



# HANDBOOK

The Toor Cummings  
Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts



The Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts (CISLA) was named after Joanne Toor Cummings, a distinguished graduate of the Connecticut College class of 1950, who generously donated the founding gift for the Center. Joanne Toor Cummings was passionate about international affairs and was deeply committed to the arts.

With her gift to CISLA, Toor Cummings ensured that generations of Connecticut College students would receive an extraordinary international education and become culturally sensitive, socially engaged, politically informed leaders of tomorrow.

We honor her legacy, along with the generous gifts of a dozen additional donors to CISLA who followed in her footsteps to make a CISLA education possible for over 700 Connecticut College graduates.

---

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

Connecticut College  
108 Blaustein / Walter Commons  
270 Mohegan Avenue / New London, CT 06320

860-439-2440 / [CISLA@conncoll.edu](mailto:CISLA@conncoll.edu)

Instagram / Twitter / Facebook: [@conncollCISLA](https://www.instagram.com/conncollCISLA) / [conncollCISLA](https://www.facebook.com/conncollCISLA) / [CISLA.conncoll.edu](https://www.conncoll.edu/CISLA)



## Table of Contents

I.	Introduction to CISLA	
	A. Mission	page 2
	B. Rationale	page 2
	C. Methodology	page 2
	D. The three CISLA questions	page 2
II.	Components of the CISLA program	
	A. Grade Point Average (GPA)	page 3
	B. Coursework	page 3
	C. Proficiency in a world language	page 4
	D. Funded international internship	page 6
	E. Senior Integrative Project (SIP)	page 6
	F. The CISLA reflection essay	page 6
III.	Application process	
	A. Timeline	page 7
	B. The CISLA application	page 8
	C. Acceptance	page 11
IV.	Approvals and changes	page 11

V.	Criteria for certification	page 11
VI.	CISLA certificate ceremony	page 11

## I. Introduction to CISLA

### A. Mission

CISLA's mission is to educate culturally sensitive, socially engaged, politically informed leaders, and to give them the skills to succeed in a globalized world.

### B. Rationale

The world is increasingly interconnected, and higher education must prepare students to meet the challenges of our rapidly evolving world. Students in all disciplines benefit academically, professionally, and personally from gaining international perspectives, as well as the ability to work effectively across cultures.

### C. Methodology

CISLA offers the support and structure for Connecticut College students to have an intensive and integrative international experience grounded in:

- Internationally-focused coursework
- Oral proficiency in a world language
- A culminating senior integrative project

### D. The three CISLA questions

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

- How do the multiple origins and power dynamics of contemporary society impact us today?
- How can one's personal, national, or cultural history shape possibilities for the future?
- How can we address the material, spiritual, and ethical challenges facing the world today?

## II. Components of the CISLA program

### A. Grade Point Average (GPA)

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

### B. Coursework

CISLA requires students to take three specific courses designed exclusively for scholars in the certificate program:

- IS 201: Perspectives on Modern Global Society is taken in the spring of the sophomore year and is a 4-credit course. In IS 201, students study an array of global issues and develop a theoretical framework to guide their CISLA experience. This course is taught by faculty from various disciplines, research librarians, and CISLA staff.
- IS 301 and 302: CISLA Junior Seminar is a two-course sequence taken in the fall and the spring of the junior year, one credit per semester. IS 301 and 302 are taught mostly asynchronously with periodic synchronous meetings. The course is designed to help students identify and secure a successful internship placement, prepare students for the internship experience, and bring students along in their research so they are ready to write the SIP in the senior year.
- IS 401: New Perspectives on Modern Global Society is taken in the fall of the senior year. IS 401 is a 2-credit seminar, graded on a pass/no pass basis, designed to provide a forum for discussing the new perspectives that students have gained from their internship and study away.

CISLA scholars must take four 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). The core courses:

- Should not be in the major
- May be in the minor or a second major
- May be a course already taken
- May be a course from study away
- May be a course taken in any of the student's years at the college, including the senior year
- May include only one course at the 100 level

### C. Proficiency in a world language

Gaining proficiency in a world language is a foundation of the CISLA program. We encourage students to study away when feasible in order to further develop their language proficiency. Students must be prepared to apply their world language skills, engage in another culture, and make meaningful contributions in their CISLA internship during the summer of their junior year.

Students should be taking a 200-level language course or higher at the time of application to the CISLA program. Students who are beginning a new language during the fall of their sophomore year must articulate a plan for gaining intermediate-level proficiency in their CISLA language by the junior year, often through intensive summer study and additional self study.

All CISLA scholars are required to take courses in their chosen world language throughout their five semesters in the program. Additionally, if a student chooses to study away, they will be asked to select a program with a strong emphasis on language learning in a country where the student's CISLA language is spoken.

Seniors will be required to take an exit Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Specific guidelines for the interview may be found here: [ACTFL Guidelines link](#)

The required exit levels for CISLA certification are:

**INTERMEDIATE MID level languages**

Arabic  
German  
Hebrew  
Japanese  
Korean  
Mandarin  
Russian

**INTERMEDIATE HIGH level languages**

French  
Italian  
Spanish

#### **D. Funded International Internship**

Students work extensively with CISLA staff during the junior year to identify organizations of interest and to create detailed contact lists used to secure an internship.

- Students complete an 8-12 week internship in one location during the summer between the junior and senior year.
- The internship must be conducted in the scholar's chosen world language.
- The internship must be a full-time work experience consisting of a minimum of 30 hours per week.
- The internship is fully funded, based on travel and living costs in the chosen country.
- Normally, CISLA only supports internships in countries where English is not the predominant language.

#### **E. Senior Integrative Project (SIP)**

During the senior year, students complete a Senior Integrative Project that integrates work in the major, the four CISLA courses, study away (when applicable), and the international internship.

- The SIP is normally completed in the major department either as an 8-credit honors thesis (two semesters with permission of the department) or a 4-credit independent study (fall or spring semester).
- During the first semester of the junior year, students must secure a faculty advisor for their SIP.
- CISLA scholars must receive a grade of B+ or higher on their SIP to receive the CISLA certificate.

#### **F. The CISLA reflection essay**

As part of IS 401, the CISLA senior seminar, all scholars must complete a 7- to 10-page reflection essay responding to one or more of the three CISLA questions. Reflection is an important component of the CISLA certificate program: it provides an opportunity for students to integrate work in their senior integrative project with other program components (language study, study away [when applicable], disciplinary study, and the CISLA internship), and to consider the relevance of their work to the wider world.

### III. Application Process

#### A. Timeline

##### **Spring of the first year**

- First-year students attend CISLA information sessions

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

- Sophomores attend an information session in early September and submit a form indicating that they intend to apply to CISLA.
- Applicants are assigned a senior student mentor and faculty advisor and are directed to contact them to discuss the application process and their research ideas.
- Students are encouraged to come to the CISLA office to discuss their research ideas with the directors or associate director.

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

- Final applications are due in mid October.
- CISLA solicits recommendations from two faculty members chosen by the student.
- Applicants participate in a 15-minute interview with CISLA faculty and staff.

##### **End of October / early November of the sophomore year**

- Applicants are notified before pre-registration whether they have been accepted to CISLA so that in the event of non-admission to CISLA, they will have the opportunity to register for a Pathway.

## B. The CISLA application

Students apply during the first semester of the sophomore year by submitting an application crafted in consultation with a senior CISLA student and a faculty advisor. Applicants will be asked to outline their preliminary research ideas for their future Senior Integrative Project with some concrete evidence of beginning research (a brief overview of the topic with references to at least three scholarly sources). Students are encouraged to consult with a faculty member in their field or with a research librarian affiliated with CISLA in support of this process. Additionally, students provide information about internship ideas, language study and previous coursework, and give the names of faculty members who will be contacted for a recommendation.

The application consists of the following questions:

- i. What motivates you to apply to CISLA? (approximately 200 words)
- ii. A central part of the CISLA program is participating in a diverse cohort of students and faculty with a wide range of linguistic, disciplinary, and geographic interests. What values, interests, and perspectives would you bring to the CISLA community? (approximately 200 words)
- iii. What language do you intend to study in CISLA?
- iv. Why did you choose this language?
- v. How will your chosen CISLA language connect to your project?
- vi. If your proposed CISLA language is not offered in a four-year program at the college, please outline the steps you will take and resources you will access to learn your language throughout your three years in CISLA.

- vii. What are your intended study away plans?
1. CISLA scholars are encouraged to study away during the junior year when feasible. CISLA does not cover the costs of study away, and students are strongly encouraged to apply for both internal and external scholarships to help defray the costs of study away.
  2. If CISLA scholars are able to study away, we encourage them to do so in a country where the student's CISLA language is spoken and in a program where language study is emphasized. Students who cannot study away work with CISLA staff to ensure they are linguistically prepared to successfully complete an internship after the junior year, and pass the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview in the senior year.
- viii. In what country do you intend to complete the CISLA internship?
- ix. Description of the Senior Integrative Project (SIP):
1. The SIP is completed in the senior year as a 400-level, 4-credit independent study or as an 8-credit honors thesis in the major. This project is the focus of your research that will integrate coursework in your major, the four supporting core courses, your geographical area of interest, study away, and your internship experience. Briefly describe a potential topic or area of interest for your CISLA SIP, and explain why this topic matters to you. How is your topic situated within a broader global context or related to a transnational global challenge (e.g., migration, sustainability, human rights, inequality, global health, etc.)? (approximately 500 words [two pages double-spaced] with reference to at least three scholarly sources).

2. When writing their proposal, students may wish to consult chapters 3-5 of *The Craft of Research* by Wayne Booth, et. al., copies of which are held online through Shain Library and the CISLA office. An SIP will evolve and change during the CISLA experience, but it is essential to begin with a feasible research and internship plan as part of the application process.
- 
- x. Support courses: CISLA scholars each take 4 support courses to bring additional disciplinary perspectives to their Senior Integrative Project. These courses should be chosen with the goal of broadening knowledge of your CISLA country and developing a strong academic background for the SIP. The support courses should not be in the major, but may be in the minor or a second major. Please list what those courses might be, and how they would support your SIP topic (these may change throughout your time in CISLA).
  - xi. Internship description: The proposal should include a description of an ideal internship that will give the student practical experience and the necessary background to complete the SIP. Applicants may list a general internship location such as “a women’s rights organization in Spain,” or “an environmental NGO in Japan.” However, a student may also list a specific organization. Students should research organizations that are doing the kind of work that interests them.
  - xii. Faculty recommendations: Applicants should provide the names of two faculty members to be contacted for a reference. Students should ask the faculty members in advance whether they may be listed as a reference on their application to CISLA. CISLA will contact faculty directly to request a reference.

- xiii. Resume: Applicants are asked to submit an up-to-date resume
- xiv. LA 103 Career Prep Course: CISLA students are required to complete LA 103 by the end of the sophomore year.

### **C. Acceptance**

Admittance to the CISLA program is decided by a committee of faculty and staff based on the following criteria: strength of the CISLA application; grade point average; world language experience; and faculty recommendations. Approximately 30-35 students are admitted to the program each year.

## **IV. Approvals and changes**

Any changes to the original proposal must be approved in writing by the faculty director or associate director, as well as the faculty advisor of the SIP. Proposed changes to the CISLA project may be made at any point during the first three semesters of the certificate program.

## **V. Criteria for certification**

- A. An overall GPA of 3.0 or higher
- B. Successful completion of IS 201
- C. Successful completion of IS 301 and IS 302
- D. Successful completion of IS 401
- E. Four supporting core courses
- F. An 8-12 week international internship
- G. The SIP independent study or honors thesis. Students must receive a B+ or higher on an independent study or an A- or higher on an honors thesis.
- H. Required level of language proficiency as certified by ACTFL (see pg. 4)
- I. Satisfactory completion of the CISLA reflection essay

*NOTE: Students who have accepted funding for the internship are obligated to fulfill the requirements for certification.*

## **VI. CISLA Certificate Ceremony**

Qualifying scholars participate in a certificate ceremony that takes place on campus the day prior to Connecticut College commencement.