

International Studies Minor

Core Course Descriptions

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 15: Violence and Security

This course introduces students to the study of violent conflict in international relations. Topics covered include inter-state wars, civil wars, mass killing, genocide, humanitarian interventions and other forms of armed conflict. We examine these often gruesome and usually depressing subjects in search of answers to a deeper question: What impels human beings toward violent conflict? Logically, this impels us also to ask: what permits people to overcome their differences peacefully and cooperate in a non-violent order?

We focus on causal explanations of violent group conflict between and within states—a focus encompassing such seemingly diverse conflicts as World War II, the Cold War, the 1994 Rwandan civil war and genocide, and mass killing and intervention in Darfur. In all these cases and too many more to mention, groups that had formerly cooperated peacefully and often profitably took up arms, with tragic results for themselves and profound consequences for international relations.

Such conflict is not only tragic, it is also deeply puzzling, for people would almost always be better off if they could settle their differences without recourse to force. Yet even though cooperation is commonly in their best interests, groups often find it hard to achieve. This course shows you how social scientists explain conflict, analyze the barriers to cooperation, and assess the different ways individuals, governments, and international institutions might overcome them. We begin by examining the most influential theories of violent conflict in political science. We then apply these ideas to some of the most important policy dilemmas of our time.

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 16 (Geography 6): Introduction to International Development

Why are some countries rich and others so persistently poor? What can, has and should be done about global inequality – and by whom? How much does economic development actually improve peoples' lives? This class addresses these questions from the perspective of critical human geography. Focusing on the regions commonly known as the global South (Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia), the class explores how development meanings and practices have varied over time and place. The first part of the course examines how colonial history, contemporary globalization and international aid have all influenced development (or lack thereof) in different parts of the world. We will give particular attention to the changing role of institutions such as the World Bank. The course then focuses on how some of the big “transitions” long associated with economic development – agricultural “green revolutions”, urbanizations and industrialization – affect human well-being in different parts of the world. We will also consider how development may be influenced by people's access to health care and new technologies.

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 17 (Comparative Literature 57): Places, Cultures, and Identities

This course is being offered by the Comparative Literature program as a qualifying course for the recently designed college minor in International Studies organized by the Dickey Center for International Understanding. Both the minor and this course respond to the increasingly conspicuous global and transnational flow of people, cultural products, and electronically mediated information. Comparative Literature Programs have always maintained a transnational, multilingual perspective. The Dartmouth program intends to build on that history, but also offer a new course intended specifically to engage with contemporary global rather than just European realities, and to become an effective component of the International Studies minor curriculum. Both the program and the College believe that international knowledge and an international perspective are becoming indispensable in the world Dartmouth graduates will enter.

Course literary and media content will vary depending on which faculty member is teaching it, but it will always include a set of core theoretical readings and cultural-studies texts. Topics to be addressed in the course will usually include some or all of the following: identity and difference in cultural global politics; migrancy and global nomadism; colonial encounters in history and post-colonial interactions in the present; de-centered global cultural production and exchange (of literature, film, television, new media texts, etc.); forms of global cultural hegemony and resistance; current global mutations of race, gender, and class (“sweatshop culture”); representation of “global” issues and perspectives in both literary and media history and in the present. In addition, students will explore how globalization affects how the nation-state conceptualizes itself and consequently how citizens have to re-imagine their place in contrasting dialogues about “home.”

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 18 (Geography 2): Global Health and Society

Only a few decades ago, we were ready to declare a victory over infectious diseases. Today, infectious diseases are responsible for the majority of morbidity and mortality experienced throughout the world. Even developed countries are plagued by resistant “super-bugs” and antibiotic misuse. This course will examine the epidemiology and social impact of past and present infectious disease epidemics in the developing and developed world. Using the introduction of drugs to treat HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa as a case study, we will consider political, ethical, medical, legal and economic perspectives in addressing public health concerns. Lessons from past and current efforts to control global infectious diseases will guide our examination of the social, economic, cultural and political constraints societies face in dealing with public health threats.