

# INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

## News | Faculty | Student Stories

### COMMENTS FROM JESSIE, ASC

I was in a training a few months ago on campus about Thinking Styles. The facilitators framed much of the seminar using Bloom's Taxonomy, a decades old model illustrating how knowledge and cognition are built. The model is a pyramid shape and begins with the simplest, most basic ways to learn: memorization and understanding. As the layers of the pyramid are built up, they are smaller, connoting the more challenging, higher levels of learning such as applying, analyzing, and evaluating information. The pinnacle of the pyramid is the most complex form of intellect: creativity (see <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/>).



Of course, we in the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts live in these top zones of thinking. Our classes are designed for students to showcase their own unique interests and make connections among departments. It is no surprise that employers place creativity at the top of their wish lists for what they hope top candidates will bring to the table; the value gained from this complex thinking multiplies in ways basic memorization or understanding cannot do.

So many aspects of academia have shifted significantly in the past few weeks. The whole world has shifted. The fact that Liberal Artists are trained and encouraged in creativity is yet another asset now that we are in a pandemic. What I have seen and heard from every student I have talked to since the start of this are the fullest, most glorious expressions of emotional intelligence. You know how to sort through and quickly analyze mass amounts of information and then decipher what is accurate and beneficial to share with your loved ones.

### DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

First off, I do hope everyone is holding up the best you can. I will say with all honesty that this semester has been the most challengingly-difficult of any semester I have ever taught. Yes, I have had challenging semesters and difficult ones, too—but never at the same time. No previous semester comes even close. I-LA majors have been amazing at not only surviving the difficult transition of CSU going to a 'distanced' instruction at spring break but also for keeping up such positive outlooks, not only in terms of your classwork but also in terms of what is happening in the COVID-19 world we all find ourselves in at the moment.

Extraordinary times right now, there is no denying it. Throughout human history there have been events that have altered human society. Hardship and adversity in the larger human scope often results in changes to how we think and how we do things as a society. Despite the uncertainty at the moment, and our rush to reconfigure our living-spaces and human-spaces, moments such as these can also be opportunities for change. And, crazy as it might seem right now, this reality we face now may help us make our world better. Often, severe times force us to see clearly what isn't working. For this, your I-LA skills are vitally important. Skills such as critical awareness, communication, media competency, and researched fact-based argumentation are going to be more essential than ever. These are exactly the skills all of you having been mastering as I-LA majors and I-LS minors.

In times such as these, though, two other skills are equally vital: reflection and interdisciplinary awareness. COVID-19 is as huge a problem as any we face in today's world. No one outlook, no one cultural reality, no one political orientation, and no one disciplinary answer is going to solve this challenge alone. Huge problems require the very utility that interdisciplinary critical methodology fosters: seeing things from multiple perspectives, finding and building collaborative frameworks, working in ways that require that one remains in between rather than in any single effort or attempt at resolution. Reflection isn't a skill that comes naturally; we must learn how to do it; and in so many of the various assignments and tasks you have been asked to do in your classes, this is another skill all of you are learning. Reflection is at the core of any successful interdisciplinary practice. What I mean here is that critical and personal reflection forces us to slow down, step out of ourselves, to look beyond (and behind) the framework of our thoughts. Best of all, I think, reflection helps us overcome our mistakes. And mistakes are as common to humanity as are our successes. In times such as these, we need to remind ourselves that as I-LA majors we have the very skills the world needs so as to move forward in whatever happens next.

Finally, I just want to shout out to all of you—and to all students at CSU—for the resilience and patience you've all demonstrated these past weeks. It truly has been quite inspiring.

Cheers, from my 'stay-at-home' world.



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LB 360 MOCK TRIAL — THIS SPRING

We have a new course this spring in the interdisciplinary department. It is called Mock Trial Practicum and is an upper division course in the Legal Studies minor. There are 36 students in the class, and they are broken up into six teams for the semester. The students are given a case problem at

the beginning of the semester.

They learn how to put on an entire trial.

We start with how a case makes its way to the court system, and then they



The Verdict. 1982.

learn how to prepare and present opening statements, closing arguments, direct and cross examinations, and how to make and respond to objections. We have had a few guest speakers who are local trial attorneys who have lectured on various aspects of a trial. The last five weeks of class involve a round robin competition where the students put on an entire trial each week against another team. The two teams with the highest scores will compete for the grand title. Unfortunately, due to the quarantine, our trials have been completely on Zoom via video, but the students have not missed a beat. We have six local attorneys come each week via zoom to judge the rounds. If you are interested in the law and/or being a trial attorney someday, this class is for you. You learn a great deal of practical trial work and it is a lot of fun. The class will be offered every spring semester.



On the Basis of Sex. 2018.

EXITING NEWS

Alpha Iota Sigma, the Interdisciplinary National Honors Society, is moving forward on its CSU chapter, and the nomination process for outstanding scholarship in an Interdisciplinary Program. If you have a minimum G.P.A. of 3.3, then you qualify to apply for inclusion in this national organization. Invitations are forthcoming.

Membership in Alpha Iota Sigma is a great resume builder and network machine! Regardless of where we are geographically, we still have lots of things going on this semester that connect us!



A MESSAGE FROM PROF. MURILLO

This virtual semester has taught me two things: 1) I still have faith in technology and 2) teaching is a two-way street. I thought this switch to online would be relatively manageable—post a lecture, deliver a quiz, assess discussion; but then I realized how much I missed the physical cues and organic responses to student-spearheaded, seemingly, off-the-cuff questions that somehow made their way to the white board. And then it all made sense. These are the breakthrough moments that are hard to recreate in asynchronous time, and as much as I try to include student feedback into my lecture videos, it is just no replacement for the real thing. Student interactions and comments fuel my teaching and help me grow as an educator because I learn from them as much as they (hopefully) learn from me. COVID-19 time has certainly taught me a couple of things 1) I can master technology (as long as I don't give up) and 2) learning is a two-way street. Perhaps all we can manage now is to discover (or rediscover) better ways for reconfiguring our time together in the classroom?



A MESSAGE FROM PROF. ROBINSON

I want to thank each and every one of you for your hard work and perseverance since spring break. The COVID-19 situation hit you all hard. Some of you have gone home. Some are sheltering in place in your local apartments. Others are working full time. You have all been taken out of your daily routine. You all miss your friends and your fun college life. You are all uncertain when this quarantine will end and what the near future will look like. Despite all these difficulties and challenges, you chose to stay the course, and I am so proud of all of you.



You have not missed a beat. Thank you for continuing to want to learn, and for coming to class prepared and ready to participate. It was almost like we were back in the classroom. You all have shown up, dressed up, and put on trials with your teammates all over the country. Your performance has been tremendous.

You have all mastered the art of perseverance. I am so proud to have had all of you as my students. Hang in there. This too shall pass.

RECOGNIZING OUR I-LA STAFF

Shara Mortensen Bassler  
Administrative Coordinator  
She/her/hers



I have been working for the ICLA Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts Program for about 6 months now, and something I am constantly amazed by is the incredible community the program fosters. I am frequently being invited to meetings over coffee and regular check-ins, and around campus I see others doing the same. Students are also encouraged to create their own community, and I love seeing groups of students in the lounges and hallways talking about projects, assignments, their weekend and just sharing little moments

together. These kinds of small social interactions make a huge difference in my daily work life and make me feel more connected and appreciated at work. I think all of us, staff, faculty or student can get far too focused on just getting the job done but the point of interdisciplinary learning is collaboration and the only way for that to happen is through regular interaction with the people around you. I appreciate that it is so widely encouraged to take a break and just talk with each other about our work and our lives.

KEEPING HOUSE

As many of you know, Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts was relocated to the A-wing basement of the Clark building in the summer of 2019. Many of you joined our open-house that took place in early January or you attended our first I-LA STUDENT MEET-UP in Fall 2019.

This February, during Black History Month, we decided to celebrate this history by hanging posters of key historical figures in contemporary American History. It is our way of recognizing and celebrating the political, cultural, and artistic contributions of important African-Americans, such as Toni Morrison, James Baldwin,

Nina Simone, and Muhammad Ali.

As we think about our eventual return to campus, our plans are to use our common space outside our program's offices as a way of commemorating contributions from other communities as well.



GREETINGS FROM ABROAD

Prof. Kevin Foskin  
Director, Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts

This past fall I had the opportunity to travel to the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. I was attending the annual conference of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, which was hosted internationally for the first time this past fall.

Scholars, researchers, artists, and performers came together as Interdisciplinary. The conference theme was



“Interdisciplinarity in Global Contexts”. I met fellow interdisciplinarians from far flung places and had an amazing number of strange and inventive conversations on topics ranging from *Interdisciplinary Research Tools to Collaborative Capacity to Design Thinking to Interdisciplinarity as the New Professional Literacy*. And these were only a small sampling of the tremendous variety of discussions, panels, and presentations hosted by AIS and the University of Amsterdam. We were even treated to a Manifesto of Interdisciplinarity. Yes, a whole lot of consensus but also a whole lot of divergence, which always serves as fuel for lively and outrageous discussions.

However, I did manage to find time to walk the streets of the Amsterdam city centre, an interesting array of canals, tightly packed buildings, crowded streets, and fantastic historical buildings, dating back hundreds of years. I



have never been to a city before where the bicycle rules—and where everyone rides bikes. The cars were outnumbered about 50 to 1. One quickly picks up the rhythms of the city and the odd radar everyone has for being on the lookout for bikes coming at you from

every conceivable direction. I do recommend that if you ever get a chance, do visit Amsterdam. I found the Dutch to be friendly, charming, and always willing to share space at their table.



## HEARING FROM I-LA MAJORS &amp; LEGAL STUDIES MINORS

Cat Sunstone, '19.  
Emory University School of Law student

As a major in the human dimensions of natural resources program I am pretty sure I was the only person in my LB 205 class who wasn't in the legal studies minor. I had already applied to law school and needed a filler class for my last semester at CSU. It turned out to be the perfect class for providing me a useable framework by which to understand what I learned my first year in law school and noticeably gave me a leg up on my fellow classmates at Emory University. One of the first things they taught us at Emory was how to brief a case – I'd already learned how to do so with LB 205 and was able to move through our readings with much more ease. Also, it gave me the sense of what I was about to commit to in law school and more confidence that I was going to really enjoy the material. I highly recommend LB 205 for anyone who is thinking about law school, whether as part of your minor or a single class you take to test the waters before you go!

Emily Stockhus, Senior

As a first-semester senior, I can say I've taken my fair share of courses at CSU. From mind-numbing lectures to droning speech practicums, I've seen it all. You can only take so many ethics classes for your Legal Studies minor before you feel yourself wishing you went into something easy, like the banal grey suits of the business department.

My dying love of studying law is what led me to take on one of the newest CSU courses, LB 360- Mock Trial. Despite not wanting to be a courtroom attorney, I hoped it would be a useful experience.

This flippant decision has already been one of the best I've ever made. The class itself is the perfect mixture of group work, lecture, and presentations. Everything builds upon itself, the work is vital to your class experience. And not just to the class experience, but to a career in law. Almost immediately, this course taught me that law school doesn't prepare you for everything. Of course, it's important to know the details of formulating an argument, so you aren't using only fallacies. Yet, many lawyers leave law school with little to no trial experience. Even interning at a law firm doesn't equate success in a courtroom.

The course is hard, don't get me wrong. I've spent hours forming and reforming questions to ask witnesses. I've struggled with what objections the other side could make. But, it's better to learn that now rather than be clueless the first time I'm representing a client in a real courtroom.



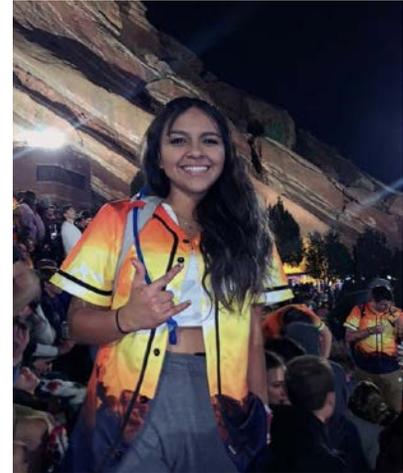
Stephanie Saenz, Junior

Hello everyone! My name is Stephanie Melissa Saenz (she/her(s)) and I am a 4th year studying Communication and Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. I came to CSU in 2016 as a first year and as I'm a first-generation student, with no idea how to navigate college.

Instead of going directly undeclared, I went into a major I thought I would enjoy as a career. After a semester of getting involved on campus with Orientation & Transition Programs and El Centro, I finally decided to change my major to communication studies as so many incredible people I've met had studied this discipline, and were also in positions I could see myself in.

Working with students was a newly found passion I discovered after getting more involved with student life in the SLiCE office, Fraternity and Sorority Life, SDPS Offices, and Key Communities. With this major, I believe I have finally found the leadership and business skills I needed to run my business, Wish Skate Projects. I founded this organization in 2012 with some friends of mine that just wanted to skate and help the environment. After years of developing our series of environmentally sustainable boards and going to college, we are finally able as to move forward towards the market. One of my main duties as a founder of WSP is to organize and maintain our development as an organization and hope to one day be non-profit.

I'll be graduating in May of 2021, and the networking opportunities I have received from being in my major have been limitless. I would not be in any of the organizations I have joined or made the friends and colleagues I have without meeting someone through my liberal arts courses. Truly has been my greatest experience, and I cannot wait for what my last year has to offer.



## INTERDISCIPLINARITY

A process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession... [It] draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective.

Klein & Newell (1998)

## HEARING FROM I-LA MAJORS &amp; LEGAL STUDIES MINORS

Litzy Duque, Junior



Before deciding on what college to attend, I had to make the hard decision of choosing what I would major in. I have always been interested in a variety of fields and topics so deciding on just one was very difficult for me. However, I thought that's what had to be done. Being a first-generation student, I did not know what to expect when it came to college. I didn't have an idea what to study. Thinking that coming in with a declared major would make my college experience easier and go more smoothly. I decided to ask everyone around me what they thought I would be good or successful at. I came to the conclusion that I have always been a very creative person and thought maybe a degree in interior design would work, but that only lasted my first semester at CSU.

mester at CSU.

I switched my major four times, varying from theater to sports and exercise science. Then, I had a great advisor talk to me about Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. Knowing that there is a major that allows me to take classes in different fields but still manages to combine them is what I was looking for. It is important to me to have knowledge about different topics and fields but it is more important to be able to connect that knowledge from the different topics and that is what Liberal Arts has taught me to do.

## SPRING COMMENCEMENT | 2020

Even though I-LA seniors graduating this spring will not be walking in person in May, I-LA, the College of Liberal Arts, and Colorado State University will be doing our best to both recognize and commemorate the achievements of the Spring Class of 2020 graduates via an CSU Alternative Commencement, in partnership with CSU Events, CSU Social, Campus Communicators, and Commencement Coordinators across the University. Graduates from all departments in the College of Liberal Arts will receive commemorative tassel—different than the white tassel CLA grads normally receive. In addition, I-LA has commissioned a local artist to create a limited-run linocut print, specific to this spring, signed and dated by the artist. And we shall be coming up with other ways of sharing your accomplishment with you—and you sharing your accomplishment with your fellow I-LA majors.



Lianne Dauplaise, Junior

My whole life I have wanted to help people, but that doesn't exactly lead me to what I want to do specifically. Because of my indecision, I took a few years off from school and traveled throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. Through my travels, I found a love for new, uncharted territory. I loved starting my days without knowing what they might hold.

Part of my travels took me to the CSU Mountain Campus to visit a friend. I fell in love with the valley and ended up working there for three seasons before attending CSU as a student. I looked online for different degrees at CSU and discovered Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. I was so happy to know there was a degree I could graduate in that could lead to so many different paths! I enjoy learning in various disciplines because I feel this applies to life. I am minoring in sociology as I feel this could provide an avenue to helping others.

Overall, I enjoy the variability of I-LA. The interdisciplinary perspective this major offers is so valuable in all aspects of my life and future goals. I can better understand my personal biases and see how they shape my understanding of the world. This is very important to me and part of why I wanted to study more than just one discipline! There are so many different perspectives to everyday life and looking at these problems with an interdisciplinary approach will allow for better solutions to the world's problems. I know this major, combined with my chosen minor, will help me to accomplish my goals of helping those around me. Wherever that goal may lead me, I know the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program will help me get there.



FOLLOW UP GRANT FOR I-LA



Great News! I-LA just received its second undergraduate academy grant to continue research on proto-Chicana activist and writer, María Cristina Mena. This undergraduate academy will be working on a multi-media project that will connect with the University of Houston (where her collection is housed) and present an interdisciplinary approach to understanding Mena and her contributions to the arts. A fun project, certainly, this academy will also help students gain practical archival intelligence in the areas of finding aids, primary sources, and specialty databases, as they sift through photographs, correspondence, short stories,

personal narratives, and screen plays that almost made it to Hollywood. As much as she influenced American literature, little is known about Mena, but this project will hopefully fill in the gaps to help us understand her far reaching effects on the artistic world. Students will also have the opportunity to present their research findings at the National US Latinx Digital Humanities conference where they can network with other professionals in their fields.

NEW I-LA COURSE - LB 173

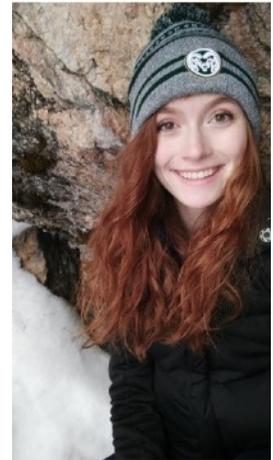
This Fall we are offering a new course in Interdisciplinary Studies Liberal Arts: LB 173: Encountering the Global. This is not a traditional survey course nor a strict study of printed world literature. Rather, we will employ a variety of interdisciplinary approaches and materials from several fields, including English, history, music, film, the visual arts, popular culture, and more in order to exam global cultures. Stories can tell us a lot about the world, so then what is the role of narrative in promoting both social and personal identities in cultures around the globe? How do culture and history work to create such national identities? What are the untold stories in the archive that never quite made it to the front page? These are just a few questions we will ask as we explore the various artifacts that help create these national narratives.

I-LA PROGRAM UPDATES

During Fall 2019 and SP 2020, I-LA underwent its five-year program review. It is a self-evaluation process all academic programs at CSU must undergo every five years. It is an excellent time for reflecting on our successes while also discovering how we can improve the major (and Interdisciplinary Legal Studies minor), so both are the best on campus. The process is lengthy and it involves not only the I-LA faculty but also the College Deans, the Provost's Office, and other university partners. By all accounts, we passed.

GREETINGS FROM THE I-LA NEWSLETTER SENIOR INTERN

My name is Kaitie Clum, and it has been a great privilege—if not an interesting challenge—to be this semester's I-LA senior editing intern. Working on this newsletter has been such a fruitful opportunity and afforded me some wonderful experience. It's also had me spend even more time than usual in front of a computer screen (as is the case for many of us, these days). When I'm not on the computer, I'm usually doodling, singing far too loudly than is probably reasonable, or playing with my cats.



My experience working on this newsletter as well as my experience with the I-LA degree program and faculty have been incredibly transformative. They've been crucial to my development and success as a student and as a human being, and it is this central transformative quality I wish to share with you.

During my junior year at CSU as an English major, I was faced with a dilemma: I love English and language, but it didn't excite me enough to want to continue my studies. I was burnt out. After taking some suggestions and doing a little digging, I decided to change my major and become an Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts—and I've never felt more intellectually or academically at home. I discovered the value in the process and perspective that I-LA advocates for and cultivates. I felt I finally had the academic space to embrace all of my ideas and interests, and to figure out what I could do with them. This degree program offered me the flexibility, critical and creative thinking skills, and useful venues for exploring my own ideas. In a sense, I-LA truly saved my college career—for without it, I'm not sure I would've finished what I started—and for that I am so thankful. Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts has armed me with the metaphorical tools in my proverbial toolkit to face our ever-changing world, and to show others that we Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts are an intellectual force to be reckoned with.



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