

INDIVIDUALIZED MAJOR PROGRAM

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: MIDDLE EAST CONCENTRATION

I seek to broaden my knowledge of international affairs, particularly in relation to the Middle East, in order to prepare myself for a career in diplomacy. I intend to structure my major on five main academic disciplines: political science, economics, history, philosophy, and language. A fusion of these disciplines is critical; no single academic department provides me with the necessary skills or comprehensive knowledge needed for success. I make this judgment based on personal experience; after considering political science, I began my career at the University of Connecticut as a student of international business. The narrow strictures of international business were confining and when I researched the political science major, the classes which interested me most were in the international relations branch. International relations covers many different aspects of foreign countries, thus an inter-disciplinary approach is needed to study this subject. No single discipline can satisfy my passion for learning about other countries and their governments, economic structures, cultures, and languages.

Instead of studying within a single academic discipline, I propose a cohesive integration of five related disciplines. The interdependent relationship that exists between governments and corporations is exemplified in their intellectual counterparts. Political science relies heavily on economics; it is impossible to have a firm grasp of one subject without some basic knowledge of the other (POLS 216 examines the "international political economy"). Similarly, it is impossible to understand the political and economic structures of a foreign country without being familiar with its historical background. One of the courses I propose to take focuses on the economic history of the Middle East (ECON 204). Studying the region's philosophical views allows me to gain greater insight into the thought processes behind important government policy decisions. Finally, language is the common thread which unites all of these disciplines within a foreign country.

In order to gain practical experience in my field and to conduct research for my honors thesis, I intend to spend next year abroad at the University of Haifa, Israel. There I will perfect my fluency in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, and be able to utilize my knowledge of modern Hebrew. I will also be able to participate in an honors program in peace and conflict studies, conduct research at the National Security Studies Center, and work as an intern for Shatil (an organization that promotes Arab-Jewish relations). If the situation in Israel is unsafe in the Fall 2007, I will pursue similar academic goals at the American University of Cairo, Egypt. If security reasons do not permit me to study in the Middle East at all, I will examine Arab integration in Europe at the University of Paris, France.

After returning from my year abroad, I intend to graduate from the University of Connecticut with a degree in international relations and a minor in mathematics. In addition to my fluency in French and modern Hebrew, I hope to have obtained a working knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish which I will continue to perfect at the graduate level. In graduate school, I will most likely obtain a masters degree in international relations and/or a PhD in Near Eastern Studies. I intend to seek employment with the government of the United States after graduate school, preferably in the CIA or as a foreign affairs analyst.