

International Relations Field

University of Rochester

The field of international relations includes the study of international conflict and international political economy, and students are strongly urged to take courses that prepare them in both areas. The training program in international relations emphasizes the combination of strong substantive knowledge of international politics with advanced tools of political science, such as quantitative methods and formal theory. In the comprehensive field examination, students are expected to demonstrate a mastery of the literature in international relations, one focus field, and two electives.

Core Readings

There is one course required of all students taking a comprehensive exam in international relations, which is the International Relations Field Seminar. The Field Seminar provides a broad survey of the literature in the field, including both classics and a sampling of current research. Since it will not ordinarily be offered every year, students planning to take a field exam should take the course when it is offered.

Focus Fields

Each student is responsible for designing a Focus Field in some substantive area in international relations, discussing the Focus Field with a faculty member a few months before the exam, and preparing a reading list. The purpose of the Focus Field is to give the student the opportunity to become expert in a particular substantive area, such as the politics of European integration, US-Soviet relations during the Cold War, or international environmental organizations.

Electives

Students preparing for a comprehensive exam must take at least two electives in international relations in addition to the Field Seminar. One or more of these may overlap with the Focus Field, but need not do so.

Organization of the Field Examination

In principle, the examination may be taken at any point in the year, but students are advised to discuss their plans with the relevant faculty member(s) well ahead of time. The examination generally consists of three essays covering the three courses presented for the examination and the Focus Field. Each question is written and graded by the faculty member who taught the corresponding course. If the Focus Field does not overlap with any of the courses presented for the exam, a fourth question may be required. Barring exceptional circumstances,

such as language difficulties, students will be given eight hours to answer each question, and the questions will be administered on successive days. Students are permitted to make use of any resources they wish, but not to discuss their answers with anyone before they are submitted. There is no need to use formal citations.

If an examination scheduled to accommodate a student falls at a particularly inconvenient time for relevant faculty, this may produce a delay in grading. Normally, however, examinations are read and returned within two weeks. Results are reported as “pass” or “fail.”