

INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS



Mission: The Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts Major Program serves the people of Colorado by providing a program of study for students with broad interests that cross disciplinary boundaries. Students in this major develop broad-based understandings of the human condition, study various cultures and cultural artifacts, and develop an appreciation for the variety and breadth of human knowledge by pursuing a concentration either in the arts and humanities or in the social sciences or some combination of both. The program aims to develop students' abilities to be critical thinkers and committed citizens with a responsibility for ethical involvement in the larger human and global community.

Purpose: The Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts major offers instructional programs that “provide an understanding of people, their cultures, histories, literatures, philosophies, media, and arts; knowledge of their social, political, economic, and environmental systems; skills of critical thinking and communication; and attitudes appropriate to its academic disciplines.” Graduates of the Liberal Arts Major will 1) be able to follow a line of reasoning and empathize with others; 2) know there are multiple ways of reading the world; 3) be able to write clearly and persuasively; 4) respect rigor not so much for its own sake but as a way of seeking truth, for they will have a larger vision that calls for the humane use of knowledge; 5) practice humility, tolerance, and self-criticism, for they will have begun to know and celebrate the wider world and will understand the history and the aspirations of other peoples; 6) understand how to get things done in the world, and they will sincerely want to leave the world a better place than they found it; 7) nurture and empower the people around them, for they know that nothing is accomplished by one person alone, that a free and flourishing community is essential to their freedom and their achievements. During and contributive to the process of achieving these seven broader goals of personal growth, our graduates will accrue both 1) skills of thinking, writing, and public speaking and 2) an understanding of the need for interpersonal, cross-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary awareness in an increasingly complex world. We recognize that this understanding and these skills are critical to individual and group success in an enlightened 21st century world.

Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts students—in preparation for the 21st Century workplace—learn also an approach to knowledge, communication and problem-solving recognized as interdisciplinary. This approach stresses understanding and intellectual/analytical processes that give our majors the ability (and confidence) to (a) analyze and interpret a diverse array of issues, behaviors, and perspectives from an interdisciplinary viewpoint, (b) study history of conflictive and harmonious societies to understand how they have functioned successfully and unsuccessfully, (c) engage in complex writing and research to enhance invention abilities, communication, and understanding of the needs and expectations of diverse audiences and (d) study diverse perspectives and cultures to understand alternative methods and ideas for living and problem solving. Our goal as a major is to not only provide students with the key skill-sets and abilities they will need to be successful in their chosen careers but also the means to be politically engaged citizens and productive members (and participants) in their local and national communities.

Academic Experience: The Liberal Arts major encourages students to think about academic experience as both a path of personal discovery but also an opportunity to plan for their future career and life to come after graduation. We focus on all aspects of career/life planning, such as individual assessment, experimentation and exploration, intellectual interest, career possibilities, personal growth, competency in the Liberal Arts core skills-set, and community awareness. We urge students to employ what we call the 'cluster' approach to their curriculum planning. Within the Liberal Arts (Interdisciplinary) Major, students have at least 30 credits (at least 18 must be upper division) with which to they are free to choose courses from any of the disciplines within the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). We stress, in the planning students do, a more focused and creative approach, which we describe as building a cluster of courses from various disciplines within the CLA that share a common theme, allowing them to then study a concept or topic through the lenses of multiple disciplines. Cluster building is different from a minor in several ways: 1) students design and build their own clusters, 2) the focus is interdisciplinary and not specific to a single discipline. Students are free (and encouraged) to explore the possibility of identifying/developing a course cluster unique to their interests and future career path, one that explores beyond the realm of any one Liberal Arts discipline. Course clustering allows students a chance to be creative while providing a topic of focus for their major. Course clustering provides students with a clearer and keener sense of purpose and a goal to pursue as a Liberal Arts Interdisciplinary Major.

Yearly academic assessment outcomes, student course surveys, economic success indicators, final destination reports and graduation surveys indicate that the Liberal Arts (Interdisciplinary) Major is a quality program that (a) serves the needs of the Colorado business, cultural, political and social communities, (b) offers excellent intellectual and academic opportunities and (c) provides to students a genuine, enjoyable and empowering collegiate experience. Students valued this program and have earned because of it a fair measure of personal growth/satisfaction, intellectual achievement and economic success.

In addition to the on campus major, Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts offers an online degree completion program designed to serve the needs of individuals in the state of Colorado (and elsewhere) who wish to return and complete their undergraduate degrees. It is often challenging (and next to impossible) for individuals already out in the workplace to take time away from existing jobs or careers to complete their education so our distance degree program is designed especially for those who would otherwise not be able to return to campus to finish their degrees.