BIS: Sustainability Studies, Global Studies, Spanish Studies

I chose to pursue a Bachelor of Individualized Studies degree because I wanted to take control of my education. The program allowed me to choose the classes that I wanted to take, and not just the classes that I needed to take in order to graduate. In my BIS program the three focus areas that I have chosen are Sustainability Studies, Spanish Studies and Global Studies. The reason I chose Sustainability Studies is because when I started taking classes that discussed the numerous environmental issues we are facing today, I experienced a profound paradigm shift on how I view my education. The shift showed me that I was the creator of my own future and it was up to me to step up and follow my dreams. This realization uncovered my passions to protect our planet and to share my knowledge and experiences of the world with others, which continue to drive me today. With these desires, I chose my other two focus areas to be Spanish Studies and Global Studies. Learning to speak Spanish and learning more about Latin American culture is something that I have enjoyed doing since the seventh grade. Due to the major that I initially chose at the U of M, I was unable to continue my language education at the university level. Since my last Spanish class in high school, I have reignited my passion to become fluent in Spanish by making Spanish Studies one of my focus areas. In addition to Sustainability Studies and Spanish Studies, my third focus area is Global Studies. Global Studies acts as the glue that holds my BIS degree together. It is through the study of global connections and interactions that I am able to draw thoughtful and practical conclusions about the world as we know it today. This third focus area encourages necessary critical thinking in all aspects of trying to understand relationships amongst and between cultures.
I. Sustainability Studies

The Sustainability Studies program at the University of Minnesota offers collaborative opportunities to students in order to study real-world problems in a wide range of environments and from a variety of academic perspectives. Through the perspectives and disciplines offered in the program, students, like myself, gain crucial knowledge that help them understand the values, choices, technologies, and policies that create a sustainable world. This interdisciplinary program allows students to tailor their sustainability education to their specific interests while addressing the core issues of sustainability that can be applied to all disciplines.

The two core courses that I completed for my Sustainability concentration are SUST 3003: Frameworks of Sustainability and SUST 4004: Sustainable Communities. The 3xxx level core class was the first environmental class that I took at the university and it ignited a passion within me to continue to work with environmental issues. Looking back, this class is an essential framework for my everyday life and career after graduation. The 4xxx level core sustainability class taught me the importance of community and not just any community, but a sustainable community. During this class I was given the opportunity to work on a current local issue with Minneapolis community members addressing the HERC incinerator in the downtown area of Minneapolis and its effects on the surrounding area. The following four classes in my sustainability concentration were completed through an off-campus study program called Environmental Sustainability through an organization called Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA). ID 3591: Adaptive Ecosystem Management addressed the complex ways in which ecosystems interact with one another and how, as environmentalists, we can understand how to manage them in sustainable ways that will benefit our future. ID 3592: Policy and Environmental Change taught me the importance of politics and community organizing
when trying to make positive change in your own community and environment. I learned that it is extremely important to get to know the people in your community because from those interactions you are able to form lasting coalitions that can give a voice to pressing issues in your city. The **ID 3593: Environmental Field Methods** class focused on a local study of the HERC incinerator where my classmates and I conducted interactive research with community members to obtain valuable information on how the problem of HERC should be addressed. This class dealt with a specific local issue and reiterated the importance of community organizing and conducting research. For my **ID: 3594 Environmental Internship** class I chose to do my internship at Youth Farm in the Lyndale neighborhood. I worked with Lyndale youth doing everything from harvesting and maintaining gardens to cooking delicious meals to feed the afternoon groups. This internship showed me what healthy, sustainable youth development looks like and inspired me to make decisions in my own life and education that reflect Youth Farm’s missions and goals. My last class in my Sustainability Studies concentration is **HORT 3131: Organic Farm Planning, Growing, and Marketing**. This class highlighted how to sustainably manage a small-scale organic farm which in turn can help me in small-business management or other management positions in future careers.

**II. Global Studies**

My Global Studies concentration allowed me to combine my passion for the environment and my passion for Spanish by taking classes that incorporated both topics. Within the Global Studies field, students are given the opportunity to investigate their region and theme of choice while obtaining broader knowledge of interconnected global processes. I chose to focus my studies on the region of Latin America and the theme of Environment and Sustainable Development because I felt as though they aligned with my passions that I was already pursuing.
Throughout my Global Studies courses, I have learned about the relationships between culture, politics, and economics of different cultural groups both in the United States and in Latin America. I have learned about differences of cultures apart from my own and that has given me strength in understanding people who are different from me. By studying global connections, I am able to understand complex, international relationships and how they developed.

**GLOS 3144: Knowledge and Power** laid the foundation for understanding key concepts of power, knowledge and politics in the global society. We looked at literary works addressing race, authority, location, class, and narrative and gathered information to describe why current systems function the way that they do. The systems that we investigated were primarily Western systems, or systems found in the United States, and we compared these to other systems in South America and Asia. This course proposed many thought provoking questions that still resound in my mind today because of their importance in understanding our future. **GLOS 3613W: Food, Culture and Society** was one of my favorite and most memorable classes in my BIS program. In this class I was able to apply my sustainability knowledge to the class’s topic of food systems and human rights. We spent a good portion of this class analyzing local and international food systems. We addressed the use of power and politics within these large national systems that ultimately take advantage of farm workers, typically Latin Americans, for the benefit of CEOs and shareholders of corporations. This class taught me to check my position within the food system and also to be an active consumer, something that I will continue to do often. **GEOG 3373: Changing Form of City** was a unique class that studied the development and history of cities such as Paris, New York and Boston. Understanding the construction of a city requires knowledge of how power was being distributed during that time. A couple other important takeaways from this course were the innovations and the technology that were being used to
expand these cities and ultimately made them the cultural, historical and economic centers that they are today. CSCL 3361: Visions of Nature investigated the scientific and cultural theory that concern the organization of nature, human nature, and their significance. We studied Western/other civilizations and focused on how religion, ethics, political/economic philosophy, civics, and environmentalism has shaped the idea of ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ that we have today.

The investigation and critical thinking skills learned in this class will help me in future investigations. MSID 4001 International Development was critical in understanding the international relationships that Ecuador has with the rest of the world. As Ecuador continues to develop and modernize its systems, the country faces more and more challenges in respect to the environment, natural resources, and the local community. Through the Sustainability and the Environment track in this class, I was able to see firsthand the complexities and challenges a small, developing country faces in the hands of international relations. CHIC 3212 Chicana Studies was an eye-opening class similar to many of the other classes in my BIS program. In this class we read and interpreted scholarly and creative work of Chicanas and politically defined women of the Mexican American community. This class confronted the social justice issues within the Chican@ community and the abuse that Chican@s face due to powerful institutions, ideologies and binary ways of thinking.

III. Spanish Studies

In my final concentration, I was able to continue studying the language I once loved learning in grade school - Spanish. Throughout my studies of Spanish at the university, I have been warmed by the rich Spanish and Latin American culture throughout the world. I have explored Spanish vocabulary and advanced topics such as linguistics, literature and Latino Immigration in the United States. Studying Spanish has given me fluency in another language, an
opportunity to study abroad in Ecuador, and the ability to understand Spanish-speaking cultures through their own language. Spanish is something very close to my heart and I intend to find a profession where I can use Spanish on a regular basis.

**ECDR 3015 Spanish Composition and Communication** emphasized the development and strengthening of oral and written linguistic and communicative abilities for the Spanish language. In this intensive Spanish class, I learned to integrate, in real contexts, my speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills at a more advanced level. **MSID 4002 MSID Country Analysis** focused on the rich biodiversity and cultural diversity of Ecuador. We explored holistic, educational, and traditional research methods in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the various development models being implemented by Ecuadorian government. We were able to enhance our understanding of the processes of modernization and global development as well as their social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts. **MSID 4003 Community Engagement** was an internship at an organization called Kallari located in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Kallari is a chocolate cooperative that practices fair and sustainable trade to its small-scale farmers and to its customers. I was given the amazing opportunity to contribute and to learn from this small Amazonian chocolate company. I gained many useful skills by interning for Kallari such as salesmanship, customer service, building a community, manual labor, money distribution and office administration. I am currently enrolled in **SPAN 3104W Intro: Study of Hispanic Literature**. Throughout this class we will study a variety of literature and focus on analyzing the specific and unique literary techniques of different authors. We will carefully examine the social, economic, political, and cultural environments that the writer has written their work in. In **SPAN 3107W Intro: Hispanic Linguistics** I studied the structure of the Spanish language. We highlighted phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics and
language acquisition. This class taught me a valuable lesson that language is an amazing innovation that allows us to communicate with one another. Additionally, I learned that language is constantly developing to adapt to its new users and environments. My final class in my Spanish Studies concentration is **SPAN 3401: Latino Immigration/Community Service**, which was another favorite course of mine in my BIS program. In this class I learned about the history behind Latino immigration to the United States, how they arrive here, and what life is like for Latin@ immigrants in the United States, specifically those who are in Minneapolis. It was an eye-opening and humbling experience to learn about the stories of the Latin@ immigrants. During this class I was able to work closely with the Latino community in Minneapolis.

In conclusion, I believe that my selected concentrations ring true to my passions and what I want to do post-graduation. I have been exploring international work-away programs as well as international teaching positions for the near future. My love for the environment, my desire to understand others, and my passion for Spanish and Latin American culture have ultimately chosen themselves as my three concentrations in my Bachelor of Individualized Studies degree program. I am happy to say that my undergraduate education truly reflects my passions and interests. Through my BIS degree, I have gained useful communication skills in both English and Spanish. I have also learned how to analyze complex global systems through all three of my concentrations. Finally, one of my biggest accomplishments is that I was able to complete this degree in programs outside of the University of Minnesota. The BIS program allowed me to incorporate my desire to learn experientially and observationally through off-campus study programs, such as HECUA, and study abroad programs, such as MSID Ecuador. Overall, I was able to take control of my undergraduate education and, in doing so, obtained a variety of different skills that I will be able to use in future careers.
## BIS Program Course Worksheet

**Total number of credits in proposed program:** 66  
**Total number 3/4/5xxx level credits in proposed program:** 66  
**Total credits in program left to complete:** 3

### Concentration One

**Title:** Sustainability Studies  
**Dept.** | **Course Code** | **Course Title** | **Complete:** | **Not Complete:**  
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
SUST | 3003 | Frameworks of Sustainability | 3 | A-  
SUST | 4004 | Sustainable Communities | 3 | C  
ID | 3591 | Adaptive Ecosystem Management | 4 | C-  
ID | 3592 | Policy and Environmental Change | 4 | C-  
ID | 3593 | Environmental Field Methods | 4 | A-  
ID | 3594 | Environmental Internship (Youth Farm) | 4 | B  
HORT | 3131 | Organic Farm Planning, Growing and Marketing | 3 | A-  
**TOTALS:** | | | **3/4/5xxx level credits in area:** 25  
**Total credits in area (IDIM only):**

### Concentration Two

**Title:** Global Studies  
**Dept.** | **Course Code** | **Course Title** | **Complete:** | **Not Complete:**  
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
GLOS | 3144 | Knowledge and Power | 4 | B  
GLOS | 3613W | Stuffed and Starved | 3 | B  
GEOG | 3373 | Changing Form of City | 3 | B  
CSCL | 3361 | Visions of Nature | 3 | B+  
MSID | 4001 | International Development | 4 | A-  
CHIC | 3212 | Chicana Studies | 3 | B+  
**TOTALS:** | | | **3/4/5xxx level credits in area:** 20  
**Total credits in area (IDIM only):**

### Concentration Three

**Title:** Spanish Studies  
**Dept.** | **Course Code** | **Course Title** | **Complete:** | **Not Complete:**  
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
ECDR | 3015 | Spanish Composition and Communication (SPAN 3015) | 4 | A  
MSID | 4002 | MSID Country Analysis (SPAN 3510) | 4 | A-  
MSID | 4003 | Community Engagement (Span elec. w/ Critical Analysis prereq.) | 4 | A  
SPAN | 3104W | Intro: Study of Hispanic Literatures | 3 | IP  
SPAN | 3107W | Intro: Hispanic Linguistics | 3 | A  
SPAN | 3401 | Latino Immigration/Community Service | 3 | A  
**TOTALS:** | | | **3/4/5xxx level credits in area:** 21  
**Total credits in area (IDIM only):**