

Bachelor of International Relations Final Project (Thesis)

Coordinating Professor: **Evan Liaras**
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DEGREE: International Relations/Relaciones Internacionales
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2023-24
DEGREE COURSE YEAR: First Second Third Fourth
SEMESTER: 1° SEMESTER 2° SEMESTER
CATEGORY: BASIC COMPULSORY OPTIONAL
NO. OF CREDITS (ECTS): 12 6 3
LANGUAGE: English Spanish

1. Course description

This module concerns the thesis option for completion of the final project requirement in the Bachelor of International Relations (for the capstone option, please see the guidelines under that module). The purpose of the thesis is the elaboration and presentation of an independent, original, and thorough piece of research on a contemporary topic of international significance—international politics broadly defined. This paper is the culmination of your undergraduate studies at IE University and should reflect the skills and interests you developed over the years. It should put forward a coherent argument backed by persuasive evidence. It must consist of original and unpublished work of the student; work by other authors must be properly cited.

2. Course objectives and skills

- i) Give students the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of a particular topic which can also be used to advance their future careers or prepare them for graduate studies
- ii) Challenge the students to muster all the research, writing and presentation skills they have acquired so far to compose a journal article-length academic text

3. Final project supervisor

Each student is responsible for finding a supervisor for the final project. A list of potential supervisors will be provided by the program. Normally, the supervisor will be a full-time or part-time member of IE faculty. Exceptionally, an external supervisor who is not a member of IE faculty may be chosen, subject to the coordinator's approval.

The supervisor and student will establish a work plan taking into consideration the deadline of the ordinary call. Students must be in permanent contact with their supervisors to discuss their progress according to the agreed calendar and procedures. The supervisor will take best endeavors to help the student to meet the deadline with a thesis of the highest possible quality, but ultimately it is the student's responsibility to do so. The supervisor is not expected to give lectures or edit the student's work for grammar and syntax. The supervisor's permission is a requisite to present the final project in the first call. Supervisors may refuse to grant such permission should they consider that the project does not meet the minimum standards, or if the student's behavior is unprofessional (not respecting mutually agreed deadlines, no-shows for meetings, etc.). Should that be the case, the student will miss the first call, with no grade appearing in the transcript. In subsequent calls, the student may present even if the supervisor deems otherwise. If the student fails both the first and second call, it will be possible to change topic and/or supervisor by petition to the program.

4. Final project proposal

The student shall submit a two-page proposal and one-page preliminary bibliography to the supervisor by December 21. The proposal should be drafted after consulting with the supervisor, who may ask for revisions. It should state the research question, give background on the state of the field, and discuss the methodology that will be used. Students have until the start of the spring semester to obtain their supervisor's final approval for the proposal. If there are ethical concerns, further approval from the department may also be necessary. Once a proposal has been approved, it will be possible to modify the topic only with the permission of the thesis coordinator and the supervisor. A radical change of topic will require a new proposal. In the course of elaborating the final project some elements may change compared to the original proposal; this does not imply a change in topic and is up to mutual agreement between the student and the supervisor.

5. Final project submission and oral defense

The written output will be due on May 6, 2024; it must be submitted electronically to check for plagiarism. Late papers will be penalized for every day past the deadline. If the supervisor and the coordinator deem that the project meets the established criteria, an oral defense date will be set in the second half of May. Defenses may take place online. For the oral defense, students deliver a 20-minute presentation of their work and then respond to questions and comments for another 20 minutes before a jury consisting of the supervisor and another faculty member assigned by the department. After the end of the Q&A, the jury will ask the student to leave the room and will consult about the final grade. The student will then be invited back in the room and informed as to

whether the grade is passing or not. The exact grades will be published after all students have defended in that call and subject to approval by the coordinator. Failure to appear before the jury on the defense date without proper justification will result in a failing grade for that call.

6. Final project format

The recommended length of the project is 40 pages (12-point font, one-and-a-half spacing, mirrored margins, approximately 10,000 words, including the bibliography). The recommended citation system is Chicago style (parenthetical or footnote). There is no set maximum, but students are advised against overly exceeding the recommended length. Every thesis should include:

- a) a cover page with the title, student's and supervisor's names, degree program and date
- b) a declaration stating that the thesis is the student's own work and it contains no material previously published or written by another person or AI except where properly cited
- c) a table of contents and an executive summary or abstract
- d) a complete and accurate bibliography

6.1 Note for dual degree students

Students pursuing dual degrees (BBA-BIR, LLB-BIR) have the option to write two entirely separate theses with different supervisors; or do a linked final project under a common supervisor, subject to permission by both schools. Students doing a linked thesis must submit a proposal which will be approved by both departments. The linked thesis submission deadline will be the later of the two departments (typically, that is the same as the BIR deadline). Students must specify in an appendix which portion of the thesis corresponds to which degree. The thesis will be evaluated by two separate juries following the grading criteria of each school. If you are a dual degree student and wish to opt for a linked thesis, consult with both schools, read the syllabus for the linked thesis, and declare your desire to enroll in the appropriate course according to the deadlines stipulated.

7. Course schedule

The first session at the start of the semester may be common for students working with the same supervisor. The next sessions will be one-on-one meetings based on the students' individual projects. These meetings may take place in person or online. If students request it, another common session can be organized later in the semester for them to exchange ideas and to peer-review each other's writing. The final session will be the oral defense. Apart from these sessions, students will be required to attend an online methods seminar and will be offered optional writing workshops.

Session 1 (mid-January): common introduction

- Description of the thesis process, expectations and deadlines, advice on how to develop your research question and methodology, basic literature of subfield

Session 2 (mid-February): project-specific meeting

- Literature review due; finalize research question and make research plan

Session 3 (mid-March): project-specific meeting

- First draft due; discuss progress on the thesis and any problems encountered

Session 4 (mid-April): project specific meeting

- Final draft due; review analysis, discuss conclusions, suggest final edits

May 6th: THESIS SUBMISSION

Final session (second half of May): oral defense

- Final presentation of research findings before a jury and evaluation of project

8. Evaluation system

Final projects are evaluated using three broad criteria (with accompanying weights):

- i) The student's command of the subject and quality of background research (30%)
- ii) The student's original ideas and contribution to the topic (20%)
- iii) The student's quality of argumentation, written (20%) and oral (30%) expression

In total, the written part accounts for 70% of the grade and oral presentation for 30%. The following table is a general guide for assigning grades on a 10-point scale.

| Grade | US/UK equivalent | Quality of work |
|-----------|------------------|--|
| 10 | A/distinction | Outstanding research that meets graduate-level standards and could be considered for publication |
| 9 | A-/first | Excellent work based on extensive research with an original contribution; minor errors or omissions |
| 8 | B+/upper second | Notable product demonstrating hard work and some original thinking with some errors or omissions |
| 7 | B/lower second | Notable work but lacking originality, suffering from some gaps in logic or research or from poor editing |
| 6 | B-/third | Acceptable work showing some effort but lacking in all grading criteria, poorly written |
| 5 | C/pass | Minimally acceptable work, very poorly written but not showing evidence of plagiarism |
| 4 | D/unsatisfactory | Incoherent, incomplete work or a small instance of plagiarism; some revision may make it acceptable |
| 3 or less | F/fail | Unacceptable work or extensive plagiarism that leaves no room for resubmission with revisions |

Graders can assign fractional grades with one decimal point to make finer distinctions. The final grade will typically be the average of the two professors' grades. If there is a large discrepancy (two whole points or more), a third reader may be assigned by the thesis coordinator.

Students who receive a grade between 4 and 5 on their first defense are allowed to make revisions and resubmit the thesis within two weeks to pass. A grade below 4 is a definitive fail and requires repeating the defense. This option to revise is only available to students on their first thesis defense; in subsequent calls, a grade below 5 is failing. Students have the right to appeal their final project grades, in which case the coordinator may ask an alternate jury to evaluate the project.

Retake policy

- Each student has 4 chances to pass any given course distributed in two consecutive academic years (regular period and June/July period).
- Grading for retakes will be subject to the following rules:
 - Students failing the course in the first regular period will have to do a retake in June (except those not complying with the attendance rules, which are banned from this possibility).
 - Dates and location of the June retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed. Please take this into consideration when planning your summer.
 - The maximum grade that a student may obtain in any type of retake will be **8 out of 10**.

9. Bibliography

These two excellent guides on how to write theses are held on reserve at IE library:

- Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, (9th edition, University of Chicago Press, 2018)
- Lisa Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* (Sage Publications, 2016)

10. Professor's bio

Evangelos Liaras earned a BA in history from Harvard and MS and PhD in political science from MIT. Before joining IE, he held fellowships in the United Kingdom (Chatham House), Spain (CEPC), the United States (George Washington University), Turkey (Koç University), and worked for the OSCE mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has been the thesis coordinator of the BIR degree since the start of the undergraduate program.

11. Plagiarism/Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting another person's ideas, texts or words as your own. That includes in order of seriousness of the offense (i) providing faulty sources, (ii) copy-pasting material from one's own past assignments (self-plagiarism), (iii) using verbatim translations from other languages, (iv) copy-pasting material from external sources, or (v) buying or commissioning essays from other parties. IEU students must contact the professor if they don't know whether the use of a document constitutes plagiarism. The professor will advise the student on how to present said material. All written assignments have to be submitted through Turnitin, which produces an originality score and detects cases of plagiarism. Professors are required to check each academic work in order to guarantee its originality. If the originality of the academic work is not clear, the professor will contact the student in order to clarify any doubts. In the event that the meeting with the student fails to clarify the originality of the academic work, the professor will inform the Director of the Bachelor Program about the case, who will then decide whether to bring the case forward to the Academic Ethics Committee. Very high (un)originality scores will be automatically flagged and forwarded to the Academic Ethics Committee. Plagiarism constitutes a very serious offence and may carry penalties ranging from getting a zero for the assignment to expulsion from the university depending on the severity of the case and the number of times the student has committed plagiarism in the past.

11.1 Note on self-plagiarism

Students are allowed to base their theses on a previous paper or project, as long as the thesis itself consists mostly of new material, past work is duly acknowledged, and the proper permissions have been obtained. The amount of overlap with one's own past work must not exceed one fifth of the thesis, in total. The student must notify the supervisor if portions of past work are used, must make reference to it in the thesis, and forward it to the supervisor for comparison. If a paper from another course is used, the other course's instructor must consent, particularly in case of a course concurrently taken by the student in the final year. If the student uses material from a group project or venture, all other participants in that project must give their consent. Students who fail to comply with these instructions will face disciplinary action for plagiarism as stated above.

Bachelor of International Relations Final Project

- Impact Capstone -

Capstone Academic Coordinator:
Prof. Carlos Lastra (clastra@faculty.ie.edu)

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| DEGREE: | International Relations |
| ACADEMIC YEAR: | 2023-2024 |
| DEGREE COURSE YEAR: | Fourth |
| SEMESTER: | Second |
| CATEGORY: | Compulsory |
| CREDITS (ECTS): | 12 |
| LANGUAGE: | English |

Impact Capstone program description

This syllabus details the capstone option for completion of the final project requirement for the Bachelor of International Relations (the other option is a final year thesis; please see the thesis syllabus for more information on this option). The capstone program is a group-based, consultancy-oriented final project option offered in collaboration with outside partner organizations. Each project will be unique and require students to complete tasks such as, for example, case studies, risk analysis, quantitative data collection and analysis, communications and marketing, process management (e.g. fundraising, business development, outreach, event planning, etc.), grant writing, and/or conference or workshop participation. The impact capstone is a career-building exercise representing the culmination of the students' studies, giving them the opportunity to implement what they learned in a realistic teamwork environment and to produce independent, impactful research and policy recommendations.

Project assignments and timeline

The BIR office will circulate a list of potential impact capstone projects as early as possible in the fall semester. In the late fall, students who choose the capstone option for their final project requirement will report their top five preferred projects and provide a statement of interest (using a form provided). The Capstone Supervisor will then work with BIR staff and the outside partners to assign students to capstone projects, taking into account students' application responses and academic standing (reflected in their GPA). The assignment of students to projects will be announced before the end of the fall semester. Project work will begin early in the spring semester (January 2024) and run for the entire semester (until May 2024). A list of deadlines is provided below.

Faculty and staff contacts

Students will inevitably have many questions over the course of their capstone project. *Given the size of this year's capstone program, it is essential that students contact the appropriate person who can help get them the required information quickly and efficiently.*

Here is a list of key people whom students should contact depending on the nature of their question:

- **For project-specific questions about research, writing, and teamwork, contact your specific Faculty Advisor.** Each capstone group will be assigned an IE faculty member with expertise in the area of the project who will act as an advisor over the course of the semester. Students should keep their Advisor updated on their progress, ask questions about the research and writing process, and inform the Advisor about any conflicts or issues within groups. If a group is experiencing conflicts or issues that cannot be resolved by students or the Advisor, the Capstone Supervisor may weigh in.
- **For administrative questions, contact the BIR office (bir.biemadrid@ie.edu).** These issues include enrolling in capstone or thesis, scheduling capstone defenses, and any other purely administrative issues.
- **For questions about academic requirements and evaluation, contact the Capstone Academic Coordinator (Prof. Carlos Lastra).** These issues include deliverables, research/writing issues that cannot be resolved by your Faculty Advisor, grading, and any other academic issues.
- **For comments or concerns about the client/external partner, contact the Executive Director (Borja Santos Porrás).**

Academic Workshops:

1. Capstone Information Session – 20th October 09.30
2. Capstone academic workshops – Starting in November

Students will participate in 8 sessions:

- a. How to develop a research question (Evan Liaras)
- b. Case Studies and the comparative method (Evan Liaras)
- c. Ethical Research (Evan Liaras)
- d. How to write a literature review (Andrew Bertoli)
- e. Survey methods (DJ Flynn)
- f. Interviews (Evan Liaras)
- g. Refresh training in R (Andrew Bertoli)
- h. How to write effective policy briefs (Borja Santos)

Deliverables and deadlines

The table below details the deliverables that are required over the course of the semester. All deliverables should be submitted following instructions from the Academic Advisor. If you have technical difficulties and are unable to upload your submission, you may email your materials to Prof. Lastra (clastra@faculty.ie.edu). Please do not e-mail back-up copies of materials that were uploaded. *Please take note of the due dates, as late materials will not be accepted – either uploaded or by email-except in the event of documented emergency (e.g., personal or family medical emergency). Failure to submit materials on time could result in failure of the capstone.*

| Deliverable | Individual or group assignment | Description | Due date/time |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 page single-spaced memo on proposed deliverables | Group | Write a 1-page single-spaced memo consisting of a bulleted list of the materials/tasks you propose to complete by the end of the capstone period and a short description of each. Be as specific as possible about the content/format of your proposed deliverables. We advise to crosscheck this document with your client and faculty advisor before submission | 9 February 2024, 23:59h [must be approved by Prof. Lastra in order to move forward] |
| 10-15 page double-spaced memo on relevant academic literature | Group | Write a 10-15 page double-spaced memo providing an overview of academic research related to your capstone topic. Synthesize (i.e., don't summarize) relevant research, explain how it will affect your capstone research and approach, and discuss gaps in the literature and how your project will contribute to our understanding of the topic. We advise to consult and confirm the academic literature review in advance with your faculty advisor and we recommend to attend the workshop on "how to write an academic literature review", which will be organized by the BIR Office and faculty. | 4 March 2024, 23:59h [must be approved by Prof. Lastra in order to move forward] |
| 30-40 page double-spaced team final report | Group | Write a 30-40- page double-spaced report explaining (1) project description and background, (2) problem analysis, (3) academic literature, (4) empirical methods used and details on deliverables, (5) data collected or analyzed, interviews done, policy proposals or recommendations and other information as appropriate for each project. | 6 May 2024, 23:59h |

| | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|---|
| Policy Brief | Group | Write 1-2 pages visual summary of the capstone | 6 May 2024, 23:59h |
| 5-10 page double-spaced reflective memo | Individual | Write a 5-10 page double-spaced memo explaining your <i>individual contribution</i> to the project, challenges faced and how you dealt with them, connections between capstone tasks and course content from their studies at IE, and lessons learned. | 6 May 2024, 23:59h |
| Compulsory Peer Evaluation | Individual & Anonymous | Complete a compulsory peer review, which remains anonymous to your group members. All team members must complete this review prior to the defence date. This is compulsory peer review can affect your grade (by 2 points) based on the review and consideration of the Capstone Academic Coordinator | Mid May 2024 (the link will be sent after 6 th May 2024) |
| 15-20 minute final presentation | Group | Prepare 15-20 minute presentation highlighting the key points from your final report. At minimum, presentations should discuss (1) background, (2) problem/task from client, (3) methodology, (4) results, and (5) example content from final deliverable. All group members must participate in the presentation and Q&A (but feel free to divide up speaking/Q&A responsibilities as you see fit). | Mid to Late May 2024 (exact date/time to be confirmed after submission) |

Formatting of submitted materials

Please abide by the following formatting requirements for submitted materials:

- Comply with page limits and single/double spacing requirements for each assignment listed above.
- Use standard (e.g., 2.25 cm) margins.
- Use a standard font (e.g., Times, Arial), size 12.
- Use whatever citation format you prefer (e.g., Harvard, APA, etc.). However, please do *not* put references in footnotes or endnotes. Instead, use in-text citations and include a reference list at the end of your document.
- For memo deliverables, do *not* use cover or title pages. Simply provide the following information near the top of the first page: assignment (e.g., “Memo on Proposed Deliverables”), capstone organization (e.g., “BIE Capstone: BANCO SANTANDER”), team member names, and the date. You may use a title page for the final report if you wish, though this is not required.

Evaluation

Each capstone project will be evaluated by a three-member committee consisting of the Capstone Supervisor, Faculty Advisor, and an outside IEGPA faculty member. (If an outside faculty member is not available, the committee may consist of only the Capstone Supervisor and Faculty Advisor.) A representative from the partner organization may attend the final presentation, ask questions, and/or offer input about the group’s performance, but he/she will not participate in grading.

Students will receive individual grades based on their performance throughout the semester and the quality of their contribution to the final output. The final grade of each student will be the average of the grades given by the committee members, subject to review by the Capstone Supervisor. In case of large discrepancy between these two grades, a fourth grader will be asked to evaluate the final output.

Final projects are evaluated using the following criteria:

- Command of the subject and quality of background research (30 %)
- Original contribution to the topic (20 %)
- Quality of written materials (30 %) (e.g., structure, clarity, spelling and grammar)
- Final presentation (20 %)
- Client satisfaction
- Compulsory Peer Evaluation

The following table is a general guide for assigning grades on the 10-point scale. The Capstone Supervisor may can assign fractional grades with one decimal point to make finer distinctions.

| Grade | US/UK equivalent | Quality of work |
|-----------|------------------|--|
| 10 | A/distinction | Outstanding research that meets graduate-level standards and could be considered for publication |
| 9 | A-/first | Excellent work based on extensive research with an original contribution; minor errors or omissions |
| 8 | B+/upper second | Notable product demonstrating hard work and some original thinking with some errors or omissions |
| 7 | B/lower second | Notable work but lacking originality, suffering from some gaps in logic or research or from poor editing |
| 6 | B-/third | Acceptable work showing some effort but lacking in all grading criteria, poorly written |
| 5 | C/pass | Minimally acceptable work, very poorly written but not showing evidence of plagiarism |
| 4 | D/unsatisfactory | Incoherent, incomplete work or showing signs of plagiarism; some revision may make it acceptable |
| 3 or less | F/fail | Unacceptable work or extensive plagiarism that leaves no room for resubmission with revisions |

Students who receive a grade of 4 on their first defense are allowed to revise and resubmit their individual report within two weeks to pass, repeating the defense is not necessary. A grade of below 4 is a definitive fail and requires repeating the defense (see below). This option to revise is only available to students on their first thesis defense; in subsequent calls, a grade below 5 is failing. Students have the right to appeal their final project grades, in which case the Capstone Supervisor may ask an alternate committee to evaluate the project.

Students who wish to appeal their capstone grades may do so by contacting the BIR office (bir.biemadrid@ie.edu) within 48 hours after the grade is communicated.

Capstone schedule (approximate)

The first session (at the start of the semester) is mandatory for all capstone students. The next (approximately) three sessions will be project-specific meetings between students, their faculty supervisor, and/or the partner organization. Meetings may take place in person or over Skype. If students request it, another common session can be organized later in the semester for students to exchange ideas on their projects and to peer review each other's writing. The final session will be the oral presentation.

For more details on the required deliverables and deadlines, see the table above.

- **December/early January: Introductory meeting**
 - Students meet with their capstone sponsor to discuss expectations and deadlines, advice on how to approach the assigned tasks, background, etc. *We recommend*

meeting with the partner organization as soon as possible (ideally when assignments are announced in the fall) to begin planning the work.

- **February 9th (23:59h): Capstone outline due**
- **March 4th (23:59h): Academic research memo due and review of the work done**
- **February-April: Intermediate project-specific meetings (at least three meetings during this time period)**
 - Meet with the capstone sponsor to discuss progress to date, next steps, and any problems/challenges that have come up in working towards the deliverables.
- **April 5th: Review of the work done**
- **April-May: Final project-specific meeting(s) (at least one meeting during this time period)**
 - Meet with the capstone sponsor to discuss progress to date, next steps, and any problems/challenges that have come up in working towards the final submission. *We recommend that students present the outside partner and advisor with a polished draft – or at minimum an outline – of the final report by this date so that they may revise and improve the final product before submission.*
- **May 6th (23:59h): Capstone submission**
 - Capstone materials due at 23:59h. Submit your three required materials – project-specific deliverables, team final report, policy brief and individual final report – using the links on Campus. (Only one team member needs to upload the deliverables and team report. All team members must upload their own individual reports.) These links will disappear after the deadline and no late materials will be accepted.
- **Date/time TBA: Oral presentations**
 - Oral presentations before a 3-member committee that will evaluate capstone materials and assign grades (using the criteria discussed above).

Retake policy

- Each student has 4 chances to pass any given course in two consecutive academic years (regular period and June/July period).
- Retake grading will be subject to the following rules:
 - Students failing the course in the first regular period will be required to complete a retake exam in June.

- Dates and location of the June retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed. Please take this into consideration when making your summer plans (e.g., flights).
- The maximum grade that a student may obtain in any type of retake will be 8 out of 10.

Professor biography

Carlos was initially very drawn to abstract concepts and thus studied mathematics and philosophy as an undergraduate at Oxford. He later spent some time in the "real world" of consulting, traveled a lot and reflected on how he could contribute to the world around him in more concrete ways. To that end, he ended up doing a PhD in Government and Social Policy at Harvard, and is now the Human Rights and Social Inclusion professor at IE School of Politics, Economics & Global Affairs. He also serves as Director of Research at the Center for Governance of Change.

Plagiarism/academic honesty

The capstone program will comply with IE's policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty:

Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting another person's ideas, texts or words as your own. That includes in order of seriousness of the offense (i) providing faulty sources; (ii) copy-pasting material from your own past assignments (self-plagiarism); (iii) using verbatim translations from other languages; (iv) copy-pasting material from external sources; or (v) buying or commissioning essays from other parties. IEU students must contact the professor if they don't know whether the use of a document constitutes plagiarism. The professor will advise the student on how to present said material. All written assignments have to be submitted through Turnitin, which produces an originality score and detects cases of plagiarism. Professors are required to check each academic work in order to guarantee its originality. If the originality of the academic work is not clear, the professor will contact the student in order to clarify any doubts. In the event that the meeting with the student fails to clarify the originality of the academic work, the professor will inform the Director of the Bachelor Program about the case, who will then decide whether to bring the case forward to the Academic Ethics Committee. Very high (un)originality scores will be automatically flagged and forwarded to the Academic Ethics Committee. Plagiarism constitutes a very serious offence and may carry penalties ranging from getting a zero for the assignment to expulsion from the university depending on the severity of the case and the number of times the student has committed plagiarism in the past.