

**Program Review**  
**University of Tennessee at Chattanooga**  
**Humanities: International Studies**  
**April 2025**

**Reviewer: Alexandru Balas, PhD, State University of New York at  
Cortland**

**1. How would you rank this program with similar ones in the state, region, and nation?**

The International Studies Program benefits from the hard-work of the International Studies (IST) coordinator, Prof. Jose-Luis Gastanaga from the Modern Languages Department. He seems to be the only driving force behind this program. In this context, the Humanities: International Program has a healthy enrollment with 26 students enrolled in fall 2023. Compared to the state, region, and the nation where similar programs are faced with decreasing enrollments, the International Studies Program has managed to maintain a stable enrollment for the period 2019-2023 and even show a slight increase (21 students in fall 2019 to 26 students in fall 2023). As an interdisciplinary major it is expected that the number of students enrolled will be smaller than other discipline-specific majors.

**2. Are the intended program and learning outcomes clearly identified?**

Yes, the program's learning outcomes are clearly identified in the self-study. On pages 12-14 the self-study presents how the Humanities: International Studies program fits within the larger goals of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Strategic Plan mission. Sharper program-specific goals could be developed on pages 14-15 where the five bullet point specific program goals/outcomes read more as actions required from the students, rather than learning outcomes/goals for the program. While the five actions listed are excellent, they should have some larger learning outcomes behind them, which are specific to Humanities: International Studies. In addition, the course goals for the capstone course HUM 4960 could benefit more from a specific International Studies focus, as the way they are right now is quite general for Humanities courses.

**3. What goals should the department establish regarding its curriculum?**

The self-study mentions the need for an introductory level course for the International Studies students. The course suggested is: MLNG 1500 World Cinema. This is a great suggestion which

should be implemented. This course should be required of all the International Studies majors and minors. This will allow students to create an International Studies majors identity and have their own major-specific cohort.

In addition, my recommendation is to create also two other courses, one a 2000 and one a 3000 level, to allow students to take at least one course per academic year with their International Studies peers. The fact that students will interact with International Studies faculty and create that major-specific identity could allow for a low percentage of dropouts from the major, but also for promoting the major to other students. There is no data about the numbers of dropouts from the major, as many who do not come to meet with the IST coordinator in their first two academic years, only get to meet the coordinator in their junior or even senior year.

My second recommendation regarding the curriculum is the main recommendation I am making as an external reviewer: make changes in myMoocsDegree/Degree Works (DW) to allow potential and current students plus their advisors to see their progress in the major. There is language telling students that they need a specific number of credits at upper division in the 7 disciplines of the major. Because there is only language in DW without specific courses, the Registrar's Office has to manually make substitutions, and the students and their advisors cannot see progress towards degree, and more important for adding new majors, cannot run "What If" to get a sense of how many more courses a student would need if they were to add IST as a dual major or switch a major to IST. Degree Works should list all the courses students can take in the major. There would be required courses (e.g.: MLNG1500, HUM3400-internship, HUM4960 – capstone, potentially new 2000 and 3000 courses), and sections of a large number of courses which could be taken in the seven disciplines (with a minimum of three disciplines represented in the courses taken by students). Specifically listing the courses will allow for everyone accessing DW to get a sense of what this major entails and for those already registered in the major, their progress towards degree.

**4. What criteria does the department use to evaluate sufficient achievement of intended program outcomes? Are the criteria appropriate for such evaluation and/or for the program? Does the department make use of evaluation information and/or information obtained from student, alumni, and employer surveys and/or data from institutional research to strengthen and improve the program?**

The self-study has excellent evidence for evaluating the achievements of the program. I really like the exit essays that students have to write. I think that evidence about the positive impact of the International Studies major should be highlighted more in promotional materials, social media and website of the major and at the college and university level.

**5. Part 2 Curriculum Questions - Is the current curriculum appropriate to the level and purpose of the program? Is it adequate to enable students to develop the skills and attain the outcomes needed for graduates of the program? Does it reflect the current standards, practices, and issues in the discipline? Does the department**

**regularly review and revise curriculum content and organization to ensure that it is appropriate and that it prepares students to meet the specified learning outcomes? Will the department need to update the curriculum and/or develop new or alternative offerings in the near future? Is the curriculum content appropriate for UTC? Are the core and advanced courses approximately balanced? Does the overall curriculum ensure the development of appropriate skills in the following areas: general education, critical thinking skills, research strategies and skills, written and oral communications, and computer and technology-related skills (in general and specific to the discipline)? Are appropriate pedagogical and/or technological innovations included that enhance student learning? Are the department's instructional practices consistent with the standards of the discipline? • Do the instructional practices provide adequate opportunities for student interactions with one another, faculty, and professionals? Does the department make adequate efforts to include students in the life of the program (e.g., seeking student advice in reviewing the curriculum/course schedules/teaching methods, etc.)? Do students have adequate opportunities to participate in research, practica/field experiences/internships, or other experiences that allow them to apply learning outside the classroom and/or expose students to professional and career opportunities appropriate to the discipline? Does the department clearly outline program requirements and offer courses regularly to ensure timely completion of the program?**

I combined all the questions in Part 2 – Curriculum under question 5. Please find my answers below:

1. The curriculum allows for a lot of flexibility for courses taken but this flexibility could be better structured through Degree Works as mentioned above. This structuring could help increase the number of students adding International Studies as a major as it would clarify for them and their advisors what courses count towards the major. Such a change would also outline clearly the program requirements and allow to check to make sure that courses are offered regularly to ensure the continuation of timely completion.
2. An introductory 1000-level courses is absolutely necessary for this major. One 2000 and one 3000-level course are highly recommended, too. These courses should be compulsory for all International Studies majors. It is great to see a 3000-level internship, and a 4000-level 1 credit course, but the way these courses are set up right now do not allow students to create an identity of International Studies.
3. There should be compulsory meetings for all new IST majors with the IST coordinator.
4. There should be a faculty advisory committee for the International Studies major. This faculty advisory committee could include the following: the coordinator of the International Studies program, 1 representative for each of the 7 disciplines which provide courses for the major, and potentially some non-voting representatives from the

various advising units on campus (The Hub, Casa, and Trio) plus the director of the Global Education Center. The faculty members from the 7 disciplines would serve as an interface between the major and their departments and could promote the major to their students, as a potential dual major and/or minor. The advisors should attend the meetings of the IST Faculty Advisory Committee to be aware of the most updated versions of the International Studies program and to know how to promote the major to potential students. The director of the Global Education Center could provide ideas for involving the International Studies majors in academic endeavors on and off campus (study abroad, larger Chattanooga community etc.). Such a body would make sure that not all the work would fall on the shoulders on the coordinator. A curriculum committee and a recruitment committee could be formed in this sense. Membership in the IST Faculty Advisory Committee would serve as service for the faculty and advisors participating.

5. Students have adequate opportunities to participate in practica / field experiences / internships and study abroad opportunities. More could be done to allow for research opportunities within the major, too. While there are some points of evidence that International Studies do research (like the one who presented research at the National Collegiate Honors Conference and got research published in an undergraduate journal), more could be done to offer research skills to all International Studies majors. One potential idea could be to increase the capstone course from 1 to 3 credits which should count as “on load” teaching for the coordinator of the International Studies Program, and to also infuse a research methods component as a final research paper for the capstone project, in addition to the exit essay. The capstone course could be taught only once per academic year instead of twice as it is set up right now.
  
6. **Part 3 – Student Experience Questions: Does the program and curricula provide students with the opportunities to evaluate the curriculum and the faculty? What procedures are in place to ensure and document that the department provides students with regular opportunities to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of teaching? How well is this information used to improve the program? Do students have adequate opportunities to participate in professional and career opportunities appropriate to the discipline and to opportunities to apply what they have learned outside of the classroom? What curricular and/or extracurricular activities does the department offer towards exposure to diversity? Do these activities provide adequate opportunities for students to be exposed to the perspective or underrepresented groups? Do the students have access to appropriate academic support services? Describe the academic support services and comment on their adequacy and appropriateness.**

The program does provide students with the opportunities to evaluate the curriculum and the faculty. For the external review I met with 5 students and they were happy to provide their

feedback. Students do meet regularly with the coordinator of the program, but these meetings should be compulsory rather than just voluntary on the part of the students. There have been improvements made based on student and previous external evaluator feedback, such as organizing meetings with alumni of the program and with people who have jobs in fields that IST majors usually get jobs, too. Diversity is embedded within everything done in a major like International Studies.

One of the student critiques was that courses are usually open to them in just a few disciplines (Religion and History), but not in all 7 disciplines (Anthropology, Classics, Humanities, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, History, Political Science, and Religion). If this critique is true, I think the above-mentioned DW recommended change would help students see better all their options for courses for each new semester, as DW allows students during advisement to see what courses are offered for the upcoming semester. In addition, a review of courses with international components in other disciplines outside of these 7 could be conducted to create a “back up” list of potential courses International Studies students could be allowed to take 1 course from such a non-Humanities discipline in case of absolute need. I was told that the coordinator has been willing to work with students to find appropriate courses as needed, especially in semesters when the offering of courses from the 7 disciplines is low.

Regarding academic support services, one of the critiques raised by students was that some advisors from the three advising units openly recommend students not to major in International Studies. I would recommend the coordinator to have regular, yearly meetings with advisors from the Hub and CASA to present what the major entails and to promote the idea that this is a worthwhile major (sharing excerpts from the exit essays of former IST majors and where they went on to graduate school/jobs would be excellent materials for that).

- 7. Part 4 Faculty Questions- Are faculty competencies/credentials appropriate to the level of the program, and do they at least meet the SACSCOC qualifications? Do faculty specialties correspond to the needs of the program? How might the program address needs for additional/different qualifications/expertise? 10 Is the faculty adequate in number to meet the needs of the program with reasonable and efficient teaching loads and/or credit hour productions? Are the regular-to-adjunct faculty ratios appropriate for the program? With respect to ethnicity, gender, and academic background, is faculty diversity appropriate for the program? Does the program use a faculty evaluation system to improve teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service? Does the system include information from the teaching evaluations of student, alumni, and employer surveys? Are the faculty evaluation procedures adequate and successfully implemented and used? Are faculty engaged in scholarly, creative, professional association, and service activities that enhance instructional expertise in their areas of specialty? • Are the faculty involved in research, publication activities, conference presentations, or other scholarly and creative activities that are appropriate for the program? • Does each faculty member have a**

**professional development plan designed to enhance his or her role as a faculty member? Is there evidence of successful achievements within the plan? • Are faculty services to UTC and the community adequate? In view of UTC’s mission, as a metropolitan institution, does the program have adequate linkages with the community? Are faculty engaged in the planning, evaluation and improvement processes that measure and advance student success?**

There is only one faculty member, the coordinator, assigned to the Humanities: International Studies major who is only working on the International Studies for part of their time, as he is first and foremost, a faculty member in the Modern Languages Department. This coordinator is doing a lot of work (supervising HUM3400 and HUM4960, organize events for the majors, represent the major at Open Houses and other such recruitment events) it seems in exchange for one course release and a stipend. One suggestion could be to count either a combination of HUM3400 and HUM4960 as one 3 credit “on load” course for the coordinator, or upgrade HUM4960 from 1 credit to 3 credits, and have that course count as “on load”.

In addition, there seems to be a need for a “house” for the International Studies major. One option would be to allow the Modern Languages Department to house the Humanities: International Studies major, too. The Modern Languages houses the coordinator, has provided a significant amount of support to this major over the years, and is one of the most international departments on campus. There are several other interdisciplinary majors (Humanities: Liberal Arts, Humanities: Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Environmental Studies, Africana Studies, Asian Studies, Film Studies, Latin American Studies) which could be assigned to individual departments to make sure that every department finds this split acceptable.

The other potential option: creating a new position to oversee these smaller interdisciplinary majors in-between the Dean and the interdisciplinary majors coordinators could further alienate students from their major, not allowing them to identify as belonging to the Humanities: International Studies major, when the new “department” of these smaller inter-disciplinary majors has such vast and varied interests.

With the first option (house the interdisciplinary majors into already existing departments), these interdisciplinary majors could be represented by the chairs of their respective departments. At the very least, I recommend that the “internationally-focused” interdisciplinary majors (Africana Studies, Asian Studies, International Studies, and Latin American Studies) could be easily split between the History Department (Africana Studies), Religion (Asian Studies), and the Modern Languages (International Studies and Latin American Studies) because their needs are different in many ways than the needs of the other interdisciplinary majors (Humanities: Liberal Arts, Humanities: Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Environmental Studies, and Film Studies).

- 8. Part 5 Questions – Learning Resources Does the program regularly evaluate its equipment and facilities and pursue necessary improvements? • Has the program requested/encouraged necessary improvements of its equipment and facilities**

**through appropriate internal mechanisms? Through appropriate external mechanisms? • Does it appear that the program's resources are appropriate within the context of overall college resources? • How should needs of the program be prioritized? Could savings be realized from current program operations to fund any new budgetary needs? Are library holdings and other learning and information resources current and adequate to support the teaching and learning needs of the discipline?**

Regarding learning resources the International Studies major needs a home with a specialized administrative assistant support, even if this administrative assistant support is shared with the Modern Languages Department. As mentioned on the previous point, this home could be the Modern Languages Department, the learning resources help provided by this department with administrative support would be formalized, instead of helping out informally, because the coordinator of the program is a professor in the Modern Languages Department.

**9. Part 6 Support – Questions: Is the program's operating budget consistent with the needs of the program? • Considering current budget constraints, what are the most pressing resource needs of the program? 11 Does the program have a history of enrollment and graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost effectiveness? Is the program responsive to local, state, regional and national needs of the discipline?**

The operating budget is used wisely by the coordinator to provide students with grants for study abroad. An increase in the operating budget would allow for more activities organized by the International Studies program to allow for creating that group identity for the International Studies majors.

The program does have a history of enrollment and graduation rates which allow for high quality of the program and for cost effectiveness.

Developing specific International Studies courses for the 1000, 2000, and 3000 levels would allow for increased responsiveness to local, state, regional, and national needs of the discipline of International Studies.

**10. Part 7 – Summary Recommendations – Questions: Overall, what are your impressions of the program? • What are the major strengths of the program? • What are the major weaknesses of the program? What goals would you suggest the program set for the next five years? Please list goals in order of priority (i.e., the most important goal first, followed by the second most important goal, etc.) How can the program work to achieve these goals over the next five years? • Considering current budget constraints, what are the most realistic strategies the program can use to achieve the highest priority goals? • What goals would require additional**

**resources? What level of resources would these goals require? How might the program secure these resources?**

The Humanities: International Studies program is a solid program in good standing at your university. The hard work of the coordinator is a major strength, showcased by the fact that while International Studies majors numbers are in decline across the U.S. at your university the numbers have maintained steady with an even slight increase. Another major strength is to be found in the testimonials of the IST seniors and alumni. These testimonials should be used more to recruit new students.

The main major weakness is the fact that it is very difficult for IST potential majors, current majors and their advisors from the Hub, Casa, Trio to see their progress towards a International Studies degree. The second major weakness is the fact that there is no major identity for the IST students. The lack of an introductory courses, which the coordinator plans to address soon, or for courses at the 2000 and 3000 level, and the fact that for the two existing HUM courses, HUM3400 and HUM4960, there are no in-person meetings with the entire class, are deficiencies that do not allow for an International Studies majors identity to form. Finally, another weakness is that all the work falls on the shoulders of the coordinator and the IST major does not have a “house”.

For the next five years, I suggest the following goals, in order of priority:

- 1) Update Degree Works to allow potential & current students plus their advisors to see progress towards degree or how an International Studies major could fit in their plan of studies if they are undeclared majors or are considering International Studies as a dual major
- 2) Create an introductory course at the 1000 level required from all the International Studies majors. Consider adding 2000 and 3000 level courses and turning the capstone course into a 3 credit to allow International Studies majors to take 1 International Studies course each academic year.
- 3) Require compulsory meetings with the International Studies coordinator from all International Studies majors as soon as possible after they declare the major
- 4) Create an International Studies Faculty Advisory Council with one representative from each of the 7 disciplines represented within the interdisciplinary major, and potentially several non-voting members from the advisors at The Hub, Casa, Trio, plus the director of the Global Education Center.
- 5) Promote the value of the International Studies major using testimonials from the exit essays
- 6) Promote the value of the International Studies major to the advisors at the Hub, Casa, and Trio
- 7) Find a “house” for the International Studies major, preferably in the Modern Languages Department



- 8) Sharpen the student learning outcomes for the major and for the specific major courses using language specific to the International Studies discipline

These goals could be achieved with limited financial resources. Instead, considering teaching for International Studies as “on load” for the coordinator (e.g. a 3 credit HUM4960 or the introductory MLNG1500 World Cinema course) would allow the coordinator to have some extra time to focus on implementing some of these changes.