

GLOBAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, B.S.

Seven Penn State campuses are scheduled for closure after Spring 2027: DuBois, Fayette, New Kensington, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York. New students are not being admitted at these campuses.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park

Program Description

The interdisciplinary B.S. degree in Global and International Studies is intended to prepare students for lives and careers in a world that is increasingly interdependent. It reflects a "One World" concept that emphasizes the importance of global perspectives, international communication, and study or working experience abroad. The major combines the expertise of multiple disciplines, including the Social Sciences and the Humanities, to suggest a variety of methods for understanding the dynamic issues facing human beings across the globe. The structure of the major also recognizes the fact that the vast majority of the world's people live in regions other than the European and North American spheres, and that a knowledge of non-Anglophone cultures is an important form of preparation for global citizenship.

The major develops transnational and trans-regional literacy, drawing on coursework both in the Humanities and the Social Sciences to focus on questions of globalization, ethical imagination, and ways to engage peoples and cultures in local terms. Students learn to situate global trends, both macro and micro in nature, in relation to other historical processes. Most courses for the GLIS major will demonstrate a global or regional (rather than national) perspective and address a central topic in one of five designated Pathways.

Human Rights

This Pathway examines the history, development, enforcement, and violations of concepts of the basic rights of mankind. Whether through questions of torture, freedom of conscience, trafficking of women and children, agreements about prisoners of war, human rights constantly need redefining and rethinking if they are to be broad enough to cover everyone on our planet and specific enough to have a real effect on human behavior.

Culture and Identity

Global economic, political, and cultural processes are bound up with complex questions of culture and identity at the individual, familial, and community levels. Examining how differences in language, ideology, religion, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation among others impact our sense of self and other, this Pathway considers:

- foundational expressions of social and cultural values;
- the formation and contestation of identity over time;
- the impacts of modernization on individual, family, and community identity;
- genetic manipulation and modification; and
- questions of colonization and colonialism on political and cultural structures.

Global Conflict

This Pathway examines war, peace, and security on a global and historical scale to reveal the contingent decisions, random accidents, and devious schemes which continue to be at the root of violence around the world. This Pathway studies conflicts great and small, from tribal warfare to national and international wars, revolutions, acts of terrorism, and so on. It also considers successful and unsuccessful efforts to halt conflict, and how and why approaches to and experiences with peace can affect conflict situations.

Wealth and Inequality

This Pathway considers global distribution of people, goods, and money, both in the contemporary world and in deep historical time, examining feudalism, trade, imperialism, nationalism, and the socioeconomic impacts of globalization. Some of the themes on which it focuses include:

- motivations for and experiences of such human movement as migration, exploration, travel, slavery, diaspora, asylum, and exile;
- demographic change;
- poverty, wealth, and economic inequality; and
- political, social, and cultural incentives for and restrictions on circulation (censorship, translation, free trade, prize culture, protectionism, access, privilege, bias).

Health and Environment

This Pathway considers the direct impact of global issues on the life on our planet. As intercontinental travel makes nearly every epidemic already global today, the more and more the health of individuals is directly connected to the health of the globe. Growing populations, aging demographics, increasing pollution, and decreasing food resources present new challenges for global human health. Similarly the global cycles of climate change and crisis force us to reconsider both natural processes and anthropogenic influences, examining the philosophy and history of human's place in nature. Some of the themes on which this Pathway focuses include:

- the relationship between local resources and global geopolitics;
- cultural, economic, and social effects of global climate change;
- pollution and conservation;
- environmental movements; and
- evolution and extinction.

Alternatively, students with a GPA above 3.5 may work with advisers and faculty to create a personalized Pathway that reflects their interests.

The B.S. degree requires six credits in quantitative competencies appropriate to the social sciences. The B.S. degree may include a significant engaged scholarship experience (such as undertaking an internship, job, volunteer position, or period of study) located either abroad or in a majority non-English-speaking part of the United States.

What is Global and International Studies?

The Global and International Studies (GLIS) Program is devoted to understanding human cultures and societies as bounded by "One World". The GLIS program emphasizes developing a global perspective through scholarly study, research, international communication and experience abroad. The GLIS Program brings together expertise from the Humanities and Social Sciences for an interdisciplinary approach to the global problems facing us.

You Might Like This Program If...

You are concerned about global problems that face everyone and cannot be explained by a single discipline or approach. Our majors and minors are engaged in thinking about the issues of planetary concern from Humanities and Social Science perspectives. If you think laws, economics, social statistics, history, and culture of importance in solving problems like war, starvation, mass migration, and climate change, think about GLIS.