



HANDBOOK

Updated Spring 2026

The Toor Cummings
Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts



The Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts (CISLA) was named after Joanne Toor Cummings, a distinguished graduate of the Connecticut College class of 1950, who generously donated the founding gift for the Center. Joanne Toor Cummings was passionate about international affairs and was deeply committed to the arts.

With her gift to CISLA, Toor Cummings ensured that generations of Connecticut College students would receive an extraordinary international education and become interculturally competent, socially engaged, politically informed leaders of tomorrow.

We honor her legacy, along with the generous gifts of a dozen additional donors to CISLA who followed in her footsteps to make a CISLA education possible for over 700 Connecticut College graduates.

**The Toor Cummings
Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts**

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I. Introduction to CISLA

A. Mission

CISLA's mission is to educate interculturally competent, socially engaged, politically informed leaders, and to foster the skills to succeed in a globalized world.

B. Rationale

The world is increasingly interconnected, and higher education must prepare students to meet the challenges of our rapidly evolving world. Students in all disciplines benefit academically, professionally, and personally from gaining international perspectives, developing scholarship in their fields, and working effectively across cultures.

C. Methodology

CISLA offers the support and structure for Connecticut College students to have an intensive and integrative international experience grounded in:

- Internationally-focused coursework
- Oral proficiency in a world language
- An international internship
- Research culminating in a senior integrative project

D. The three CISLA questions

The three CISLA questions are an important part of the CISLA experience. They were designed to ensure that the broad-based learning of CISLA scholars is always grounded in the liberal arts tradition.

- How do the multiple origins and power dynamics of contemporary society impact us today?
- How can one's personal, national, or cultural history shape possibilities for the future?
- How can we address the material, spiritual, and ethical challenges facing the world today?

II. Components of the CISLA program

A. Grade Point Average (GPA)

Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 in order to apply to the program. CISLA scholars must maintain a 3.0 GPA in order to qualify for the funded internship.

B. Coursework

CISLA requires students to take four specific courses designed exclusively for scholars in the certificate program:

- IS 201: Perspectives on Modern Global Society is taken in the spring of the sophomore year and is a 4-credit course. In IS 201, students study an array of global issues and develop a theoretical framework to guide their CISLA experience. This course is taught by CISLA faculty, with guest lectures from faculty of various disciplines.
- IS 301 and 302: CISLA Junior Seminar is a two-course sequence taken in the fall and the spring of the junior year, one credit per semester. IS 301 and 302 are taught mostly asynchronously with periodic synchronous meetings. The course is designed to help students identify and secure a successful internship placement, prepare students for the internship experience, and bring students along in their research so they are ready to write the SIP in the senior year.
- IS 401: New Perspectives on Modern Global Society is taken in the fall of the senior year. IS 401 is a 2-credit seminar, graded on a pass/no pass basis, designed to provide a forum for discussing the new perspectives that students have gained from their internship and study away.

CISLA scholars must take four additional core support courses. These courses should be chosen with the goal of broadening knowledge of the chosen country and developing a strong academic background for the senior integrative project (SIP). The core courses:

- Should not be in the major
- May be in the minor or a second major
- May be a course already taken
- May be a course from study away
- May be a course taken in any of the student's years at the college, including the senior year
- May include only one course at the 100 level

C. Proficiency in a world language

Gaining proficiency in a world language is a foundation of the CISLA program. We encourage students to study away when feasible in order to further develop their language proficiency. Students must be prepared to apply their world language skills, engage in another culture, and make meaningful contributions in their CISLA internship during the summer after their junior year.

Students should be taking a 200-level language course or higher at the time of application to the CISLA program. Students who are beginning a new language during the fall of their sophomore year must articulate a plan for gaining intermediate-level proficiency in their CISLA language by the junior year, often through intensive summer study and additional self study.

All CISLA scholars are strongly encouraged to take courses in their chosen world language throughout their five semesters in the program. Students who have a CISLA language that is not taught at the College will need to develop a language-learning plan with faculty and staff in CISLA. Additionally, if a student chooses to study away, they will be asked to select a program with a strong emphasis on language learning in a country where the student's CISLA language is spoken.

Seniors will be required to take an exit Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Specific guidelines for the interview may be found [here: https://www.actfl.org/assessments/postsecondary-assessments/opi](https://www.actfl.org/assessments/postsecondary-assessments/opi)

The required exit level for CISLA certification in French and Spanish is INTERMEDIATE HIGH. For all other languages, the required exit level is INTERMEDIATE MID.

D. Funded international internship

Students work extensively with CISLA staff during the junior year to identify organizations of interest and to create detailed contact lists used to secure an internship.

- Students complete an 8-12 week internship in one location during the summer between the junior and senior year.
- The internship must be conducted in the scholar's chosen world language.
- The internship must be a full-time work experience consisting of 25-30 hours per week.
- Each student receives a stipend to offset travel and living expenses during the internship.
- Students must complete and submit both an interim and final internship report.
- Normally, CISLA only supports internships in countries where English is not the predominant language.
- Students wishing to directly address their internship experiences in their research (i.e. feature the internship provider) must complete and submit an informed consent agreement form prior to the start of their internship.
- Students wishing to conduct surveys or interviews during their internship must submit an informed consent form prior to the start of their internship and must also receive IRB approval for their research.

E. Senior Integrative Project (SIP)

During the senior year, students complete a Senior Integrative Project (SIP) that integrates scholarship in the major, the four CISLA courses, the support courses, study away (when applicable), and the international internship.

- The SIP is normally completed in the major department either as an 8-credit honors thesis (two semesters with permission of the department) or a 4-credit individual study (fall or spring semester). The SIP credits fulfill the CISLA requirement, but also count as a course in the home department of the student's SIP advisor.
- Any substantive changes to your research agenda (SIP topic) and internship search must be communicated via the CISLA Change Form.
- During the junior year, students must secure a faculty advisor for their SIP.
- An SIP that includes surveys or interviews must clear the IRB process in order to be accepted by CISLA.
- CISLA scholars must receive a grade of B+ or higher on their SIP (A- for honors theses) to receive the CISLA certificate. This grade is assigned by the instructor of record for your individual study/honors thesis.

F. The CISLA Addendum

As part of IS 401, the CISLA senior seminar, all scholars must complete a 7- to 10-page reflection essay responding to one or more of the three CISLA questions. Reflection is an important component of the CISLA certificate program: it provides an opportunity for students to integrate work in their senior integrative project with other program components (language study, study away [when applicable], disciplinary study, and the CISLA internship), and to consider the relevance of their work to the wider world. Once students complete their SIP, this reflection is added to their work.

III. Application process

A. Timeline

Spring of the first year

- First-year students attend CISLA information sessions

September of the sophomore year

- Sophomores attend an information session in early September and submit a form indicating that they intend to apply to CISLA.

- Applicants are assigned a senior student mentor to assist with the application process and are directed to contact faculty recommenders to discuss their research ideas.
- Students are encouraged to come to the CISLA office to discuss their research ideas with the CISLA directors.

October of the sophomore year

- Final applications are due in mid October.
- Applicants solicit recommendations from two faculty members, which must be submitted by the application due date.
- Applicants participate in a 20-minute interview with CISLA faculty and staff.

End of October / early November of the sophomore year

- Applicants are notified before pre-registration whether they have been accepted to CISLA so that in the event of non-admission to CISLA, they will have the opportunity to register for a Pathway.

B. The CISLA application

Students apply during the first semester of the sophomore year by submitting an application crafted in consultation with a senior CISLA student and a faculty advisor. Applicants will be asked to outline their preliminary research ideas for their future Senior Integrative Project with some concrete evidence of beginning research (a brief overview of the topic with references to at least three scholarly sources). Students are encouraged to consult with a faculty member in their field or with a research librarian affiliated with CISLA in support of this process. Additionally, students provide information about internship ideas, language study and previous coursework. Students must list the names of the two faculty members who will be submitting recommendation forms on their behalf, and select a time slot for their CISLA interview.

C. Acceptance

Admittance to the CISLA program is decided by a committee of faculty and staff based on the following criteria: strength of the CISLA application; interview with the selection committee; grade point average; world language experience; and faculty recommendations. Approximately 25 students are admitted to the program each year.

IV. Criteria for certification

- A. An overall GPA of 3.0 or higher
- B. Successful completion of IS 201
- C. Successful completion of IS 301 and IS 302
- D. Successful completion of IS 401
- E. Four supporting core courses
- F. An 8-12 week international internship
- G. Research culminating in the SIP individual study or honors thesis.
Students must receive a B+ or higher on an individual study or an A- or higher on an honors thesis.
- H. Required level of language proficiency as certified by ACTFL (see pg. 5)
- I. Satisfactory completion of the CISLA Addendum

NOTE: Students who have accepted funding for the internship are obligated to fulfill the requirements for certification.

V. Grounds for dismissal from the program

Students may be dismissed from the CISLA Certificate Program at any stage of the three year program if any one of the following grounds for dismissal should occur:

- A. If a student's overall GPA should fall below a 3.0, the student will have a one semester grace period for the following semester. An overall GPA that continues to be below a 3.0 beyond the grace period may result in dismissal from the program.
- B. Required CISLA courses not completed or passed: IS 201, IS 301, IS 302, and IS 401. A student receiving a grade of C- or lower in IS 201, will be placed on probation. Students receiving a non-passing grade in any CISLA required course will be asked to withdraw from the CISLA program. Incompletes filed for any CISLA course will be considered on a case by case basis.
- C. Four supporting core courses not completed
- D. Failure to complete an 8-12 week international internship
- E. SIP not completed at B+ or higher
- F. ACTFL proficiency test not passed at the required level (see pg. 5)
- G. CISLA Addendum not completed
- H. Failure to submit the SIP or honors thesis to the Digital Commons
- I. Student receives a DP2 or higher sanction from the College

VI. CISLA certificate ceremony

Qualifying scholars participate in a certificate ceremony that takes place on campus the day prior to Connecticut College commencement.