

Social Inquiry and Analysis Major

NOTE: The following is primarily intended to fulfill two functions. First, it is a fairly detailed illustration of how an *adjunct major* could be developed. Please see supporting documents from the report of the Task Force on Interdisciplinary Innovation for further details. Second, it is an invitation for potential stakeholders in this major to discuss its merits. It is *not* a formal proposal for this major to be implemented; such a proposal would be premature without the aforementioned discussions. Further comments, criticisms, or questions should be sent to Kareem Khalifa (kkhalifa@middlebury.edu).

Brief Description: Social Inquiry and Analysis (SIA) enables students to develop a deep, interdisciplinary understanding of social phenomena. Students develop a suite of analytical skills that enable them to reason across the boundaries of the traditional social sciences, achieve broad theoretical proficiency in multiple social sciences, and apply these abilities to acquire in-depth knowledge of a particular social issue.

Motivation: There is increasing student interest in doing extensive interdisciplinary research on a single social issue. Currently, the College has a few interdisciplinary programs that might address these issues, but cannot cover the full range of legitimate academic interests that students possess. The SIA major has the potential to be far more adaptive to student interests. Moreover, the College's current interdisciplinary social-science options tend to underestimate the difficulty of doing sound interdisciplinary research in the social sciences; largely assuming that students will simply intuit interdisciplinary connections by taking different courses in different fields. This runs contrary to the current climate of scholarship, where interdisciplinary connections are often regarded as the most difficult to establish, owing to deep methodological and theoretical differences between and within the social sciences. To address this challenge, the SIA major explores, at a fundamental level, what a meaningful connection between two social sciences entails, and then encourages its majors to apply this to a concrete topic of their choosing.

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Requirements

1. Home Discipline:
 - a. A major in one of the following: Economics, Geography, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology/Anthropology.
2. Analytical Core (4 Courses)
 - a. MATH 0116: Introduction to Statistical Science¹
 - b. PHIL 0180: Introduction to Modern Logic
 - c. PHIL 02xx: Philosophy of Social Science²
 - d. SIA 0300: Integrated Social Analysis
3. One Two-Course Cluster in discipline outside of one’s Home Discipline. The list of possible Clusters is below.
4. Focused Sequence of Study (4 Courses):
 These courses are all directed toward a common theme (e.g. poverty, justice, crime, law, etc.), and must be approved by the end of sophomore year in consultation with a faculty advisor and with the approval of the SIA Program Chair. The Focused Sequence is subject to the following constraints:
 - a. All courses in this Sequence must be above the 0100 level.
 - b. One course should be either:
 - i. A 0400+ level in the student’s Home Discipline; or
 - ii. SIA 0700

This should be thought of as the culmination of the student’s academic experience within the SIA major, with the other courses in the Focused Sequence geared towards making the student capable of offering a beneficial multi-disciplinary perspective to the 0400 level seminar.
 - c. The Focused Sequence must include, but is not restricted to, courses from the student’s Cluster and Home Discipline.
 - d. Any course taken in the Home Discipline that is part of the student’s Focused Sequence counts towards both majors.

Explanation of the Requirements

The SIA major is designed to achieve five major curricular goals:

- (1) To cultivate general ways of thinking about a broad class of social issues;

¹ ECON 0210, MATH 0310, or PSYC 0201 can replace this course.

² To be taught by Kareem Khalifa in the near future.

- (2) To cultivate reflection on the different methodologies and assumptions of the different social sciences;
- (3) To provide an opportunity to synthesize social-scientific frameworks to gain both a deep and broad understanding of a particular social phenomenon;
- (4) To gain insights from fields outside of one's primary area(s) of competence in order to gain both a deep and broad understanding of a particular social phenomenon; and
- (5) To enable students to engage in advanced interdisciplinary study of any social issue of interest.

These five curricular goals are achieved through the SIA's four areas of requirements: the Home Discipline, the Analytical Core, the Clusters, and the Focused Sequence. Minimally, the SIA provides a different way of achieving these goals than current curricular options. Insofar as this alternative is a more productive way for some students to meet these objectives, the SIA major thus serves a valuable function. Stated somewhat more boldly, the justifications below suggest that the SIA major provides a better means to achieve many of these objectives than the currently available options.

1. Home Discipline

The SIA major is an *adjunct major*, meaning that one can major in SIA only if one has a major in another discipline. The Home Discipline guarantees that students have the methodological tools required to do advanced work in at least one field, which are needed in the Focused Sequence (see below).

The concept of an adjunct major is an innovation to Middlebury's current curricular options. In contrast to a joint major with a traditional social science, the student's social science (i.e. Home Discipline) requirements are not decreased in any way, though the SIA major does encourage students to choose their electives strategically in the context of the Focused Sequence. In contrast to a double major, the SIA major is not a stand-alone major, and is designed to enhance traditional majors already offered at Middlebury College.

The Home Discipline provides a baseline by which to highlight the SIA major's unique contributions to the curriculum. On the one hand, the SIA major's Analytical Core allows students to situate their Home Discipline in a more *general* framework by seeing how it is a special case of a much broader pattern of social inquiry. On the other hand, the SIA major's Focused Sequence allows students to become more *specialized* in a particular topic of inquiry.

2. Analytical Core

All social science majors would benefit from sharpened analytical skills, and the SIA major offers interested students the opportunity to do so. In the context of the SIA major, analytical skills include the abilities to recognize, interpret, criticize, and construct inferential and explanatory relationships between propositions serving either as hypotheses or evidence in social scientific inquiry.

The need for this complement of skills is pressing. Social phenomena are complex, and complex phenomena are best understood by grasping various inferential and explanatory relationships that pertain to them. Current social science majors are largely trained to focus only on a particular subset of those relationships—cultural, economic, geographic, political, psychological, or sociological—at the exclusion of others. Consequently, the understanding conferred by current social-science majors will tend to be incomplete.

While it would be overly ambitious to familiarize students with every kind of social-scientific framework, students can learn about features common to all social-scientific inferences and explanations that would position them to be good, all-purpose social scientists. In other words, instead of being only a good anthropology student, or only a good economics student, etc. the SIA program strives to produce a good student of the social sciences, i.e. a good producer and consumer of *any* social

scientific ideas with which one is presented. In this way, even if students lack complete information about a complex phenomenon, they are at least poised to understand, critically evaluate, and piece together any information that they confront in an intelligent way, regardless of its disciplinary origins.

Thus, social-science majors would benefit from sharpened analytical skills. The SIA major addresses this need through four courses. To repeat, analytical skills include the recognition, interpretation, critical evaluation, and proffering of inferences and explanations. The guiding idea behind the SIA's Analytical Core is that there are fundamental analytical skills that are not discipline-specific, and that frequently have been taught outside of the social sciences (largely in mathematics and philosophy).

Essentially, being a good student of social science involves the grasping of different "connections" between hypotheses and evidence in the social sciences. The courses in the Analytical Core foster appreciation of different kinds of these "connections," and how they function at different stages in the process of social inquiry:

Logic: A good deal of what counts as a "connection" between theoretical claims from different social sciences is an *inferential* connection, and what counts as an "incompatibility" or "disconnection" between such claims is their mutual *inconsistency*. Logic is primarily concerned with distinguishing good and bad (i.e. valid and invalid) inferences, and identifying inconsistencies where they exist. Therefore, logic is an indispensable tool for navigating complex relationships between theoretical claims from different social sciences.

Statistics: Introduction to Modern Logic focuses on *deductive* inference. Some connections between theoretical claims from different social sciences are non-deductive (i.e. inductive). The most significant of these non-deductive inferential connections are *statistical* in nature; hence the need for Introduction to Statistical Science as part of the SIA major. The assumption is *not* that all good social science must be quantitative; only that one achieves a better understanding of how different social scientific theories complement and challenge each other when one can subject those theories to empirical tests, some of which are statistical or quantitative in nature.

Philosophy of Social Science: While frequently non-inferential in nature, *explanatory* relations are an important kind of connection that social science majors ought to grasp. The Philosophy of Social Science course will familiarize students with different kinds of social-scientific explanations and identify the conditions wherein such explanations compete and complement each other. Core issues include the relationship of explanation, interpretation, and understanding; how to evaluate explanations; whether group-level explanations compete, reduce to, enhance, or simply coexist with individual-level explanations; and causal and functional social-scientific explanations. A course in at least one social science is a prerequisite for this course.

Integrated Social Analysis: The three previous courses in the Analytical Core major focus on how students *evaluate* hypotheses from different social sciences. This course will focus on how to *construct* these hypotheses. Core issues include construct validity, causal modeling, research design, and triangulating between quantitative and qualitative data/theories. This course will also serve as a catchall for various curricular gaps that affect a majority of SIA majors. The other three courses in the Analytical Core serve as prerequisites for this course.

2. Social-Science Clusters

Social Science Clusters familiarize students with the specific kinds of social processes, interactions, theories, etc. that distinguish the social sciences from each other. For instance, microeconomic theory focuses on how individual choices and actions explain certain social phenomena, while sociological theory focuses on norms and power relations as explanatory factors. Each Cluster is two courses (e.g. Intro and Intermediate Microeconomic Theory), and each SIA major must take one Cluster outside of his/her Home Discipline (see the List of Clusters below.) Consequently, SIA majors are familiarized with two distinctive kinds of social-scientific frameworks.

The educational benefits of the Social Science Clusters are at least fivefold. First, the Clusters inherit the same justifications that any department in the social sciences would tout on behalf of their “theory” courses, e.g. the theoretical frameworks of the social sciences attune students to the causes and effects of various kinds of social arrangements.

Second, the Clusters (along with the Home Discipline) provide some needed concreteness and application to the Analytical Core. Whether assessing the soundness of an inference, evaluating the power of an explanation, or constructing an interdisciplinary social-scientific theory, knowledge of the social science being invoked is indispensable.

Third, when combined, the Home Discipline, Analytical Core, and Social-Science Clusters enable students to think about a wide variety of social issues with a high level of abstraction. Upon completing these three components, SIA majors will have reflected upon all of the following issues:

- (1) For all of the social sciences, what constitutes a sound inference?
- (2) For all of the social sciences, what constitutes a good explanation in any of the social sciences?
- (3) How does one construct and test a good interdisciplinary hypothesis in the social sciences?
- (4) What constitutes a good explanation in two particular social sciences?

Answers to all four of these questions inform understanding of any particular social phenomenon, and thus are invariant with respect to the idiosyncrasies of a particular social issue. In other words, reflecting on the answers to these questions will be beneficial regardless of the particular historical event, kind of social structure, cultural practice, etc. that one is studying. By contrast, a double major in the social sciences will have had, at best, the opportunity to reflect at length on only the fourth of these questions in her coursework.

Fourth, just as the Analytical Core provided a set of tools by which to reflect and abstract from the Home Discipline and Clusters, the Home Discipline and Clusters provide a set of tools by which to reflect and abstract from the Focused Sequence. The Focused Sequence targets a particular social issue (e.g. crime, disability, education, law, poverty, race, social justice, urban planning, war, etc.), but without proper theoretical grounding in a traditional social science, students run the risk of having copious amounts of information about a given social issue without having a proper understanding of that issue. The Clusters guarantee that students have this grounding, and thus alleviate this risk.

Fifth, the Clusters and Home Discipline function as intermediaries between the abstraction of the Analytical Core and specificity of the Focused Sequence. Thus, SIA majors achieve understanding of the topic of their Focused Sequence not only through the theoretical know-how achieved through the Clusters, but also through the broad suite of skills afforded by the Analytical Core. Conversely, the Clusters highlight particular theoretical constraints in applying the abstract tools of the Analytical Core to the particulars of the Focused Sequence. The academic options currently available do not provide this integration of abstract reasoning skills and detailed knowledge of a particular social phenomenon.

List of Clusters

To determine the Clusters, I examined the current course offerings from departments in the Social Sciences Division, and chose courses with a primary focus on how to think like a social scientist in a given field, rather than those courses that put greater emphasis on specific topics, geographic areas, etc. This is an admittedly hazy line, and these Clusters may be modified based on further information, especially based on input from participating departments.

The list of clusters is as follows (listed alphabetically by department):

A. Economics Clusters

1. *Macroeconomic Theory*
 - a. ECON 0150: Introduction to Macroeconomics
 - b. ECON 0250: Macroeconomic Theory
2. *Microeconomic Theory*
 - a. ECON 0155: Introduction to Microeconomics
 - b. ECON 0255: Microeconomic Theory

B. Geography Cluster

3. *Geography*
 - a. GEOG 0100: Place and Society
 - b. One of the following:
 - i. GEOG 0213: Population Geography
 - ii. GEOG 0215: Political Geography
 - iii. GEOG 0218: Cultural Geography
 - iv. GEOG 0320: Geographic Information Systems

C. Political Science Clusters

4. *Normative Political Theory*
 - a. PSCI0105: Introduction to Political Philosophy
 - b. One of the following:
 - i. PSCI 0309: Risk and Late Modernity: Politics, Culture and Danger
 - ii. PSCI 0317: Ancient and Medieval Political Philosophy
 - iii. PSCI 0318: Modern Political Philosophy
5. *Descriptive Political Theory*
 - a. One of the following:
 - i. PSCI 0103: Introduction to Comparative Politics
 - ii. PSCI 0104: Introduction to American Politics
 - iii. PSCI 0109: International Politics; *and*
 - b. One of the following:
 - i. PSCI 0304: International Political Economy
 - ii. PSCI 0347: Theories of Comparative Politics

D. Psychology Clusters

6. *Psychology*
 - a. PSYC 0105: Introduction to Psychology
 - b. One of the following:

- i. PSYC 0203: Social Psychology
 - ii. PSYC 0204: Personality Psychology
 - iii. PSYC 0302: Conditioning and Learning
 - 7. *Educational Psychology*³
 - a. PSYC 0105: Introduction to Psychology
 - b. PSYC 0327: Educational Psychology
- E. Sociology and Anthropology Clusters
- 8. *Anthropological Theory*
 - a. SOAN 0103: Topics in Sociocultural Anthropology
 - b. One of the following:
 - i. SOAN 0306: Topics in Anthropological Theory
 - ii. SOAN 0359: Language and Power
 - 9. *Sociological Theory*
 - a. SOAN 0105: Society and the Individual
 - b. One of the following:
 - i. SOAN 0252: Social Psychology in Sociology
 - ii. SOAN 0305: Topics in Sociological Theory
 - iii. SOAN 0307: Social Movements and Collective Action
 - iv. SOAN 0309: Risk and Late Modernity: Politics, Culture and Danger
 - v. SOAN 0365: Political Sociology
 - 10. *Sociology of Education*³
 - a. One of the following:
 - i. EDST 0115: Education in America
 - ii. SOAN 0105: Society and the Individual
 - b. One of the following:
 - i. EDST 0230: Social Justice in Education
 - ii. SOAN 0215: Sociology of Education

3. Focused Sequence

The Focused Sequence consists of a four-course concentration on a particular social issue. Students will be the primary designers of these Sequences, so as to customize them to their interests. However, they are subject to several constraints that are intended to optimize the student's educational experience. First, a faculty advisor must approve the Sequence. Second, one course must be either a 400-level course in the student's Home Discipline, or an Independent Project in Social Inquiry and Analysis (SIA 700). This in and of itself may dictate some of the courses required in the Sequence, if, e.g. the 400-level course has prerequisites that are not requirements of the Analytical Core or Social Science Clusters. Third, no course in the Sequence may be taken at the 100-level, so as to ensure that the students are challenging themselves sufficiently. Fourth, the Sequence must span at least two departments, so as to ensure a truly interdisciplinary model of research. Otherwise, an existing major would better serve students.

The Focused Sequence has several academic benefits. First and foremost, it provides students with an opportunity to engage in focused study on a particular social issue from an interdisciplinary

³ Students who pursue this Cluster may take courses in Education Studies (EDST) as part of their Focused Sequence.

perspective. While certain interdisciplinary programs and joint majors currently afford students this opportunity, they suffer from two lacunae.

First, these programs do not cover all viable areas of academic interest. To repeat, potential topics of a Focused Sequence include crime, disability, education, law, poverty, race, social justice, urban planning, and war. All of these can be viewed from an interdisciplinary perspective, yet none of these fits comfortably in the current interdisciplinary options available. Because the Focused Sequence is not constrained in content, but only by the aforementioned academic requirements, virtually any of these topics—and far more—could be the focus of interdisciplinary study.

Second, majors in current interdisciplinary programs frequently lack the core set of analytical skills required to do advanced work in traditional disciplines. At their best, interdisciplinary programs should make students competent practitioners of two or more disciplines. If the testimony of many faculty members in traditional social science departments is any indication, interdisciplinary programs have been inconsistent in meeting this standard, and frequently produce students who are dilettantes in every field. More pressingly, being able to critically evaluate different perspectives—in this case, perspectives that cut across disciplinary lines—is a core skill in a liberal arts education. Thus, if the critics of interdisciplinary programs are correct, interdisciplinary majors' shortcomings in advanced seminars are symptomatic of a much bigger failure to execute our educational mission.

For the reasons rehearsed above, the SIA major addresses this worry. Students well versed in logic, statistics, the broad philosophical and methodological issues common to all social sciences, and the major theoretical precepts of two traditional social sciences are poised to engage a wide variety of social-scientific approaches. Furthermore, when coupled with faculty input on how best to structure the Focused Sequence and the requirement of a Home Discipline, the SIA major positions students to succeed in 400-level courses by the same standards as more traditional majors in those seminars.

Finally, when situated within the broader the SIA major, the Focused Sequence plays a pivotal role in rendering concrete the many abstract and general lessons of the Analytical Core and Clusters.

Independent Research in Social Inquiry and Analysis (SIA0700)

SIA 0700 holds the potential to satisfy new demands in the curriculum, as well as to help minimize the burdens of faculty in departments contributing to the SIA program. The latter point is addressed below. Regarding new curricular demands, there are natural ways of tethering the SIA0700 to several nascent initiatives. Increasingly, students and a subset of the faculty are clamoring for “project-based learning” or “learning outside of the classroom.” This fits quite comfortably within the SIA’s Focused Sequence. Presumably, this Sequence will be about a social issue of interest to the student, and much of what goes under the banner of project-based learning is also dedicated to a specific social issue.

The most frequent objection to project-based learning is that it appears to lack the kind of quality control and/or rigor characteristic of more traditional forms of pedagogy. The SIA 0700 in particular and the SIA Major in general can address this concern. First, SIA majors could only do project-based learning on a topic about which they have studied extensively in precisely the traditional ways that the critics of project-based learning respect. Hence, students will have an opportunity to synthesize what they’ve learned in the classroom with what they learn in “the field.”

Furthermore, additional constraints can be built into SIA0700’s that promote this kind of synthesis between traditional and project-based learning. For instance, a possible precondition for doing project-based learning as an SIA0700 is a research proposal and literature review, drafts of which might be initiated in SIA0300. Furthermore, SIA0700 could require students to write a significant paper in which they incorporate data from their projects. With further staffing resources, there could eventually be an SIA elective course that precedes the SIA0700 course, and that prepares students to apply

fundamental social-scientific research methods to project-based situations, e.g. project evaluation, project impact, and social impact analysis.

A nearly identical template can be applied to any number of other initiatives, such as integrating study abroad with advanced research, service-based learning, Middlebury-Monterey connections, the Center for Social Entrepreneurship, etc. Having said all this, I stress that SIA0700 can also assume more traditional formats, such as an independent reading course or a senior thesis.

Summary

When compared with the existing academic options, the SIA major promises to develop greater analytical skills, integrate different social scientific approaches in a more reflective manner, and apply these analyses and reflections to a more personalized focus of interdisciplinary study.

Institutional Impact of the SIA Major

Some of the effects of implementing the SIA major depend on how many students pursue it. Others are scale-invariant. I rehearse the latter here.

A Versatile Major

The SIA major allows students to realize several academic goals without multiplying the number of departments and programs *ad nauseum*. Potentially, the semantics of the SIA major might be tailored so that a student's transcript more closely reflects his/her interests.

For instance, the SIA Major arose out of an attempt to design a Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) Major at Middlebury. After further reflection, it became clear that a PPE major could be a limiting case of a much more general template for an interdisciplinary social science major. In this case, SIA majors wishing to replicate a PPE major could choose Economics as their Home Discipline and Political Science as their Cluster (or vice versa). Since they would also have to take Logic and Philosophy of Social Science, they would have a similar level of training in Philosophy, and can then design their Focused Sequence around these three disciplines.

For the purposes of signaling to students what they can achieve via the SIA major, it may make sense to allow SIA majors who pursue such a track to list "PPE" as their major. Similar kinds of "tracks" in the SIA major might warrant other kinds of "majors," such as Legal Studies, Peace and Justice Studies, Critical Race Studies, etc. Similarly, certain fields in which one can currently only minor (e.g. Education Studies and Global Health) might easily be transformed into majors via SIA. Perhaps some preliminary work can be done to establish these tracks in advance. The crucial constraint will be that however these majors are realized, they conform to the strictures of the SIA major, i.e. the Home Discipline, Analytical Core, Social Science Clusters, and Focused Sequence.

This has several benefits. First, it minimizes the number of Independent Scholar requests: students interested in studying a topic from multiple social-scientific frameworks should simply become SIA majors, and do not have to create new majors from whole cloth. For parallel reasons, this may decrease the number of double and joint majors. Second, this would be an important selling point for the College. It can now boast a large number of new majors while minimizing changes to the curriculum.

Impact on Social Science Departments

Faculty in traditional social science departments frequently voice two complaints about several current interdisciplinary majors. First, these majors overburden these departments, which already suffer from

high enrollments. Second, faculty from traditional social science departments must frequently accommodate majors from interdisciplinary programs in advanced courses, yet these interdisciplinary majors are frequently insufficiently equipped to excel in these courses. The SIA has measures in place to circumvent both of these worries.

Enrollment Pressures

There are three reasons that the SIA major will not increase enrollment pressures significantly in the social sciences.

First, with the exception of perhaps the SIA 300 course, none of the required courses of the Analytical Core would be taught by a social scientist. Logic and Philosophy of Social Science are taught by philosophers; Statistics, by mathematicians. Thus, three-quarters of the required courses for the SIA major do not affect the social sciences.

Second, SIA majors have to come from somewhere, and the most reasonable inference is that if someone were not to major in SIA, then he/she would have: (a) majored only in his/her Home Discipline, (b) would have majored in his/her Home Discipline while minoring in his/her Cluster, or (c) would have double-majored in his/her Home Discipline and Cluster. Only in the first scenario would the SIA major actually impose greater burdens on social science departments than is currently the case, and there are good reasons to think that this is the least probable scenario: presumably, if someone is motivated to major in SIA, he/she is motivated to get multiple majors and minors in the social sciences anyway.

Third, if there are greater enrollment pressures, they will be in certain introductory social-science courses, but the consequences might be slight and potentially beneficial. They will be slight because, once again, these courses are taken by a large number of students anyway, so if there were no SIA major, the students who would otherwise be SIA majors might still be taking these introductory courses. Moreover, because SIA majors are likely to be a self-selecting group, instructors might prefer students with broad social-scientific interests to, e.g. the “dumb jock” with few of these interests.

Finally, potentially the most difficult scenario would be one in which the rotation of course offerings precludes a student from taking a course that would greatly enhance his/her Focused Sequence, particularly the 400-level course in his/her Home Discipline. The SIA Major handles this difficulty in three ways. First, students need faculty approval before on their Focused Sequences, so some of these difficulties can be anticipated in advance. Second, under the new course load guidelines, the SIA Program rewards faculty for advising SIA0700 courses. Third, there are many ways of supervising SIA0700 courses that can minimize faculty burdens. For instance, consider the possibilities of alternative independent projects listed above for the SIA0700. For these kinds of projects, the student might have close contact with the faculty member before and after embarking on her project, but spend a significant amount of time working on his/her project—often away from the Middlebury campus. In such a case, faculty members would have several weeks in which the SIA 0700 imposes minimal impositions on their time. Alternatively, faculty could “cross-list” a 200-300 level course that they were already scheduled to teach as an SIA0700, with the stipulation that the student taking this course as an SIA0700 would do more advanced work than the other students in the course. Once again, this is less work than is typically required for the supervision of a traditional 700-level course, though the new course load guidelines would reward faculty members.

Preparedness of SIA Majors for Advanced Work in the Social Sciences

As mentioned above, interdisciplinary majors are frequently disadvantaged when forced to take advanced courses in the social sciences (or any other traditional major for that matter.) The SIA major sidesteps that difficulty in four ways. To help make this clear, let's consider the following SIA major:

- Home Discipline: Economics
- Cluster: Sociological Theory
- Focused Sequence: Drugs

First, and most obviously, the preceding requirements entail that no SIA major ever enters a 400-level seminar with lesser qualifications than a traditional major, and most likely enter with greater qualifications. Any 400-level seminar must be taken within a student's Home Discipline, so the student is simply a major taking a seminar in a topic of special interest. In this example, such a student might take ECON0410, the Economics of Sin, as the 400 for her Focused Sequence. As an Economics major, she will have taken all of the prerequisites and have had all of the opportunities that any other Economics major has to become familiar with the major theories and methods of her discipline.

Second, the Focused Sequence requires faculty approval, and thus allows members of social science departments to counsel students in a way that prepares them for advanced study. Ideally, students will seek faculty advisors who will teach the 400-level course that interests them, and this will provide an opportunity for faculty advisors to review necessary prerequisites to prepare students for advanced work.

Third, because of the Focused Sequence, SIA majors will also have specialized knowledge of the seminar topic. To be sure, some of this knowledge will come from other disciplines, but hopefully this enhances these seminars with alternative hypotheses to be interpreted and/or evaluated by the lights of the Home Discipline. In this example, our student will have some knowledge of sociological literature about drugs, e.g. because she took SOAN0319, the Sociology of Drugs.

This presents an exciting curricular opportunity for the student to ascertain how sociological ideas about drugs can be translated and incorporated into an economic framework, which leads to my fourth and final point. When compared to other interdisciplinary majors, the SIA major puts heavier emphasis on positioning students to be adaptive to a wide array of reasoning tasks, and this is a good indicator of their ability to do advanced work in any social science. As mentioned above, the Analytical Core aims to develop a collection of skills that any social science major would find useful. An SIA major thus enters an advanced course equipped with these skills, working knowledge of the major theoretical tenets of a discipline, and additional courses in the discipline via the Focused Sequence.

SIA Minor and the Possibility of a Non-Adjunct SIA Major

A reasonable set of Minor Requirements would be:

- (1) The Analytical Core (4 courses), plus
- (2) A Cluster (2 courses).

The benefits of both the Minor would largely consist of the opportunity to further develop the analytical skills mentioned above.

If the SIA major were to develop and there were sufficient support from students and faculty, the possibility of stand-alone or non-adjunct SIA Major could be explored. Tentatively, such a major would consist of the Analytical Core and Focused Sequence, plus two minors in relevant disciplines.