THE SENIOR IAS 4013 CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

What is a capstone? Capstone courses are intended to serve as the culminating experience for IAS undergraduates. In most cases, students will enroll in capstone courses during their senior year, after having completed their study abroad experience, and after having completed substantial undergraduate coursework at the upper-division level.

The content of capstone courses will be thematic (e.g. Global Inequality, Mega Cities, Nationalism, Anti-Americanism, etc.). The themes of the capstone courses will vary from semester to semester, and from instructor to instructor. Capstone courses will not be regionally focused, but will instead be global and comparative in nature.

Students will have broad flexibility in choosing a topic for their individual projects. While capstone courses will focus on global and comparative themes, individual student projects may have a specific regional or area focus. However, the topic for these individual projects should fit within the thematic parameters of the capstone in which the student is enrolled.

Instructors have considerable flexibility in designing the reading, research, and writing requirements for the capstone courses. While capstones will meet regularly, each capstone may incorporate individual student meetings with the course instructor. These meetings may, at the discretion of the instructor, replace regular class sessions – but only up to a maximum of 300 minutes of scheduled class time (i.e., no more than four 75-minute classes). There is also flexibility with respect to teaching methods in the capstones. However, the pedagogical goal of the capstone course should be to provide a collaborative learning environment (maximum enrollment of 20) where students will complete a substantial semester-length research and writing project, and in which students have the opportunity to apply the multidisciplinary skills they've acquired in the IAS major to important global themes.

Class size: Given that the nature of the capstone is a seminar, the primary mode of instruction will likely be discussion. There will be extensive reflection and writing as well as student presentations throughout the semester. To facilitate this type of learning experience, class sizes will be capped at 20 students.

Enrollment: As with all courses offered on campus, some classes will fill faster than others. The same goes with capstones. Enrollment is on first come first served basis. Sections will stay capped at 20 students, and if a section is full, students will be asked to enroll in another open section.

SPRING 2019 IAS 4013 CAPSTONE SECTIONS:

Sec. 001 “Comparative Democratization”, MW 1:30-2:45pm, Dr. Aqil Shah
This capstone seminar focuses on democratization, which some scholars have described as the principal global political development of the 21st century. It is also one of the most extensively researched and debated topics in modern comparative political science. The course examines the important debates and research on the emergence, endurance and breakdown of democracies. We start with defining the concept of democracy and discuss different measures of democracy. We then explore the different explanations of democracy—economic, cultural, political and international. We also examine the process of transition from authoritarian rule; the challenges of democratic
consolidation, ethnic diversity, and institutional design (constitutions, electoral systems, civilian control); and assess the so-called global “democratic recession” in the early 21st century.

Sec. 002 “Global Resource Security”, TR 10:30-11:45am, Dr. Bo Kong
The purpose of this Senior Capstone Seminar is to examine the role of natural resources in shaping the organization and consequences of international politics. Specifically, it will explore how concerns about resource security galvanize the actions and interactions of a variety of actors, including individuals, firms, states, and international organizations, shape ideas and identities, and impact technologies and markets in a way that ultimately determine who gets what, when and how in the process.

Sec. 003 “Authoritarianism”, TR 12:00-1:15pm, Dr. Samer Shehata
The majority of the world’s population lives in non-democratic political systems. This course explores authoritarianism with particular focus on the varieties of authoritarian regimes, how such regimes endure, and why they (sometimes) collapse. What are the bases of support in authoritarian systems? How do these regimes produce compliance? And what are politics and everyday life like in such polities? In addition to examining variation among authoritarian regimes, this course will explore the role of elections, parliaments, and political parties in such systems as well as the international dimensions of authoritarianism. Although our focus will be comparative and cross regional, we will devote a number of sessions to authoritarian political systems in the Middle East, including the challenges to those systems posed by the 2011 Arab uprisings.