

Assessment Rubric for Senior Thesis in International Relations

Learning Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), and Assessment

Student Name: _____
 Reader Name: _____
 Term: _____

Learning Goals of the International Relations Program

- To understand theories of international relations and comparative politics and use them to analyze significant international problems
 Students will be able to demonstrate thorough knowledge of major international and comparative theories. Students should also be able to develop a hypothesis from one or more of these theories and be able to substantiate their arguments with logic, normative insights, and quantitative evidence when appropriate.
 Assessment: To assure consistency and objectivity, faculty will evaluate senior theses using a rubric to determine students' levels of understanding and mastery of theories of international relations and comparative politics. Thorough analysis may require the use of computer-based technologies, published sources, interviews, data sets, surveys, and primary documents.
- To communicate effectively in writing
 Students will be able to express themselves effectively in writing.
 Assessment: To assure consistency and objectivity, faculty will evaluate students' senior theses for analysis and presentation using a rubric. Faculty will meet periodically to evaluate student progress and to determine what measures should be taken to improve analysis and communication.

Learning Outcomes	High Pass 4	Pass 3	Low Pass 2	Fail 1	N/A	Score
Knowledge of the issue under consideration						
Knowledge of the appropriate literature						
Knowledge theories and philosophical positions relevant to the issues						
Application of the multiple disciplines relevant to the issues						
Employment of appropriate evidence						
Sobriety of the analysis						
Skillful written communication of the arguments						
(For Honors Thesis) Skillful oral communication of the arguments						

Categories and Scoring

High Pass

The student with an outstanding grasp of theory, analysis, and effective communication presents a worthwhile and interesting thesis/argument. His or her paper is based on a thorough survey of the relevant theoretical and substantive literature from academic and non-academic sources. Appropriate statistical techniques are used when called for.

The thesis is supported by sound evidence, and the student's analysis is presented in an orderly and well-organized way.

In addition, the student's thesis and the analysis supporting it are compelling and even original. The writing is lively, well-paced, interesting, exciting. It has style. Everything in it seems to fit the thesis. It may have a proofreading error or two, or even a misspelled word, but the reader feels that these errors are the consequence of the normal accidents that all good writers encounter.

Readers of an outstanding thesis can feel a mind at work. They are convinced that the writer cares for his or her ideas, and about the language that carries them.

The writer has considered contrary views and rebutted or adapted them thoughtfully.

Pass

The student demonstrates a good grasp of theory, presents a thorough analysis, and begins to develop an interesting thesis/argument. His or her paper is based on an adequate survey of relevant literature from academic and non-academic sources. Appropriate statistical techniques are used when called for. The thesis is supported by sufficient evidence, and the student's analysis is relatively well organized.

The student's thesis and the analysis supporting it are good, but not completely compelling or original. The writing is clear and effectively communicates the author's points. It may have several proofreading errors or syntactical mistakes, but those do not detract from the paper's substance. The writer has considered contrary views and rebutted or adapted them thoughtfully.

Low Pass

The student who has reached a satisfactory level of theoretical understanding, analysis, and communication presents a thesis/argument. Though it may be vague and broad or obvious, the thesis is supported by evidence and analysis. The evidence may not be original, substantial, or well-organized, but it matches the argument. The analysis may not be sophisticated but demonstrates an understanding of basic political dynamics. The paper demonstrates at least a basic knowledge of theory and the ability to apply relevant theories to the argument and evidence.

The paper may not be very well-written, but has enough structure and clarity to allow the reader to identify and understand the argument and its substantiation. There may be errors in grammar and spelling.

Fail

The student with an unsatisfactory grasp of theory, analysis, and communication either has no thesis or else has one that is strikingly vague, broad, or uninteresting. There is little indication that the student understands the material being presented. The paragraphs do not hold together; ideas do not develop from sentence to sentence. The paper usually repeats the same thoughts again and again, perhaps in slightly different language but often in the same words. The paper is filled with mechanical faults, errors in grammar, and errors in spelling.

N/A

Not applicable.