Elliot Dickerson likes to dream big. Politics and world affairs are the stuff of his dreams. He came to the College with his sights set on a career in the foreign service, and with aspirations of becoming an ambassador. Fortunately, our international studies major offers the ideal background for that and for many other professional pursuits, as well.

At first, Elliot took an interest in Cuba. Then, Asia. He studied Mandarin Chinese, and Chinese politics, literature and religion. “That’s one of the cool things about this major. You can choose from one of five areas for a concentration, and the subject matter goes well beyond just politics or history.”

Elliot’s interests took a quantum leap during a study-abroad course when he spent a month traveling in Cambodia and Vietnam with four other students and a political science professor. “Every day we set off on a bus, a motorcycle or a boat. We examined non-governmental organizations by spending time at an orphanage for children with HIV. We visited Buddhist temples and checked out historically significant sites from the Vietnam War and the Cambodian genocide era. It was really amazing.”

Later, in a course on Chinese politics, he wrote a paper analyzing China’s drug-smuggling policies. For an independent study, he investigated the perception of important issues as depicted in Chinese film. “Instead of looking at things from the perspective of history or hard facts, I examined the film director’s point of view, because each one expresses it all so differently through his individual lens.”

Elliot also joined the Chinese Club where he spent time discussing Chinese culture and practiced the language. “I feel like I can do anything with a degree in international studies. You develop a comprehensive understanding of the world that can be used in business, economics, literature, or whatever you want to immerse yourself in after graduation. As long as you have a passion for languages and other cultures, this is a really useful major because it’s so versatile.”

If you want to discover what the rest of the world is about, and enhance your chances for a successful career in the process, check out the international studies major.