

**Skidmore College Fall 2008—International Political Economy and the Environment (GO 339)
Ladd 207—12:40 to 2:00 pm—Prof. Ginsberg—Office Hours M 4:00-5:30 pm, Tues. 2:00-3:00
pm, TT 11:15 am-12:30 pm, and by appointment in Ladd 304—x5245—rginsber@skidmore.edu**

Ten Course Objectives

- explore key interrelated aspects of international relations—agriculture, commerce, demographics, development, economics, energy, environment, finance, monetary affairs, and politics
- understand lessons from international political economy (IPE) history, especially from the period of the interwar years
- introduce and critique contending IPE theories and concepts—and their explanatory cogency
- examine major IPE international institutions and how power is distributed and decisions are made
- compare/contrast IPE policies of major state and non-state players
- emphasize the important implications that environmental issues have for the IPE in general and individual states' international economic relations in particular
- consider and probe major IPE problems and issues and their sources and policy solutions
- investigate the relationship of regional economic integration and bilateral trade accords to the multilateral features of the IPE
- sharpen writing, policy analysis, debating, oral presentation, and library research skills
- prepare students for graduate work or careers in international affairs

Course Requirements (see instructions and evaluation methods inside syllabus)

- one 15-page research paper* featuring the defense of a thesis (40 percent)—affords opportunity for advanced research, research design, conceptual, methodological, and policy analyses, and writing skills* needed for graduate study and/or careers in international affairs and government
- two short-answer/key concept quizzes** (30 percent @ 15 percent each)—captures student learning of key material
- two-page policy briefs* on IPE issues (10 percent @ five percent each)—offers practical experience of distilling/organizing knowledge and suggesting policy choices to decisionmakers
- class participation and civility,*** responses to assigned study questions for readings, videos, and guest speakers; and current events discussion and presentation, drawing on readings principally from the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* (10 percent)—make concrete what students learn
- participation in roundtable discussions or debate (10 percent)—makes concrete what students learn and sharpens skills of communication and persuasion

* To assure fairness to all, there can be no late submissions of required work. All deadlines are posted in syllabus. The Government Department stresses the importance of good writing skills as part of your overall education and your education in government. See attached Government Department "Writing Statement."

**all quizzes must be taken as scheduled—no exceptions.

***The Government Department stresses the importance of mutual respect in the classroom. See attached "Policy on Civility and Comportment in the Classroom." Turn off cell phones. No text messaging.

Required Text

- Cohn, *Global Political Economy: Theory and Practice*

Schedule of Lectures, Reading Assignments, Films, Speakers, Debates, and Roundtables

Part One: History, Theory, and Institutions of the IPE

- 9-4 What is IPE and Why Study It?
- 9-9 IPE in Historical Context. Cohn Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 (pages 17-22)
- 9-11 The IPE from 1944 to 2008. Cohn, Ch. 2 (pages 22-42)
- 9-16 Conventional IPE Theory: Realism and Liberalism. Cohn, Chs. 3-4

- 9-18 Unconventional IPE Theory: Historical Structuralism and Constructivism. Cohn, Ch. 5
9-23 IPE Bretton Woods Institutions—the IMF, the IBRD, and the WTO. Handouts
9-25 Other IPE Players. Handouts; Spero and Hart, “Oil and Politics,” pp. 299-332
9-30 Rosh Hashanah. No Class. View film *International Economic Law* (30 min.)—respond to study questions for discussion on 10-2
10-2 Discuss Film. Proceed to Regional Economic Integration. Cohn, Ch. 9; Ginsberg, *Economics of European Integration*, pp. 97-107; and Dominguez, *Latin American Integration*, pp 12-15. First paper deadline
10-7 Exchange Rates, Balance of Payments, the Dollar, and the Euro. Cohn, Ch. 6. View film *Global Concerns* (28 min)—respond to study questions for discussion 10-21 and 10-23
10-9 Yom Kippur. No class. Second paper deadline by start of class. View *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore--prepare study questions for discussion on 10-21 and 10-23
10-14 First Quiz

IPE History—feudalism, agricultural, transportation, and industrial revolutions, Enclosure Movement, repeal of Corn Laws, mercantilism, urbanization, colonialism, imperialism, Cobden-Chevalier Treaty, economic nationalism, beggar-thy-neighbor, Great Depression, trade protectionism, economic nationalism, Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, competitive devaluation, Bretton Woods system (including rise/fall), trade liberalization, gold standard, dollar convertibility, Marshall Plan, Kennedy Round, Dawes Plan, oil cartel actions, high and low politics, North-South Dialogue, collapse of communism, hegemony, post-hegemonic cooperation, Euro, economic interdependence, economic globalization, unilateralism, bilateralism, multilateralism

IPE Key Acronyms (identify and define)—APEC, ASEAN, BIS, BIT, BRICs, EC, ECB, FDI, GDP, EMU, EU, CMEA, GATT, G-8, G-10, G-24, G-77, GATS, GMF, GSP, HDI, IBRD, IMF, IPE, IPPC, LDC and LLDC, MERCOSUR, MNC, MTNs, NAFTA, NGO, NIC, NIE, NIEO, NTB, OECD, ODA, OPEC, PPP, SDRs, TRIMs, TRIPs, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNCTAD

IPE Key Concepts—state and market, cartel, regional economic integration (and four variants), fiscal and monetary policy, fixed and floating exchange rates, balance of payments, payments deficit, market economy, social market economy, regime, declinists and nondeclinists, global economic governance, central bank, depreciation and appreciation, conditionality, optimum currency area

IPE Key Theories—know thinkers and explanatory tenets of realism, liberalism, and historical structuralism (and their variants); know definition, logic, and application of IPE as a conceptual approach

Part Two: IPE Practices and Policy Issues, Debates, and Choices

- 10-16 Trade. Cohn, Ch. 8; *Free Trade* by Gary Hufbauer and *Fair Trade* by Joseph E. Stiglitz, in *National Interest*, June 2008. Third paper deadline by start of class
10-21 IPE and the Environment. *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change* (2007) and excerpts from the *Executive Summary of the IPPC Report on Climate Change* and the *Stern Review* (2006). Fourth paper deadline by start of class
10-23 Trade and the Environment. *International Trade and Climate Change* (overview) by the World Bank; view film *The Great Global Warming Swindle* by Martin Durkin—prepare study questions for discussion on 10-23 and 10-28
10-28 Debt and Investment. Cohn, Chs. 7 and 10. Fifth paper deadline by start of class
10-30 First Debate Between Obama and McCain Supporters on Key IPE Issues. *International Cooperation on Climate Change* by David Victor
11-4 Guest speaker Peter Selkin, Centennial Energy Partners and a Skidmore parent (to be confirmed). Sixth paper deadline by start of class
11-6 Interview/discussion with IPE scholar Dr. Alan Cafruny, Hamilton College; reading TBA
11-11 Development and the Environment. Cohn, Ch. 11. Policy brief due at start of class.
11-13 Agriculture, Demographics, and Energy. Reading TBA. Seventh paper deadline

11-18	Catch-up and Review. Eighth paper deadline by start of class
11-20	Second Quiz
11-25	First and Second Roundtables. Ninth paper deadline (nonobligatory)

IPE Key Concepts—tariff, quota, export subsidy, comparative advantage, economies of scale, economic competitiveness, intra-firm trade, zero and positive sum games, balance of trade, trade deficit, budget deficit, specific and diffuse reciprocity, dumping and countervailing duties, intra-industry trade, economic development strategies (know all), global civil society, public goods, export controls, export subsidy, trade liberalization, free and fair trade, fast-track negotiating authority, competition policy

Key Global Environment Issues and Concepts—sustainable development, greenhouse gases, ozone depletion, fisheries depletion, climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, precautionary principle, CFCs, desertification, nuclear energy, environmental security, trade in conflict diamonds, ivory, and whale meat, food safety, genetically modified foods, Malthusian perspective, emissions trading, global water and food shortage, environmental dumping

Global Environmental Regime--Brundtland Commission, Rio Earth Summit (UNCED), Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, UN Convention of Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes, UN Law of the Sea, Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, Montreal Protocol, Kyoto Protocol

Part Three: Theory and Practice Revisited

12-2	Current IPE Trends. Cohn, Ch. 12; Third Roundtable. Policy brief due at start of class
12-4	The Future of the IPE and the Global Environment. <i>Globalization and Governance</i> by Spero and Hart, pp. 385-396. Course Evaluation
12-9	Fourth Roundtable. Graduate Studies and Careers in the IPE
12-15	Final Research Paper Due No Later Than 6:00 pm in Dr. G.'s office

Instructions for Assignments and Criteria for Evaluation

Student Participation and Contribution

Students bring the relevant reading to class each day, arrive on time to discuss reading and film and current events assignments, and submit responses to study questions and key concepts as assigned. No unexcused absences are allowed both for classes and the fourth credit hour roundtables given the speed and depth of coverage in the lectures and discussions. Each unexcused absence will result in a single letter grade drop in the participation grade. If students cannot make class, for whatever reason, they are required to let Dr. G. know before the start of class by phone. Since late arrivals to class are disruptive, students are asked to arrive on time. Consult the appended Government Department "Policy on Civility and Comportment in the Classroom." Due dates for assignments and scheduled exams, which are detailed in the syllabus, are fixed and cannot be changed. In fairness to students who meet deadlines, and to best prepare for the "zero tolerance" of late work in either graduate/law school or the workplace, no late submissions will be accepted. In order to anticipate last minute hitches, do not wait until it is too late to print out a document. Always save your working documents. Students are asked **not** to send the professor their written work by electronic mail without advance agreement.

Study Questions and Key Concepts

Responses to study questions are required for each of the assigned book chapters and films. The questions are designed to encourage students to think creatively and analytically on the basis of what they have learned in the reading. Dr. G. may require students either to submit their written responses for evaluation or to come to class prepared to discuss them. Study questions will be included in the quizzes. For each question, provide a succinct response with explanation, and make concrete what you write, using examples.

Study questions are found at the end of each chapter of the textbook: they may be augmented by Dr. G.

Current events readings encourage students to bring IPE news items to class that are relevant to lecture topics and their research project, roundtable/debate topic, and policy briefs. Students are asked to report to class on current events articles from BBC World News online, the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*.

Key concepts are building blocks in students' understanding of the basic principles of the IPE. They are found in the syllabus at the end of each section of the course. For each key concept, students provide a brief definition, offer a date and an example when appropriate, and explain how the concept is relevant to the study or practice of the IPE. Students are more apt to learn, define, and remember key concepts if they first understand the context and significance of those concepts. Students may wish to reserve a section in their notebooks for a glossary or use note cards. Students should find their definitions only in either the assigned texts or in the lectures (and not other outside sources). Dr. G. may require students to submit key concepts for evaluation, but students should always come to class prepared to define key concepts in the course of discussion. Students' knowledge of key concepts is tested in the quizzes.

Classroom Exercises

Debates and roundtables have proven to be effective in generating student interest in the study of the IPE and engaging students in active learning. Scheduled debates offer a lively way to focus on what students learn and how to put that knowledge to use. Students not assigned to roundtable discussions are assigned debate topics and groups. Each debate will have a moderator, two or three debaters on each side, a discussant, and an audience. The moderator keeps track of time allocated to each debate group, alerts each group thirty seconds before its time is up, tosses a coin to see which group starts first, and holds a vote on debate issue at the beginning and end of each debate to determine if the debate has changed the views of audience members (debate participants do not vote). The discussant offers comments and questions at end of debate. Audience members offer comments/questions in written notes to discussant during caucuses.

The debaters will meet as a group at least twice before the debate to organize a division of labor and a strategy for success based on sound substantive arguments. Debaters are asked not to read prepared statements but rather to speak on the basis of relevant key points. Practice is key to success. For every argument a debate group makes, it should anticipate the counter-argument and prepare for response. Each group selects its own team leader who organizes meetings, outlines strategy, and ensures an even distribution of labor among debaters. Dr. G. expects each group to pay him an office visit at least one week before the debate to discuss substantive points/strategy. Additional readings are provided as needed.

Each group makes a five-minute opening statement followed by two five-minute rounds of responses. There are two-minute caucuses between opening remarks, the two rounds, closing remarks, and discussant's comments. The debate closes with a five-minute summary statement. The moderator turns to the discussant, who has five minutes to make comments/ask questions. Each group has five minutes to respond. If time permits, the moderator entertains audience questions. A round of applause is customary at end of the debate and after final vote is taken. The criteria for evaluating student performance follow:

- style and delivery
- confidence
- team work
- creativity
- persuasiveness
- clarity of thought
- preparation
- substantiation
- organization
- quality of key points and responses and consultation with Dr. G.

In roundtable discussions a group of participants, led by a moderator, focuses on a preassigned set of questions/themes. The discussion starts with an introduction of the participants and a summary of the issue or problem to be discussed followed by a *tour de table*. Each individual speaks 4 to 5 minutes. This is followed by a general discussion. The roundtable ends when the moderator asks each participant to summarize main points (2 to 3 minutes each). The criteria for evaluating student participation include:

- clarity, organization, and delivery of thought
- substantiation of ideas
- confidence
- persuasiveness
- quality of key points and responses
- quality of preparation
- consultation with Dr. G..

Roundtable topics could include

- Expansion of the G-8
- Future of Doha
- Trade and the Environment
- Man-Made Global Warming—Science and Policy
- Next Global Emissions Reduction Agreement (next Kyoto)
- Reform of IMF
- Biofuels and the Energy Crisis
- Nuclear Energy and the Energy Crisis
- GMF and the Food Shortage

Policy Briefs

A policy brief, a formal governmental document, is a briefing paper written by an expert or political advisor for the benefit of a decisionmaker. Decisionmakers are too busy to gather the information they need, so they rely on policy briefs to sort out choices for action. The expert reduces the complexity of an issue to its core elements, presents policy options or scenarios on which decisionmakers may base their final determinations, and assesses benefits and costs associated with each option.

Briefly explain the policy problem or issue and its origins; offer three policy options for action; and explain the costs and benefits of each option. No late submissions are permitted in order to simulate as closely as possible the preparation of a real policy brief. Get an early start. Consult with Dr. G. early enough to get feedback on how you propose to proceed. Models of outstanding policy briefs may be viewed in Dr. G.'s office. Your briefing paper must be two-pages maximum, exclusive of the cover page, and double-spaced. Make sure the second page is numbered. Your grammar, sentence structure, spelling, margins, paragraphs, and print-out must be flawless. A cover page in memo format (see below) includes the name/title of your alter ego. Your own name goes on the back of page two. If you wish, use headings/subheadings to distinguish among the parts of the brief in order to enhance its structure. This is not a research document; endnotes should be avoided. If you are drawing directly on the work of others, write in the body of the text, "According to source x...." Take the draft to the Writing Center for assistance with editing.

First Policy Brief (due 11-11). You are chef de cabinet to Pascal Lamy, WTO Director-General. What are his options for reviving talks to conclude the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, now that the U.S. Presidential election is over?

Second Policy Brief (due 12-2). You are chef de cabinet to Jose Manuel Barroso, EU Commission President (or another international leader from a developed or developing country or international

institution). What are his/her options for reaching a new agreement on global warming at the UN Conference scheduled for December 2009 in Copenhagen?

Here is the cover-memo format:

Memorandum

To: Pascal Lamy, Director-General, World Trade Organization
From: Laura Tuthill, Chef de Cabinet
Re: Revival of the Doha Talks
Date: October 23, 2008

Following your request, attached please find options for the WTO to consider as it attempts to revive the stalled Doha Round of trade talks. (Then list your three options here. Begin discussion of three options on the next page)

The criteria used to evaluate student performance in the production of the policy brief follow:

- submitted on time
- organization and structure
- creativity
- effectiveness
- proper cover memo/memo format/full names and titles
- within two-page limit
- spelling, grammar, sentence structure, page numbers, margins, paragraphs
- concise introduction of policy issue and clear list of policy options on cover page
- logical sequence of options
- clear explanation of options
- pros and cons of each option
- authenticity of options
- consultation with Dr. G.

Research (or Honors) Paper

In close consultation with Prof. G., select/analyze an issue of IPE or the global environment of keen interest to you, ideally one that will put you in the direction you desire for employment or graduate/law/business school. Skills associated with research design and methodology, writing, research, argumentation, support of a thesis, developing a framework for analysis, and the expertise gathered in a substantive policy (or theoretical) area are indispensable skills no matter where your post-graduate career takes you.

Consult online Skidmore resources for format/style rules. Avoid use of first person. Visit Writing Center for assistance. See models of excellent research papers in Dr. G's office from past GO 339 students.

The 15-page paper (30 pages for honors in government) must have a formal cover page (see sample below); a table of contents, indicating page numbers for chapters and headings; a bibliography; endnotes (no footnotes at the bottom of each page and no source or author citations in text); flawless spelling, grammar, sentence structure, use of paragraphs, print-out, and margins (one inch); appendices as needed; and at least ten sources cited as endnotes, four of which must be primary (a roughly even mix of online and in-library sources is the norm; consult with Dr. G. on the mix of sources suitable for your project and proper format for bibliographic citation of online sources). Honors students have twelve sources, five primary.

The paper must have a useful framework for analysis that allows the writer to embed her/his thesis or

central theme/questions in a specific approach and design. The paper revolves around either a thesis, central theme, or central questions (honors students do thesis). It may be policy-oriented and/or theoretical. Students work with Dr. G. on the proposed topic and framework most suitable to their projects and needs.

Deadlines. Students are graded for each stage of the completion of their project as outlined below.

- First Deadline: 10-2 Consult with Dr. G. on preliminary topic proposal; begin literature search
- Second Deadline: 10-9 Submit one paragraph topic proposal, indicating significance/importance
- Third Deadline: 10-16 Submit hypothesis and rationale
- Fourth Deadline: 10-21 Submit brief list of preliminary central questions with explanation. Complete literature search.
- Fifth Deadline: 10-28 Consult with Dr. G. on first chapter (conceptualization). Submit/present preliminary sentence outline depicting how paper will be organized into its component parts (see models below); indicate/justify the framework for analysis chosen after having closely consulted with Dr. G.
- Sixth Deadline: 11-4 Submit list of bibliographic sources
- Seventh Deadline: 11-13 Submit final draft of sentence outline and annotated bibliography (see models)
- Eighth Deadline: 11-18 Submit Chapter One
- Ninth Deadline: 11-25 Submit Chapter Two (nonobligatory)
- Tenth Deadline: 12-15 Submit Final Draft of Paper at Dr. G.'s office no later than 6:00 pm

Evaluative Criteria Checklist for Successful Research Paper

Preparation and Style	Substance
Met All Ten Deadlines _____	Thesis/Theme Up Front _____
Formal Cover Page _____	Central Questions _____
Creative Title/Subtitle _____	Rationale/Significance _____
Table of Contents _____	Clear/Engaging Intro. _____
Bibliography/Correct Format _____	Time Frame _____
Endnotes/Correct Format _____	Structure _____
Grammar/Sentence Structure _____	Framework of Analysis _____
Paragraphs and Spelling _____	Methodology _____
Clarity of Font/Print-Out _____	Flow of Chapters _____
Margins and Pagination _____	Substantiation _____
Appendices as Needed _____	Conclusions/Link back _____
Page Length _____	Sources _____

Below is Model of a Proper Cover Page (must be spread out over entire page)

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL:
THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC POLITICS ON INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

BY ALEXANDER SMITH '02

SUBMITTED TO PROFESSOR ROY H. GINSBERG
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF GO 339

(or for honors)
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORS IN GOVERNMENT

DATE
SKIDMORE COLLEGE

Generic Research Paper Outline (provide paper title and subtitle)

Table of Contents (in draft form, this is your paper outline)

Chapter One (the conceptual chapter)

- A. Thesis Statement or Central Theme and Rationale (thesis required for honors)
- B. Significance of Topic; Timeliness
- C. Time Frame with Rationale
- D. Framework for Analysis with Rationale
(Make a choice in consultation with Dr. G. about the conceptual framework. The framework may be based on central/probing questions, key concepts, theories, levels of analysis, historical periods, or case studies)
- E. Literature Review (for honors only)
- F. Structure of Paper

Chapters Two and Three (the empirical chapters)

Make a choice in consultation with Dr. G. with regard to the empirical chapters. Empirical chapters may feature central questions (one per chapter), levels of analysis (one per chapter), historical periods (one per chapter), or case studies (one per chapter). Other organizing designs may be considered in consultation with Dr. G.

Example No. One

Chapter Two

- A. Introduction
- B. Case Study or Level of Analysis
- C. Conclusion/Lead in to next Chapter

Example No. Two

Chapter Two

- A. Introduction
- B. Central Question or Historical Period
- C. Conclusion/Lead in to next Chapter

Chapter Four (synthesis chapter that bridges the conceptual and empirical chapters and links the thesis or theme with the conclusions)

- A. relate conceptual and empirical chapters to conclusions
- B. reconfirm significance/timeliness
- C. justify framework of analysis
- D. offer prescriptions/future scenarios

Endnotes

Appendices

Bibliography

Video/DVD Study Questions (always give examples to make concrete your responses)

Seton Hall Law School video *International Economic Law* (30 minutes)

1. What are the three major areas of international economic law?
2. When and where did international commercial law first develop?
3. What is the difference between a tariff and a quota?
4. What was the GATT? When was it founded? What did it do? What were its objectives?
5. When and how did the GATT change into the WTO?
6. Compared to the GATT, how does the WTO strengthen international trade dispute resolution?
7. Why is NAFTA viewed as a landmark and a model in international economic relations?
8. What is IMF conditionality?
9. What is the World Bank's primary goal?
10. Why is the international monetary system important for international trade?
11. What is FDI? Why is it important to have international legal protection for FDI?
12. Why is international economic law expanding and through what means is it expanding?

Seton Hall Law School video *Global Concerns* (28 minutes)

1. What was the first principle of international environmental law and when was it established?
2. What is the “precautionary principle” of international environmental law?
3. What is the “good neighborliness principle” of international environmental law?
4. What was the significance of the 1972 UN Conference on the Environment at Stockholm?
5. What is the UN Environment Program (UNEP), the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and what do they do?
6. What is the principle source of international environmental law?
7. What is the Montreal Protocol and what is its most tangible contribution to the environment?
8. How and why did the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio usher in a new phase of international environmental law?
9. What is the relationship between environmental degradation and human rights?
10. What is the UN Law of the Sea (UNLOS) Treaty and what are its chief legal provisions with regard to territorial waters, the high seas, and the environment?
11. Who is the father of modern international environmental law, and why?

An Inconvenient Truth (96 minutes)

1. According to the film, what is causing global warming? And why? Make sure to list and explain each piece of the explanation.
2. What scientific evidence is used to substantiate the thesis about global warming? Be specific. Are you convinced or intrigued by the data or are you unconvinced? Explain and be specific.
3. What are five of the major effects of global warming, according to Gore?
4. What does Gore mean by “inconvenient truth” and why does he think the debate over human-made CO₂ is unfairly balanced? List and explain each reason.
5. What is the “political economy” of global warming and the debate swirling around it according to Gore?
6. What are the film’s strengths and weaknesses in terms of the thesis itself and how it is presented?

The Great Global Warming Swindle edited and directed by Martin Durkin (120 minutes)

1. According to the film, what is causing global warming if not human CO₂? And why? Make sure to list and explain each piece of the explanation.
2. What scientific evidence is used to substantiate the thesis about global warming? Be specific. Are you convinced or intrigued by the data or are you unconvinced? Explain and be specific.
3. Why does Durkin think the debate over human-made CO₂ is unfairly balanced? List and explain each reason.
4. What is the “political economy” of global warming and the debate swirling around it according to Durkin?
5. What are the film’s strengths and weaknesses in terms of the thesis itself and how it is presented?

Department of Government Writing Statement

The Government department faculty believe that the ability to produce grammatical, lucid prose is a prerequisite for clear thinking and cogent argumentation. Department members therefore take note of the quality of the writing when assessing student work, and each faculty member may shape her or his grading policies accordingly.

Competence in written expression is one of the defining properties of a liberally educated person. Writing well also has practical value. We offer as evidence of this a comment by one of our alumni, a successful lawyer:

My experience has taught me that the single skill most lacking in college graduates is the ability to craft proper written arguments. Professors should emphasize grammar and sentence structure at all course levels. In order for your graduates to succeed, they must be able to express themselves perfectly in writing. Anything less dooms them to failure.

The most important way that students can improve their writing is by reading and responding to instructors' comments on their assignments. Failing to read such comments and revise accordingly constitutes a refusal to take advantage of one of the key benefits of a liberal arts education. The "conversation" that occurs between faculty and students through the medium of student exams and papers is singular to liberal arts colleges. Your peers at larger institutions do not necessarily enjoy the benefits that accrue from having full-time teacher-scholars read and comment on their writing. We urge you to take advantage of your privileged position.

There are also several other ways that students can improve their writing outside of the classroom:

1) Read widely and voraciously

Your reading should not be confined to your coursework. The more you read, the more you will learn about grammar, syntax, organization, and style. Try to read as many different "genres" as possible (e.g., history, biography, memoirs, fiction, etc.). *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* and *The New York Review of Books* provide both concise and lengthy reviews of recently published books that can help you distinguish the flawless from the fatuous. You should also not hesitate to ask faculty for book recommendations.

2) Purchase a "style manual" or a "grammar and usage guide"

Even the most fluid writers sometimes need help with a grammar rule. The Skidmore Guide to Writing is a good place to start. We also strongly recommend that students purchase *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Students who aspire to more than mere competency should purchase both *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White and *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, by H.W. Fowler. "Strunk and White," as the former is affectionately known, is not technically a style manual, but it remains the most readable, succinct primer on how to generate correct and compelling prose. "Fowler" was an "epoch-making book" well before Winston Churchill invoked it during WW II to chastise the Director of Military Intelligence for using "intensive" rather than the correct "intense" in the plans for the invasion of Normandy. It remains the essential source for those who are "not satisfied with catching the general drift and obvious intention of a sentence" but insist that "the words used must... actually yield on scrutiny the desired sense."

3) Look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary

You cannot know the "right word" if you only know the "wrong words." It is important to look up every word whose definition eludes you. Poor word choice can cause misinterpretations and misunderstandings. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, there is a difference between "a horse chestnut and a chestnut horse."

4) Keep a "commonplace book"

One records in a commonplace book particularly well-written, insightful, or meaningful passages from his or her reading. Thomas Jefferson knew that mimesis could be an effective learning technique. He kept a commonplace book for most of his life, and no one ever accused him of being "derivative" (though he may have cribbed a bit from John Locke). Your commonplace book does not need to be a leather-bound, gold-embossed folio. A spiral notebook will do the job. By transcribing trenchant quotations, sublime turns of phrase, or vivid vignettes from your reading, you will improve your ability both to identify and to produce exquisite prose.

5) Write "e-letters"

We recognize that the only people who compose letters today are those perverse few who cannot get enough of Dangerous Liaisons. Email and instant messages have developed their own conventions that abet rapid communication but are contrary to the rules of "formal writing." This is unfortunate because electronic communications provide students with excellent opportunities to improve their writing. Crafting a readable and memorable "e-letter" requires the same skills as those needed to compose a clear and compelling argument. John Adams averred in one of his letters to Thomas Jefferson that, "You and I ought not to die before we explain ourselves to each other." E-letters can help you to "explain yourself" to others in ways that are transferable to your coursework.

Department of Government Policy on Civility and Comportment in the Classroom

The classroom experience is the heart of liberal education, and as such is the most important aspect of your Skidmore College education. Presumably, if you did not agree you would not be attending Skidmore. The faculty of the Government Department takes this understanding as the basis of our educational efforts. It is in an attempt to honor the centrality of the classroom experience that we offer this department policy on civility and comportment.

As is stated in the Student Handbook, your presence at Skidmore College is contingent upon your acceptance of, and full adherence to, the Skidmore College Honor Code. This honor code is distinct from the oath you take when writing a paper or taking an exam – it is in fact much more all-encompassing, and much more demanding.

The Code includes the following statement: "*I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of*

others, and to abide by the College regulations." Elsewhere, the Code also calls all Skidmore students to *conform to high standards of fair play, integrity, and honor.*"

What does it mean to do act honestly, with integrity, and according to high standards of fair play, particularly in the classroom? In our view, it includes, minimally, the following.

1. No student shall lessen the learning experience of others in the classroom by arriving late to class.
2. No student shall lessen the learning experience of others in the classroom by leaving the classroom while class is in session, except for true medical emergencies.
3. Cell phones must be turned off during class.
4. No student shall disrupt the learning experience of others in the classroom by talking to a neighbor, writing notes to other students, reviewing one's mail, reading the newspaper, completing homework for other classes, or playing with the laptop computer, while class is in session.
5. No student shall disrespect other Skidmore students, professors or the housekeeping staff by putting feet on the desks or other furniture in the classroom, or by leaving trash, food, or recyclables in the room at the end of the class session.

While we will hold all students to these minimal expectations, we also have some suggestions for those who seek to go beyond the bare minimum of civil classroom comportment to become the type of mature, responsible, active learners who are an asset to any classroom and society at large. These include the following.

6. Every student should take copious and meaningful notes both on assigned readings and during classroom sessions. Note taking is an important skill—if you do not already possess it, you should acquire it.

7. Every student should take some time to review the notes that he or she has taken on the day's assigned reading before each class meeting. You will be amazed how much more invested and engaged in the class you will feel if you go into the classroom well-prepared.

8. Disruptions in class can be a significant impediment to learning, and no member of the Skidmore community—including faculty and students—should tolerate them. Thus every student should take responsibility for holding his or her peers and classmates to both high academic

standards and high standards of civility. If people around you are chatting, passing notes or otherwise detracting from the overall quality of YOUR classroom experience, don't let them get away with it.

9. Individual faculty members in the Government Department will determine the level of sanctions for disruptive behavior.