

How different is Global Studies from International Relations

Despite increasing globalisation and careers unrestricted by geographical boundaries, Global Studies is a field less known

c-Sheetal.Banchariya@timesgroup.com

Confused between picking International Relations (IR) or Global Studies (GS) as the subject for higher studies? Have you been told that both the subjects are the same? If yes, then read on to clear the doubts.

Global Studies is an academic field of inquiry focusing on the study of globalisation through transdisciplinary and critical perspectives. Among other concerns, Global Studies explores forms of geopolitics, economic and cultural globalisation, social movements, and global environmental change. With only a handful of universities offering programmes in Global Studies, people often confuse it to be an extension of International Studies.

LIMITED AWARENESS

Only a couple of institutions in India offer programmes in the field of Global Studies, though the field is popular in universities across North America, Europe and some universities in China and Japan. “Global Studies departments are largely staffed by scholars trained in traditional disciplines like History, Sociology, Geography, Economics and Politics. Several scholarly works, apart from textbooks and edited volumes, have now started getting published but there is still a long way for it to become one of the mainstream choices among Indian students,” said Praveen Singh, dean, School of Global Affairs, Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD).

Many students who find their inclination to understand global issues beyond politics often opt for International Relations at master’s level due to unavailability of programmes concentrated on global studies at the undergraduate level. “People in developing countries do not take a chance and encourage students to study traditional degrees, which is largely because well-performing students are pushed to pursue Engineering or Medicine. Parents still feel that fields such as Global Studies do not fetch well-paying employment,” said Sreeram Sundar Chaulia, professor and Dean, Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA).

GLOBAL STUDIES V/S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

While IR is concentrated upon understanding inter-state and inter-governmental functioning, Global Studies incorporates several disciplines that critique a nation-state centric approach to the world. “International Relations build on a basic assumption of the pre-eminence of the nation-state. Academics, policymakers and social activists have long perceived the inadequacy of models such as IR to make sense of rapid changes in global politics, forms of production and consumption, modes of communication, cultural practices and patterns of social identification that cut across national borders. Hence, Global Studies helps one gather the holistic understanding of different issues that concern the world than just politics,” added Singh.

International Relations is largely derived from Political Sciences with a mix of history. “IR can also be looked at as a subset of Global Studies that dwells upon comparative politics, unlike IR. It compels the students to understand the reasons and impact of events such as the economic crisis in 2008, rather than just mugging up the post-event information,” said Chaulia.

JOB PROSPECTS

Global Studies not only equip students to make sense of the world through theory and frameworks but also provide the necessary skills for them to both take advantage of the opportunities that come with global change, as well as become leaders of that change. Additionally, the programmes will help prepare students for higher study in any of the Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines or in emergent interdisciplinary fields like Development Studies, Human Ecology, Cultural Studies, Policy Studies and Legal Studies.

“Students can opt to find employment in various sectors with plenty of job roles, which include digital and tradition media, foreign affairs experts, research analysts, regional and geopolitical analysts. Indian Foreign Service (IFS) is another lucrative option as the domain is seeing a dearth of professionals with an academic and professional background in foreign affairs,” added Chaulia.

