

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

# **CISLA Handbook**



The Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts was named after Joanne Toor Cummings '50 who generously donated the naming gift for the center. Mrs. Cummings was passionately interested in international affairs as well as the arts. With her gift to the CISLA program, she hoped to ensure that Connecticut College students would have the opportunity to add an international component to their undergraduate liberal arts education.

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# **I. Introduction to CISLA**

## ***Mission***

To encourage students to become politically concerned, socially engaged and culturally sensitive and informed. We seek to engage our students as leaders of tomorrow by preparing them today with the skills, knowledge, wisdom, virtue and eloquence required of citizens in a global world.

## ***Rationale***

The world is changing at an unprecedented rate and higher education would be irresponsible not to prepare students to enter the rapidly evolving interconnected world. Students in any discipline benefit academically, professionally and personally from developing international perspectives and an ability to work across cultures.

## ***Methodology***

CISLA offers the support and structure for Connecticut College students of any major to have an intensive and integrative international experience through:

- Internationally focused course work
- Foreign language oral proficiency
- International internship using the chosen foreign language
- Culminating senior integrative project

## ***The three CISLA questions***

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

*What are the origins and dynamics of contemporary society?*

*What is the relevance of the past in understanding the present and the possibilities for the future?*

*What are the material, spiritual, and ethical challenges of modernity?*

## **II. Components of the CISLA program**

### **1. Grade point average (GPA)**

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

### **2. Course work**

CISLA requires you to take two specific courses designed exclusively for CISLA scholars, IS 201: Perspectives on Modern Global Society, in the spring of the sophomore year, and IS 401: New Perspectives on Modern Global Society, in the fall of the senior year. In IS 201, students consider an array of international issues through the lens of the three CISLA questions and begin to develop the theoretical framework and international perspectives that will guide their CISLA experience. IS 401 is a two-credit seminar, graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis, designed to provide a forum to discuss the provocative issues and new perspectives that students have experienced in their work and study abroad.

CISLA scholars must also take 4 additional core 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). These courses should be:

- a. Not in the major
- b. Can be in the minor
- c. Can be a course already taken
- d. Can be a course from study abroad
- e. Can be a course taken senior year
- f. Only one at the 100 level

### 3. Foreign language oral proficiency

Foreign language oral proficiency is a basic foundation of the CISLA program. Students must be prepared linguistically to thrive in an internship in a foreign country, working and communicating in the target language, during the summer between the junior and the senior year.

Students who are neither taking a 200-level or higher language course at the time of application nor have taken 200-level or higher language courses at the College must take a proficiency test as part of the CISLA application process.

All CISLA sophomores and juniors are required to continue to take courses in their chosen foreign language, and will be asked to choose a study abroad program in a country that speaks the target language and to choose a program with a strong emphasis on language learning.

Returning seniors are encouraged to continue language study.

Seniors will be required to take an exit level oral proficiency interview conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Follow this link for specific guidelines: <http://www.actfl.org/files/public/Guidelines.pdf>

The required exit levels for CISLA certification are:

- Arabic: Intermediate Mid
- French: Intermediate High
- German: Intermediate Mid
- Hebrew: Intermediate Mid
- Italian: Intermediate High
- Japanese: Intermediate Mid
- Mandarin: Intermediate High
- Russian: Intermediate Mid
- Spanish: Intermediate High

#### **4. Funded internship**

Students work extensively with the Internship Coordinator during the junior year to identify organizations of interest and create detailed contact lists, which will be used to solicit an internship.

- a. Students complete an 8-12 week internship in one location during the summer between the junior and senior year.
- b. The internship must be conducted in the foreign language of the area.
- c. The internship must be a full-time work experience, consisting of a minimum of 30 hours per week.
- d. The internship is funded on an individual basis determined by travel and living costs in the chosen country. If a student is studying abroad in the country of the internship, CISLA does not pay travel costs as they are covered through study abroad. CISLA would cover travel to a different city within the chosen country.

#### **5. Senior integrative project (SIP)**

During the senior year, students complete a senior integrative project which integrates the work of the major, the CISLA courses, foreign language and study abroad work and the experiences and research completed during the international internship.

- a. The SIP is completed in the major department either as an 8-credit honors thesis (two semesters and with permission of the department) or a 4-credit independent study (one semester, either fall or spring).
- b. Before leaving for the summer internship, students must attain approval for the SIP from the faculty member who will advise it.
- c. CISLA scholars must receive a grade of B+ or better to receive the CISLA certification.

#### **6. The addendum**

As part of IS 401, the senior seminar, all CISLA scholars must complete a 7-10-page addendum to the SIP. This addendum is an important feature of the CISLA certificate program. It is an opportunity to consider the work of the SIP in a broad vision that integrates the project within the three questions that frame the CISLA experience.

## **III. Application Process**

### **1. Time line**

#### **Spring of freshman year**

Attend advertised informational sessions and CISLA festival

#### **September of sophomore year**

Sophomores attend an informational session in early September and fill out a form that indicates they want to apply to CISLA

Applicants are assigned a senior student advisor and told to get in touch with him/her to discuss the process and start a draft proposal

Students are encouraged to come to the CISLA office to talk with the Director or Assistant Director to discuss the proposal

A draft of the proposal is due the end of September

Once a draft is received the applicant is assigned a faculty/staff advisor and told to contact him/her immediately to continue to refine the proposal

#### **October of sophomore year**

Final proposals are due in mid-October

The CISLA administrative assistant will solicit recommendations by email from two faculty members chosen by the student

#### **November of sophomore year**

Applicants are notified before pre-registration if they have been accepted.

## **2. The proposal**

Students apply during the first semester of sophomore year by means of a proposal that is crafted with the help of a student and faculty advisor. Applicants will be requested to provide information about language study and preparation, and will be asked to give the names of faculty members who will be contacted for a recommendation.

The proposal is the heart of the application process. Follow this link: <http://www.conncoll.edu/academic-centers/cisla/cisla-the-application-process/sample-cisla-proposals/> to see examples of past proposals. The proposal should be no longer than five double spaced pages and should contain the following information:

### **a. Personal statement**

A general statement of who you are, some background information as to why you want to do a program like CISLA, a mention of any significant past travel experiences, what foreign language study you have had and/or which languages you know. Indicate what you think your major/s will be.

### **b. Description of the SIP**

A clearly articulated description of your proposed SIP. This is the project that you complete senior year in your major, either as a 4-credit independent study or an 8-credit honors thesis. As you craft your proposal, you will need to do preliminary research on your chosen topic in order to demonstrate that you know something about the subject you will eventually address in your SIP. Discuss what courses and areas of study, both within and outside your major, you will need in order to complete a thoughtful and sophisticated SIP. Think of the SIP as an overarching hypothesis that you want to explore and it will become clear what questions and research you will need to address to complete a comprehensive final project.

### **c. Internship description**

A description of what you consider an ideal internship that will give you a practical experience and the background to complete the SIP. You do not need to be specific, but could say for example, a women's rights organization in Spain, an environmental NGO in Japan, etc. If you have a specific organization in mind, you can name it.

#### **d. List of core courses**

See Course work section above.

#### **e. Study abroad plans**

Students are strongly encouraged to study abroad. A statement of your intended study abroad plans will be required. CISLA reserves the right, in some cases, to ask you to study abroad in a certain country or with a certain program, with the intention of ensuring that you are prepared linguistically and culturally to succeed in the internship. CISLA students must study abroad in a country that speaks the language of the proposed internship country.

#### **f. Faculty recommendations**

We ask you to give us the names of two faculty members who we will contact for a reference. You DO NOT have to ask for the reference, we will. You should, however, let the faculty members know that you are applying to CISLA and that someone from the office will contact them for a brief email reference. It should be a faculty member who knows you well enough to write a recommendation.

### **3. Acceptance**

Admittance to the CISLA program is decided by a committee of 12 faculty and staff who will have read your proposal and looked at your GPA, foreign language experience, and faculty recommendations. We admit approximately 30 students a year and reserve the right, somewhat like the admissions process, to put together a diverse and balanced class.

## **IV. Approvals and changes**

Any changes to the original proposal must be approved in writing by the Director or Associate Director and the faculty advisor of the SIP.

## **V. Criteria for certification**

1. An overall 3.0 GPA
2. Required level of language proficiency as certified by ACTFL
3. Successful completion of IS 201
4. Successful completion of IS 401
5. Successful completion of supporting core courses
6. Successful completion of an 8-12 week internship
7. Successful completion of the SIP (must receive a B+ or higher)
8. Successful completion of the Addendum

NOTE: Once a student has accepted the funds for the internship, there is a contractual obligation to complete the SIP and all other required elements of CISLA certification.

## **VI. CISLA Faculty and Staff Contact Information**

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For more information, please visit the CISLA website at  
<http://cisla.conncoll.edu>.





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