying to graduate programs. This can be an important “tipping” factor in your favor if your application falls somewhere on the border between acceptance and rejection during the review process. But an outstanding thesis cannot by itself compensate for a mediocre academic record. The most important criteria that graduate school admissions committees look for are outstanding performance in a rigorous course of study and strong letters of recommendation.

In short, the above two reasons should be considered when deciding whether or not to write a thesis, but they should not determine your decision. Researching and writing a senior thesis is a strenuous and time-consuming process. It diverts your time and energy from other courses and activities during your senior year. It can also be extremely rewarding intellectually—a fitting culmination to your major in International Relations—if undertaken for the right reasons. The right reasons include being passionately interested in a particular topic, one in which your work can make an original contribution; having started to explore a topic in a previous class that you want to probe in much greater depth; developing the discipline and skills to undertake and complete a sustained research project.
**Components of an Honors Thesis**

“Honors quality” is a subjective determination, but there are some necessary conditions for an honors thesis. None is sufficient, for an honors paper achieves a remarkable synthesis of a number of attributes. What follows is a list of some of the essential attributes.

**Argument**

The thesis is an extended essay, so it must have an argument. The argument is what you intend to prove in your thesis. Strong theses are built upon a clear and coherent assertion of causation or correlation. If someone asks you what your argument is, you should be able to answer them in one sentence that has the general form: “Because of x, then y.”

Worthwhile theses also require an argument that is significant or nontrivial. If the person who asked you what your argument is then proceeds to ask “So what?” you should be able to tell her why it is important, how it illuminates other related problems, and how it applies to cases beyond the ones you are studying.

Finally, an argument is framed within a theoretical structure or conceptual framework that draws upon previous work in the relevant discipline or disciplines. Arguments are not made in a vacuum but build on and add to existing theories.

**Scope**

One of the most common mistakes thesis writers make is to tackle a topic that is too broad. The average length of an IR senior thesis is 100 pages. That is not a great deal of space when you consider all the elements necessary to a successful thesis: an introduction, theoretical framework, case studies, and conclusion. No matter how focused you believe your original topic is, it will inevitably grow as you research and write the thesis. Beginning with a broad and diffuse topic risks having the thesis grow beyond manageable bounds. The narrower the scope, the more manageable your task and ultimately the more convincing your argument.

**Originality**

This is a crucial requirement: An honors thesis must make an original contribution to the literature. To fail to demonstrate originality is to write essentially a literature survey.

There are basically two ways to meet the originality test. You might make a novel argument, one that has not been made before on a particular topic. Or you might confirm an existing argument by marshaling new evidence. Either way, originality does not mean that your thesis deals with a topic no one has addressed before. Few topics have been exhaustively or definitively explored. All sound academic work builds upon a foundation laid by generations of scholars who went before. Simply because others have already written books or articles on the same topic is no reason to abandon it. But originality in a heavily studied field requires one to find a fresh angle or perspective, to propose new answers to old questions, and to uncover evidence substantially different from what others have cited in the past.
Primary Research

An original argument requires primary research if it is to be sustained. Primary research simply refers to evidence in original sources. These could include interviews, polls, and other types of surveys that you design and conduct yourself, or ones conducted by others and published or otherwise made available as unedited, raw data. Or they could be diaries, memoirs, oral histories, government cables or memos, newspaper accounts, and film footage. Statistics of all sorts are also essential to supporting many arguments. Primary research does not require uncovering sources no one else has seen or cited before; it does require that you go back to the original sources themselves and not rely on earlier researchers’ analyses or interpretations of these sources.

Primary research is part of the process of writing. While one should always start one’s research with a question in mind, it is more than likely that the question will change in the course of investigation and analysis. Primary research is part of an iterated process: one asks a question, researches a possible explanation, refines the question in light of the research, investigates the new, more refined question, and so forth. There should be a constant and vigorous interaction between the research and the writing of a major essay. Put simply, the absence of primary research suggests that the essay is not rooted in evidence, but rather based on an interpretation of others’ interpretations. Such an essay may provide a useful summary of the existing literature, but it does not advance our understanding of the question being explored and may, unfortunately, perpetuate a gilded error.

Presentation

To be persuasive, an essay has to present the evidence in a clear and logical manner. In the social sciences and humanities, one never “proves” a hypothesis in the sense of the natural sciences and mathematics largely because one can never test thoroughly exact conditions over a long period of time. But one can persuade, carefully and fairly.

Honesty and conviction are the keys to persuasiveness. Honesty is the presentation of the details without exaggeration. Never claim more than the evidence warrants; acknowledge limitations in your research and the merits of counterarguments. Conviction is the sense the reader gets that in spite of your work’s limitations and all the counterarguments, you stand by your argument. You do so based on a carefully reasoned analysis of the best evidence available to you.

Neither honesty nor conviction can make up, however, for poor prose. Good writing depends on clarity and precision, on direct language and structures. The final draft of your thesis must be free of grammatical, syntactical, and typographical errors.

The final format of the thesis should comply with college regulations. See the detailed instructions at http://www.mtholyoke.edu/archives/collections/honors_format.html. At the minimum, an IR thesis should have the following parts:

Title page
Table of contents
The Role of the Advisors

Every thesis writer works closely with two advisors beginning in the first semester of her senior year, one primary and the other secondary. At least one of the two advisors must be a member of the IR Department Committee. The role of the advisor in the thesis-writing process is very different from the role of an instructor in a normal class. The thesis advisor is not an instructor responsible for teaching a given syllabus to the student. Rather, the advisor is more akin to a coach, making sure the student stays on course, offering suggestions for improvement, and providing encouragement during the inevitable moments of frustration and despair.

Every advisor and every student is different, so it is impossible to articulate a preferred routine with precision. There is, however, a thin line between doing independent work properly and improperly. Avoiding one’s advisors can lead to disaster, and a disaster which becomes self-perpetuating the longer it goes on. Over-reliance on an advisor leads to a different type of disaster, one which vitiates the very idea of independent work. The following are some guidelines for a healthy student-advisor relationship.

- The student should meet with her advisors as soon as possible in the fall term. Meeting times should be clearly established. Failure to keep these appointments is a sufficient reason for ending the project.
- A work schedule should be discussed. It does not matter what the schedule is—once a week, once a month; a chapter every two weeks or a draft in January. Again, these schedules should be clear, and lack of adherence to them is a sufficient reason for ending the project.
- Time for reading drafts should be discussed. Some faculty have a quick turn-around time, others take longer.
- Advisors should take great care in pressing their own ideas regarding the argument and methodology. Any student who thinks that her own point of view is being lost should raise the matter with her advisors as soon as possible.

Schedule

Ideally, a student should begin to formulate a research question and to do preliminary research in the second semester of her junior year or during the summer before senior year. Often, research papers for seminars taken in previous years will provide the basis for an honors thesis. A research paper that gripped your interest on a topic that you felt could and should be explored more intensively makes for an excellent starting point in developing a proposal for honors work. The summer months also allow you to begin archival research or conduct field work.

Once you have a working draft of your proposal, you need to find a primary advisor. Again, it is vital to plan ahead because potential advisors often get “booked up” in the
spring semester or over the summer. If a faculty member agrees to serve as your advisor, they will need to enroll you in their section of IR 395: Independent Study for the fall semester. If you are approved to continue in the spring semester, you will receive a “cont” grade for the fall semester and will again be enrolled in IR 395 for the spring semester. At the end of the year, you will receive a grade apart from your honors recommendation for IR 395.

If you return to campus for your senior year without having written a thesis proposal or having started research, you start the process at a disadvantage but not a disqualifying one. It’s not too late to begin and to write an excellent thesis. You will, however, have to work quickly to design a proposal and to find advisors. The following is a general overview of the thesis-writing schedule. Specific dates for the current academic year will be provided to all seniors by the chair.

By the end of September, you should have written a proposal of six to seven double-spaced pages. It should have your name, project title, and two advisors’ names clearly written at the top of the first page. If you have only one advisor at this stage, a second advisor will be assigned to you by the IR Department Committee. Either your primary or secondary advisor must be a member of the IR faculty.

The proposal should contain the following parts:

(1) ABSTRACT: Summarize what you intend to do, how you intend to do it, and why it’s important. Clearly state your research question and working argument (What’s your hypothesis?). Provide a tentative table of contents, if you can.

(2) CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: Outline the historical and theoretical context of your project. Which concepts and theories will you be drawing upon? Which debates and controversies is your topic situated in?

(3) METHODOLOGY: Outline your research methodology (How do you intend to test your hypothesis?). What primary sources will you explore? Are you going to conduct interviews or surveys? Are you going to employ any quantitative methods?

(4) SIGNIFICANCE: Describe why this project is significant to the study of international relations. If you have a project that is closely focused on the study of one country, institution, or group, what are the broader regional or international implications of your topic and how will you bring those into your thesis?

(5) WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY: List the key works in your field that you have already consulted or plan to consult as you pursue your research.

Shortly after your proposal is submitted, the IR Department Committee will meet to approve it and to suggest possible ways to refine it. If you have not identified a secondary advisor, the committee will suggest someone.
By the middle of January, you must submit to your two advisors approximately 35-40 pages from your thesis. This work may be a shortened draft of your intended final thesis, or it may be one or two chapters out of the intended whole. What you choose to write should be approved in advance by your advisors. You should keep in mind that this work will be used by them to judge whether your work in the fall semester merits continuation in the spring semester as an honors thesis. Strictly speaking, you are not approved for honors work until the spring semester; the fall semester is a sort of probationary period of independent study during which you need to demonstrate that you are on track to completing a thesis. So the work you submit should be broadly representative of the substance and quality of what you intend to submit as a final draft of your thesis.

By the beginning of spring break, you should submit a complete first draft of your thesis to your two advisors.

By the middle of April, you should submit a complete second draft of your thesis to your two advisors. This version should reflect all suggestions for revisions of your complete first draft made by them. If at this point your two advisors decide that the work merits consideration for honors, a third reader will be appointed to review your work.

In early May, you will defend your thesis before the three faculty members who have read your thesis. If the chair of the IR Department is not one of the three readers, she or he will also be a member of the defense committee. In addition, all the members of the IR faculty will be invited to read the thesis and attend the defense. During the oral defense, the committee may ask you to describe your argument in detail, how you conducted your research, and the problems or unresolved issues you identify in the final product. Based on your written thesis and your performance in the oral defense, your three readers will recommend a grade of highest honor, high honor, honor, or no honor to the full IR Department Committee. The names of those candidates that receive a recommendation of honor, high honor, or highest honor from the IR Department Committee will then be forwarded to the Academic Administrative Board. The final determination of the level of honors will be made by the AAB and will not be announced until Commencement.

So, in summary, the following are some key deadlines that all thesis writers need to keep in mind:

* by beginning of October: Thesis proposal is due in the IR office
* by mid-January: 35-40 pages of your thesis due to your advisors
* by mid-April: Complete second draft due to your advisors
* by end of April: Final draft submitted to the IR Department
FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

IR majors must have or acquire a level of proficiency in a language other than English up to at least the intermediate level. By completing this requirement, they should be able to conduct basic research in at least one foreign language, including being able to read texts and conduct interviews in it. Students may fulfill this requirement in a number of ways.

Ordinarily, this requirement will be fulfilled by completing a minimum of four semesters (or equivalent) of coursework in a foreign language. Students who fulfill the college’s language requirement by taking a two-semester elementary course sequence will need to take an additional two semesters of coursework at the intermediate level. Students who enter the college with elementary language training need to complete at least two semesters of instruction at the intermediate level, or at least one semester at the advanced level. The self-instructional and mentored language courses offered through the Five College Center for World Languages cannot be used to meet the IR Department’s language requirement.

International students or students whose first language is not English can satisfy the IR Department’s language requirement through the process established by the college for exempting students from the language requirement. To qualify, a student must show

- documentation that she attended a secondary school for at least one year at which instruction was conducted in a language other than English.
- documentation that she attended a secondary school outside of the U.S. where the language of instruction was English, but she elected a language or literature course taught in her native language.
- an O-level, A-level, or GSCE language result (for students from India, this would be a Grade X or Grade XII) or an official record of a college-level course in her native language.

If a student meets at least one of the criteria listed immediately above and wishes to be exempted from the language requirement, she must contact the dean of international students, who will review the student’s records and inform the registrar’s office if she determines that the language requirement has been fulfilled.
STUDY ABROAD

A year or semester of study abroad is an important component of the IR major. Study abroad furthers the central mission of the department to educate global citizens and leaders, not just in the classroom but in the world at large. More concretely, study abroad is valuable to IR majors because it allows

- first-hand experience of different cultures, values, histories, and political and economic systems;
- continuation of language study begun at Mount Holyoke, perhaps in an intensive program;
- coursework in specialized fields that may not be available at MHC or the Five Colleges and are important to a student’s focus within the major;
- preparation for researching and writing a senior thesis.

All students are encouraged to consider in consultation with their advisor how study abroad could further their educational goals in the IR Department. They should also discuss their plans with the staff of the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives.

All courses related to international relations taken abroad and successfully transferred for college credit are eligible to be used toward the IR major. Since no substitutions are allowed for the required courses in the major (20 credits) or for the 12 credits at the 300 level, a maximum of 8 credits may be transferred from abroad. Language courses do not count for the major unless they are advanced courses on a topic related to the student’s focus. If in doubt about a course’s appropriateness, the student should consult her advisor before enrolling in it. Upon completion of study abroad, she should complete the course approval form and submit it to her advisor for their signature. Without this form, courses taken abroad will not be applied toward the student’s major.

Internships abroad also provide valuable international exposure and education. At present, Mount Holyoke does not grant academic credit for these internships, but the internships allow for extended residence in a foreign country and work and learning experiences that enrich the student’s formal program of study. Information on foreign internship opportunities is available from the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives.
ADVISING

Each IR major will be assigned an academic advisor from among the members of the IR Department Committee. Students may request a certain faculty member as their advisor, but the final assignment will be made by the chair. Every effort will be made to match students to faculty in the student’s declared focus within the major.

An understanding of mutual responsibilities and good communication are key to the success of the student-advisor relationship. It is the student’s responsibility to plan her major, including the focus, and to make sure that she is on course for completion of all requirements for graduation. She should be in regular contact with her advisor, updating them on progress toward graduation and any changes to her focus or general program of study. The advisor’s responsibility is to be available on a regular basis for consultation by the student and of course to clear students for registration after meeting with them during each semester’s advising and preregistration period. Each faculty member should establish and publicize their weekly office hours. They should in addition be available for appointments with students who cannot come to the regular office hours.

There are a few conversations that every IR major should have with her advisor. Immediately after a student declares the major, she should meet with her assigned advisor, first, to review courses for the major already taken, and second, to plan her future program of study, including, most importantly, the focus. She should arrive at this meeting having completed the Planning the Major form attached at the end of this section. The form is also available at the IR website and the IR Department office.

Most students will already have begun to complete requirements for the major by the time they formally declare it. A typical student’s program of study will be sequenced so that she takes all the introductory courses within the first five semesters at Mount Holyoke, takes IR 200: Research Methods in the spring semester of sophomore year, begins to take intermediate (200-level) and advanced (300-level courses) in her focus during her sophomore year, studies abroad for all or part of junior year, and then completes the major requirements and possibly writes an honors thesis during senior year. In order for this sequence to work, most students must take some of the required IR courses during their first year at Mount Holyoke, even before they formally declare the IR major. They should in particular plan to take as early as possible Economics 110: Introductory Economics, which is a prerequisite for Economics 213: Economic Development and Economics 218: International Economics, one of which all IR majors must take. They should also plan to take Politics 116: World Politics in their first year, as it is a prerequisite for all courses offered within the IR Department. So at this initial meeting, the student and advisor will want to ensure satisfactory progress toward completion of the required introductory courses. If a student enters the major without having taken any of them, she should make their immediate completion a priority.
Before the end of sophomore year, the student should consult with her advisor regarding plans for study abroad. They should first ensure that study abroad does not impede the student’s completion of all required introductory courses or the required 12 credits at the 300 level, none of which can be substituted by coursework done abroad. They should discuss programs suited to the student’s background and academic interests. They should consider how different programs contribute to the student’s focus in the major or how they might provide a springboard for a senior thesis. They will want to discuss which courses will apply to the IR major when transferred back. If study abroad is partly to fulfill the IR language proficiency requirement, they should also consider the strengths and weaknesses of different programs in language training.

Before the end of junior year, the student and advisor will want to review progress toward completion of the major and all other requirements for graduation. This is the time—not the beginning of senior year—to make sure that the student is on track for graduation within two semesters. The student should enter senior year with all required coursework completed and with clear expectations of completing the other requirements as well, especially the focus. This is also the time to discuss plans for doing honors work and how writing a thesis will affect the student’s schedule during senior year.

In addition to faculty advisors, IR majors may consult senior student liaisons, a number of whom volunteer each year to advise the IR Department Committee and their fellow majors. These liaisons offer a student’s perspective on all aspects of the major and are an invaluable resource. A list of liaisons is available from the IR Department office.
**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
**Planning the Major**  
Minimum of 40 Credits in the Major

**Directions:** List the courses that you intend to take and the semester you will take them. Please consult the IR Handbook and your advisor as you develop this course audit.

**NAME**

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<th>Core Courses¹ (20 credits)</th>
<th>Semester / Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Economics²</td>
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<td>Econ 213: Economic Development <em>or</em> Econ 218: International Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography³</td>
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<td>Geog 105: World Regional Geography <em>or</em> Geog 206: Political Geography</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Hist 151: Mod. and Cont. European Civilization <em>or</em> Hist 161: British Empire and Commonwealth</td>
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<td>Politics</td>
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<td>Pol 116: World Politics</td>
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<td>Methods¹¹</td>
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<td>IR 200: Research Methods</td>
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**Focus:** Global Commons, International Institutions, International Political Economy, International Peace and Security, *or* International Ethics  
(12 credits minimum in at least two disciplines,⁵ only 4 credits of which may be independent study)  

**Elective Courses (8 credits)**

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<th>From the focus and elective courses above, list those at the 300 level (12 credits minimum in at least two disciplines, only 4 credits of which may be independent study)</th>
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<th>Foreign Language Requirement (Intermediate proficiency or above in a modern foreign language)</th>
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1 These courses should all be completed within the first five semesters at Mount Holyoke.

2 Please note that the Economics Department requires Econ 110: Introductory Economics as a prerequisite for Econ 213 and 218.

3 Students with high school coursework in geography should take Geog 206: Political Geography.

4 Should be taken in the sophomore year.

5 Disciplines are economics, geography, history, politics, and other fields. IR is not a discipline; most IR courses are politics courses by discipline.
Sigma Iota Rho, the national honor society for international studies, was established in 1985, and Mount Holyoke College was designated as one of its founding chapters. Since its inception, the society has tried to recognize excellence in the study of international relations and established rigorous criteria for membership. Mount Holyoke College is proud to have regularly graduated a number of students who meet these criteria.

The criteria for membership are as follows:
1. Students must have junior standing with a minimum of sixteen (16) credits in the international relations major. The major requires courses in modern history, international economics, world politics, and political geography.
2. Students must have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.40 and an average of 3.60 in the international relations major. Students must demonstrate proficiency in a modern foreign language.
3. Students should express genuine concern and interest in world issues through participation in activities related to the field of international relations.
4. Any individual of outstanding ability and achievement in the field of international relations may be elected as an honorary member. A maximum of two (2) such members from each class shall be elected each year.

For more information, see the Sigma Iota Rho website: http://www.sigmaiotarho.org.

The IR Department awards the following book prizes to graduating seniors:

- Book Prize for Outstanding Honors Thesis in International Relations (generally awarded to the student who has submitted the best senior thesis).
- Book Prize for Outstanding Performance in the Study of International Relations (generally awarded to the student with the highest GPA in the major).

All eligible students will be considered by the IR Department Committee, but the prizes may not be awarded every year.