

# INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

## News | New Faculty | Student Stories | What's Coming

### COMMENTS FROM JESSIE, ASC

Adam Leipzig, a film and theater producer and advocate for creatives, delivered a TEDx talk back in 2013 titled "How to Know Your Life's purpose in 5 Minutes." As I watched this, I kept thinking about all of you, our current and former Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts students. I have had fantastic conversations with many of you about your interests, your paths in the curriculum, and your wishes and worries regarding future careers. When I have heard concerns about employment and marketability, I think of Leipzig's message. He spoke about going to his college reunion and hearing about the lives of his cohort. He noticed that people who studied the liberal arts were happier and more robust than their peers who focused on specific career tracks. Why? He believes it was because they did not limit themselves in school. He notes, "We had studied classes for the joy of learning not because we thought they were going to direct us to a specific job—we still got jobs, we were living our lives expansively, with life's ups and downs—and we did not think we had wasted a single minute." When you are talking with friends and family, or when you are meeting new people in any social situation, what do you talk about? We talk about the liberal arts: film and television, books, music, art, politics, and culture! So be proud of your path. You will always find jobs and careers. And when you do, try Leipzig's method of talking about that employment through a liberal arts lens by articulating these 5 things: who you are, what you do, who you do it for, what those people want or need, and what they get out of it. That focus on providing service and support to others is crucial for living a life that appreciates the humanities. To watch the video go to <https://tedxinnovation-s.ted.com>

### DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I do hope everyone is having a successful fall semester so far. It's hard to believe we are more than half-way through the semester. I would like to share several lines from two individuals I admire. Irish Poet, Seamus Heaney and American Bluesman Robert Johnson. First, our Irishman, from his *Glanmore IV Sonnet*, published in his collection: *Field Work*, 1979.

He lived there in the unsayable lights.  
 He saw the fuchsia in a drizzling noon,  
 The elderflower at dusk like a risen moon  
 And green fields greying on the windswept heights.  
 'I will break through,' he said, 'what I glazed over  
 With perfect mist and peaceful absences. . . .'  
 Sudden and sure as the man who dared the ice.

I start here because Heaney beautifully describes a particular predicament we so often find ourselves when trying to explain (or defend) what Interdisciplinarity is, and how this intellectual and academic approach enhances and compliments disciplinary research and knowledge. I think what is best about an inter-disciplinary achievement is, as Heaney describes, that 'sudden and sure' moment when we 'dare the ice.' Yes, it is daring to choose a major where you are constantly sitting in different classrooms in different subject areas (Economics, Sociology, Art, English Political Science, etc.), meeting different kinds of people every semester. You all are having to constantly adapt to new classroom environments and disciplinary practices and methods. Yes, history majors know the world slightly differently than do Philosophy students. Of course what's most appealing about any 'dare' is the excitement that comes when you meet the dare. Secondly, because you're constantly working with different subjects and methodologies and with disciplinary communities and assumptions, you are always finding yourselves at your own unique crossroad.

Here is where Robert Johnson comes in. Legend has it he met the devil at a crossroad and gained his ability to play the blues from such an encounter. Every semester is an encounter for you and you never know where you might be heading. Both Heaney and Johnson typify for me what seems an increasingly normative component of Interdisciplinarity, that moment in any thinking or intellectual process where the integration of disciplinary knowledge takes place, that moment of uncertainty and excitement—and perilousness—where diverse disciplinary understanding meet up at a crossroad, where one catches the bus at midnight. I can't help but end with the finishing lines to Johnson's *Me and the Devil Blues*.

You may bury my body, ooh down by the highway side  
 So my old evil spirit can catch a Greyhound bus and ride.



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I-LA CURRICULA UPDATE

This fall I-LA is transitioning to our new degree requirements. Several key new courses have been brought into our program requirements that we hope will maximize your time in our program without sacrificing what's best about our program—your ability to take the liberal arts courses you want to take. One key need missing from our program was a meaningful I-LA experience at the Junior level. We now have a Junior Seminar (LB 392) focusing on the critical perspective and practice of Interdisciplinarity. We will be offering this course Fall, Spring and Summer, both online and on campus. Also, at the Senior level we now have a one credit Interdisciplinary Portfolio Workshop course (LB 490). This course is designed to help you (1) better realize your achievement, (2) document this achievement in the form of an electronic Portfolio (e.g., a collection of samples of the various work, awards, and activities you've been a part of as you worked towards earning your degree, and (3) give you a sense of what's next after graduation. For a better sense of what these changes mean, do make an appointment with Jessie, the I-LA ASC, so she can help you update your graduation plan.

For those of you who are into data or are considering careers where some knowledge of data management is going to be useful, I-LA has teamed up with the Department of Economics and Professor Steven Shulmann. The new course is listed as LB 235 and is called Working with Data. Professor Shulmann has designed the course as an introductory course for all Liberal Arts majors. You will learn how to (1) work competently in spreadsheet programs such as Excel and (2) tell interesting stories with data. Understanding and being able to work with data is an increasingly valued skill within the 21st Century workplace. Here's your opportunity to learn such a key skill.

I-LA INTERNSHIPS

Coming this spring, there are a number of new I-LA specific Internship opportunities available for I-LA majors. These internships will involve editing, communication, graphic design and media events. For more information, contact Professor Cindy Murillo.

MEET YOUR NEW I-LA FACULTY

Gina Robinson, J.D.

**Education:**

B.A. Psychology, Minor Economics, Vanderbilt University; Juris Doctor, Washington University School of Law

**CSU Classes:** Contemporary Legal Studies, Constitutional Law

**Other Roles at CSU:** Pre-Law Advisor, Legal Studies Minor Advisor

**Family:** Husband and four children (25, 23, 19, 11)

**Hobbies:** Ironman triathlons, marathons, snow skiing

**Exerts from Interview by Viktor Darkpoint (Junior, Political Science major, Legal Studies minor)**

**What do you like most about teaching in the interdisciplinary studies department?**

I love that it gives the student such a well-rounded education. There are so many classes from so many disciplines that you can choose from to create your interdisciplinary major. also love the preparation before the trial. This is the most important piece,

**What do you like most about teaching at CSU?**

I love the students and the energy that the students bring to the campus. I also love all the people I work with. It is a great place to teach.

**What do you like most about teaching Contemporary Legal Studies?**

This class is the first class in the Legal Studies minor, and you get a taste of each area of the law. I love the student interaction in the class, as they get answers to all those questions they have had about legal issues they or someone they know have dealt with. I also enjoy sharing real life experiences I have had while practicing law, which makes it more real.

**What do you like most about teaching Constitutional Law?**

This is a great class to be taking right now. There are so many hot topics with the U.S. Supreme Court, and we spend a lot of time in class unpacking those issues. It is also great to try to analyze what the founding fathers meant by the wording of certain sections in the Constitution, and how that affects us today.

**As J.D., what did you like most about practicing law?**

I love the thrill of the courtroom. It is a great challenge to be fully prepared for a trial, anticipate all of the opposing party's arguments, and to present your case in a smooth and convincing fashion. I truly believe that in most cases, the party best prepared is the one that wins.



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I-LA SUPPORT STAFF

Brittany Lesar,  
Class of 2018



The College of Liberal Arts has always seemed like a second home to me. As cliché as that sounds, much of my time at CSU has been spent wandering different halls of the Clark building, discovering rooms that I didn't even realize existed, and

busying myself with classes to earn my B.A. in Communication Studies with a History minor. I always felt connected to CSU, and when graduating this past spring I knew it did not mark the end of my time spent here.

My 22 years of life has taught me a lot of things about myself so far—I am fascinated by the human experience, I love to learn and discover new things, and I am indecisive to a fault. These qualities I have learned about myself were what drew me to the Liberal Arts, particularly Communication Studies. I love learning about people's lives and interacting with them, and I truly believe that strong communication and human connection have the power to change the world. Plus, my indecisive mind finds comfort in the fact that a Liberal Arts education opens up many doorways for future careers.

My indecisiveness has proven to be difficult in deciding which path to pursue professionally, but I am absolutely thrilled to be joining the CLA Dean's Office as an Administrative Assistant, and I can't wait to see what this opportunity holds for me.

Aside from my educational and newly established professional background, I love being outdoors (like any other Coloradan) and enjoy activities like rock climbing, hiking, and snowboarding. I have a slight obsession with board games and video games, and am frequently known to destroy my competition in Mario Party. I also have a major sweet tooth, so feel free to leave any extra treats in the Dean's Office next time you stop in. I'm looking forward to seeing what this experience has to offer, and I'm so excited that I get to remain a part of the CSU community!

MEET YOUR NEW I-LA FACULTY

Cindy Murillo, Ph.D.



**Education:**

B.A. English, Minor Political Science, Indiana University; M.A. English, University of Central Florida; Ph.D. English, The University of New Mexico

**CSU Classes:** World Literature The Modern Period, Junior Seminar  
**Other Roles at CSU:** Internship Coordinator, Newsletter Editor

**Family:** Husband and two children (19,15)

**Hobbies:** Marathons, mountain biking, paddle boarding, and reading!

Professor: Cindy Murillo (CM) Students: Danielle Klein (DK), Bryce Liebe (BL), Eli Zeek (EZ); Christian Schultz (CS)

CM: Ok, let's get started. First, do any of you have questions for me?

DK: How old is this class? I mean how many times has this class been taught?

CM: It is brand new! This is the first time this course has been taught and it is also a required class for I-LA majors. So, there. What do you think?

BL: Wow, just the thought....of being a part of something so grand...

CS: It could really blossom!

CM: So my first real question: What do you enjoy most about Interdisciplinary Studies?

BL: It [I-LA] is just super fitting, especially in business, communications, and even in conversation and learning; you learn to adapt so you can take on the situation in the best possible way. Like Christian said earlier, when I transferred in here, I was really limited in terms of declaring a specific major. I only had a few options because only a few of my credits transferred to fit a single major. And with Interdisciplinary Studies, you get flexibility with credits and electives. I can choose business *and* psychology. That's why I like this class. With this class, we take on a situation from all different angles and consider it from multiple perspectives.

DK: Yes, coming from a different department—Journalism, which is in Liberal Arts—and taking this class, I find myself in my other classes seeing things in different ways.

CS: I feel like there is real problem solving going on in interdisciplinary studies and as interdisciplinary majors, we look at problems more completely.

EZ: Yeah. It prepares you for the real world and trains you to see the professional world from different perspectives. I mean if you are a PR person for Engineers, you will need to consider not just the engineers, but the economical, sociological, and political aspects involved. I also see a lot from not just talking in class, but from listening to everyone else. Everyone else has a different background and different ideas about what things are and what they mean.

DK: What's nice about I-LA is that you can take several courses you are interested in and those courses will fulfill your requirements. This allows you to think in terms of interdisciplinarity.

STORIES FROM ABROAD

Jenna Van Lone,  
Interdisciplinary Legal Studies minor

Earlier this semester, I had been stressing about having things to put on my resume for my law school applications. I kept racking my brain for something unique that would set me apart from my peers. Luckily, one day I was walking to the busses when an internship flier caught my eye. The CEA Study Abroad flier offered law internships in a variety of countries for this summer and I immediately thought about how amazing it would be to get a law internship in Paris, France. I had thought about doing a study abroad semester, but I happen to be more a homebody and two months for the summer sounded like a good compromise for me. So, I took the flier and found out that the deadline to commit to the program was in just three days. There were applications to fill out, credit transfer forms to get signed, parents to convince, and the list just kept getting longer the more that I did. At first, I wasn't going to commit to the program unless I was sure that I would receive credit for it but the more I thought about it, the more I realized what an amazing opportunity this was. Who else gets to say they've gone to France to intern in a subject that they're passionate about? This was the perfect thing to put on my law school application and an incredible experience that I would be a fool to miss out on. With a lack of sleep and more coffee than I probably should have consumed, I finished everything I needed to in those three days and committed to this internship. The advisors were all extremely helpful and before I knew it I was interviewing with a coordinator in France to try and place me in a law related internship that was best suited for me. I am so excited that this opportunity was available, and I cannot wait to eat all the bread and pastries that France has to offer.



INTERDISCIPLINARY LEGAL STUDIES INTERNSHIP

Jennie Reiher, Interdisciplinary Legal Studies Minor

Over the past year, I had the opportunity to work at a local law firm, Procter, Callahan & Liska, as an administrative assistant. The two fabulous attorneys practice in the legal area of estate planning, guardianships and conservatorships, probate, and long term care. My responsibilities remained on the administrative side of the business including managing the calendar, drafting court documents, and working on our client's initial estate planning drafts. Much of my job also involved answering the phones, which has proven to be much more challenging than I thought.



Most people on the phone were very cordial and kind to me, but as in any customer service position, there exist people who take their frustrations out on "the help." I had clients hang up on me or yell at me because something happened they weren't happy about. The biggest challenge I faced was learning how not to take things personally over the phones.

The silver lining is that I learned how to talk to people who had trouble working the system and understood that many of the people with whom I spoke were going through the toughest parts of life like losing a loved one or putting a parent in a nursing facility.

I learned more than I ever thought I could in one short year. (Those are the best jobs to have.) The attorneys showed me what it means to be compassionate towards total strangers and to be kind to people who aren't necessarily kind in return. Listening to the way they talked to their clients whose parent had just passed away, or the way they calmed down their client who had such severe dementia. These attorneys help people who are having the worst time of their lives with grace, compassion, and warmth. There's nothing more valuable to take away from a college job than how to treat others the way these attorneys treat their community. It was an honor to be a part of their team.

COMING SOON TO I-LA

There are several exciting things happening in I-LA.

First off, Professor Gina Robinson, our Interdisciplinary Legal Studies Faculty member, is now in the planning stages of putting together a new LB course called Mock Trials. Here, students considering law school and a future at the bar can learn and practice trial skills in action, while eventually participating in Mock Trial competitions with other instate Universities, such as CU, Denver U, and UNC.

Second, Professor Cindy Murillo, Instructor for Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts, is developing an exciting research opportunity for Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts majors and she will be applying for funding to create our first I-LA Research Academy, a new undergraduate research program sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts.

I-LA STUDY ABORAD SCHOLARSHIPS

In collaboration with the Study Abroad Programs, I-LA has established 5 new SA Scholarships for I-LA students wishing to study abroad in Todos Santos, Mexico, a new semester long SA program starting Fall 2019: Liberal Arts & Community Engagement. These SA scholarships are open to all I-LA majors and are designed to help cover the cost of studying abroad. Please visit the SA website or contact the Study Abroad Programs for more information and application details.

HEARING FROM I-LA MAJORS

Heather Perry, Senior

Ever since I was little, I've wanted to work with animals, so becoming a veterinarian seemed like the right path for me. Transferring to CSU was the first step to achieving my dream and I was extremely excited. My first Fall semester here I started taking classes for my Zoology major and things quickly started going downhill. The classes became overwhelming and I struggled to keep up with the workload. I knew deep down that I wouldn't be able to handle the amount of work it takes to become a veterinarian, but I was stubborn and unwilling to let go of a dream I had had since I was 10 years old. My struggling continued into Spring semester and that is when I hit rock bottom. I finally realized I needed to make a change, or I was going to burn myself out. I was apprehensive about changing my major in my senior year, but I couldn't continue down the road I was on. I met with multiple advisors from the English and Liberal Arts departments and together we decided that a degree in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts was the right choice for me. To me Liberal Arts means diverse learning and this degree offers a broad spectrum of knowledge. For me, learning about one topic can get boring and I lose interest quickly. An I-LA degree matters to me because it allows me to take a variety of classes I actually enjoy and am passionate about. Since my strengths lie in writing and creative projects, my advisor suggested adding the new creative writing minor they just introduced this Fall. I also discovered that I wouldn't have to give up my dream of working with animals. It turns out this degree offers many possibilities of working with animals in various forms. It was extremely hard, but changing my major was the best path for me and I am much happier with my academic choices.

COMMUNITY SERVICE MESSAGE

Rory Plunkett, Senior

I am a senior studying Communication and Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. I have created the student organization **Eliminate Hunger Locally** (EHL) to help combat hunger in local communities. I have a history of volunteering in my own hometown where we gather thousands of cans and deliver them to hungry people throughout Connecticut. With this experience, I aim to help eliminate hunger through awareness and donations in the Ft. Collins area. 1 in 3 children in Larimer County is food insecure. Because hunger transcends race, class, and ethnicity, it is imperative for people like me, a student in the Liberal Arts college, to aid when I can.

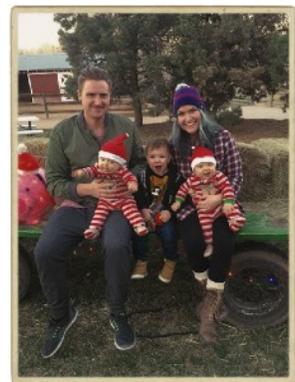
The main event EHL organizes is Cansgiving, an outreach committed to helping those in need during the Thanksgiving time. The spirit of this event is to allow hungry people in our local community to be able to enjoy the wholesome and positive benefits of Thanksgiving. Please join us in helping with canned and dried goods of the Thanksgiving season. Please contact me at [rplunk@rams.colostate.edu](mailto:rplunk@rams.colostate.edu) if you would like to be part of this organization or if you just wish to donate some canned goods.

GREETINGS FROM LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

Brennen Kaylor, Class of 2016

The Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program allowed me to focus on several of my interests, combining them into one, all-encompassing degree. I had initially changed my major a couple of times, trying to determine what path would suit me best and what I truly wanted to do. This meant I had earned a good number of credits in (at first) seemingly unrelated fields – Communications, Sociology, and Art. After speaking with my advisor, I realized that all the credits I had earned throughout my journey could be applied to a degree in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. This was perfect for me, due to my varied interests in several different fields of study. Once I declared my major as Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts, I felt as though I was making the most out of the things I enjoyed, wanted to pursue, and in the way I wanted to pursue them. My fellow students also seemed to be on a similar page; having a variety of interests and wanting to gain a deeper understanding of how they may compliment each other.

After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts, I was offered a job as the Web Designer for the College of Liberal Arts. The various courses I had taken prepared me wonderfully for the duties I perform daily in my career. I find myself utilizing many different skills – from each of the fields in which I studied – daily. More importantly, I now have a stronger understanding of how these skills intertwine and how to utilize each of them together, to reach my full potential in a work environment.



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