

A sampling of past distinction projects shows the range of possible topics available to you:

- The Effect of Political and Economic Change on Mexico's Drug Cartels and the Rise of Narcoterrorism
- Chinese-English Interlanguage: Using Test Design to Understand Difficulties in Language Learning
- Conditions for Success in Achieving Multilateral Arms Control Agreements
- EU Influence on Immigration Policy and the Implications for Maghrebian Immigrants
- Work as Social Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities in Kenya
- Egypt's Resistance to the Virtual Water Strategy
- Basque Identity Today and Recent Works by Two Basque Artists
- The Transformation of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Thailand
- Media, Democracy and Social Movements: Comparative Analysis of U.S. Civil Rights and Anti-Apartheid Movements

Students speak...

"Pursuing a distinction project helped me the most in learning how to manage a months-long project. Much like projects in the 'real world,' a distinction paper can't be written the night before and involves more than one person. Also, having this project on my resume helped a lot after graduation. I was often asked about it during interviews and explaining the project enabled me to show off my knowledge of the area of the world that I studied at Illinois." *Jonas V.*

"The most important thing that I got out of the distinction project was that after it was completed, I felt like I was really a part of the discourse and the academic world. You can publish your work, submit it to conferences, or just put it in your resume--either way, you've proved to yourself and to everyone else that you can bring something new and individual to the field." *Annamarie W.*

"From pursuing the distinction project I learned that gaining a strong support system in a project and goal is critical to reaching ones destination. Hence in order to cultivate this, I found that consistent formal and informal communication with my committee was key. As a result I was able to learn from and connect with my committee on professional and personal levels which helped to strengthen my project as well as my networking skills." *Eden G.*

"Prior to pursuing distinction, I never thought I would do much in the way of research or have a future in academia, and was somewhat unsure of graduate studies. But wanting to distinguish myself from other Global Studies and LAS majors, I decided to pursue distinction anyways. The process not easy, but it gave me such a hands-on experience with an area that I was interested in and extremely passionate about. It also gave the opportunity to work with and build a lasting bond with distinguished faculty members. With their support and guidance, my confidence in my field of study and writing abilities improved greatly. In the end, I was able to gather data from human subjects during my semester studying abroad, and the final product was something I was extremely proud of. It gave me an idea of what it's like to work in academia - something I once saw as impossible and now see as an exciting goal - and an excellent feel for what I might experience during graduate studies." *Lauren C.*

"There is no greater feeling than pursuing something you really care about and watching the change that it brings as you chase your curiosity. The distinction project pushed me to really apply all of the skills I had learned throughout my 4 years of college and to take it upon myself to fill the gaps in the research that already existed on my topic. It was difficult, a lot of reading, took much self-discipline, and was discouraging at times. However, it was worth all of the sweat and hard work. To have completed the distinction project sends a message to all of your future employers, peers, and professors that you took college seriously. It shows that not only did you learn and absorb what University of Illinois had to offer, but that you challenged it. It was a rewarding and gratifying experience!" *ManoLasya P.*

"Pursuing a distinction project was one of the best decisions I made in my undergraduate career. It a rewarding experience and provided a constructive opportunity to synthesize what I had learned through my thematic concentration. Not only was the project an exploration of my academic interests, it was a personal journey in that I came to understand my own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to in-depth research, writing, and project management. I feel well prepared to continue on to graduate studies and to begin a career in international relations after completing my distinction project."
Elizabeth P.