What does it mean to be interdisciplinary? It’s the question I’d like to explore here. It means—in our case—a program of study situated in between academic disciplines, as opposed to being inside one, say English Literature or Economics or any of the 14 disciplines that make up the College of Liberal Arts here at California State University. It also means not only being in between but also among disciplines. Being among disciplines requires specific skills and a different sort of awareness. It means knowing how to manage and negotiate differing and sometimes competing perspectives. Perspective allows us to know something. But differing perspectives allows us to know the same thing differently. So being interdisciplinary is more not about choosing the one answer or perspective but, rather, working with a number of perspectives so as to find an answer.

Before we go any further, however, we need to look at disciplines first. Without disciplines it wouldn’t be possible to be interdisciplinary. Disciplines are vital for intellectual achievement and understanding. Most of us do this by becoming aware of the boundaries because these provide us with focus and a structure for developing knowledge. Disciplinary learning allows us to go deeper into a particular perspective or methodology and it can—and often does—give us spectacular answers. Disciplines also help us manage our distance from the world. These a while ago we have concentrated on a specific manner of seeing or knowing what is important or vital about the disciplinary subject at hand.

Within the College of Liberal Arts, we have three large categories of disciplinary knowledge, i.e., similar means and methods of investigation, each with their own identities, procedures, assumptions, and outcomes. These are 1) the Social Sciences and 3) the Arts. And of course within each of these we have further divisions of focus, expertise and emphasis. For example, within the arts we have the visual arts, the performance arts and art history. Within social sciences we have economics, sociology, anthropology and political science. Within the humanities there is a particular manner of investigation, where observation, experimentation and quantitative research are key players, say, in the Humanities, Philosophy, History, or Languages. Literatures & Cultures, the preeminent features of investigation/communication/interpretation/synthesis. And here qualitative research is more the norm.

There are three more crossovers and a differentiation of qualitative versus quantitative means/means is visible in every discipline.

There are a number of metaphors we might use so as to better visualize/envision a program of study that we could codify as interdisciplinary study. Allen F. Repko, in his textbook, Interdisciplinary Research, Process and Theory, introduces three metaphors as a way of summarizing in general terms the differences, as he sees it, between disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices. These metaphors quickly communicate what I believe is valuable—and different—about our major. The first metaphor is “boundary crossing.” What Repko describes as “the process of moving across knowledge formations for the purpose of achieving an enlarged understanding.” This somewhat helps to explain the general purpose of our study. A second metaphor is “mapping.” Maps are intriguing objects, aren’t they? They are usually the spatial but also abstraction/symbolization of space. Repko calls this the “caving up of knowledge space” for the purpose of “displaying” or “mapping” what is gathered from a variety of sources. This helps us to visualize one of our key methodologies. Our third, and final, metaphor is “bridle.” Repko makes the bridle a symbol of controlling, or teaching, students to span existing chasms or gullies that exist between ‘locations of knowledge.’ Similarly it connotes what it sees as one of the key creative accomplishments of interdisciplinary study—connectivity. When we build bridges we connect different spaces, thus allowing individuals within these spaces to move back and forth across what once was a formidable or perhaps even impassable barrier.

Registration for Fall 2016 is nearly upon us. MLA Freshmen and Sophomores need to meet with Jesse, our ASC, before you can register for fall classes. We ask you to do this only to make sure you’re on track. We also encourage last semester seniors to also contact Jesse. Doing so reduces the chances of you having to suddenly deal with any last minute surprises, such as oh, no you mean I have to make even more classes.

Registration opens on April 5th for Juniors, April 8th Sophomores, April 15th & continuing freshmen, April 22nd. Don’t forget, most questions about course registration can be found on your RamWeb homepage under the “Registration” heading. But don’t hesitate to contact Jesse, your ASC, or the program director. We’re here to help.

Juniors and Seniors, we do it sometimes frustratingly hard to have a course because access to a course is limited to majors within a department first. Remember, oftentimes contacting instructors and simply explaining to them you’re an MLA major helps to eventually get you into a course. If you find you are having great difficulty with getting into classes, do let us know.

As you’re thinking about Fall 2016 registration, do keep in mind the following MLA curricular expectations. You must complete LB200 (Research Methods in the Liberal Arts) first before you can register for LB492 (Senior Seminar). And LB200 is designed to be taken your first semester of your sophomore year so do take it as close to this time as is possible. If you are considering working with a professor on an Independent Study, do stop by the CLA Dean’s office to pick up a LB Independent Study Intent Form, which you and the faculty member sponsoring your independent study will need to complete before you will be allowed to register for any LB495 Independent Study credits.

For those of you who are beginning to plan your spring and summer schedules, do keep those scheduling commitments in mind. You will be offering one section of LB200 and one section of LB492 (on-campus) this coming fall. Those of you who haven’t taken LB200 yet but are planning on graduating in Fall 2016 should plan accordingly—and register for LB200 this summer. Equally, for those of you working on the online (distance) MLA degree, we shall be offering one online section each of LB200/LB492 this coming fall. In addition, we shall be offering LB200 in the first four-week of the 2016 semester and one section of LB492 in the following eight-week semester. Overrides for summer registration for LB492 will be granted only if you are enrolled in LB200. Do contact Jesse for assistance.

For online summer classes, CSU is continuing with the summer class model first introduced in recent years where both on-campus and online students will register for the same online class through their normal registration access channels (i.e., RamWeb for on-campus students and Online Plus for distance students).

SUMMER/FALL COURSE OFFERINGS

**LB COURSES OFFERED SPRING 2016**
- LB492 Senior Capstone Seminar: TR 9-11am: 12:15-1pm.
- LB200 Liberal Arts Research Methods: T 9-10:50 am.
- LB170 World Lit to 1500: T/R 12-30-14.50pm.
- LB273 World Lit: Modern Period: M/W 12-12:50 pm.
- LB205 Contemporary Legal Studies: T/R 2-3pm.
- LB455 Documentary Film as a Liberal Arts: M/W 5-5:50 & 6-6:45 pm.
- LB300 Specialized Professional Writing: M/W 2-2:50 pm. & F (recitation sections, various times).

**LB COURSES OFFERED (ONLINE) SUMMER 2016**
- LB200 Liberal Arts Research Methods (1st 4-weeks)
- LB492 Senior Capstone Seminar (8-weeks)

**A TIME TO VENTURE**

The university is designed to be a place of exploration. It is place to delve into both study and challenge what you think you know, hunt for new answers, and discover connections that were seemingly disparate. But not all of your learning is housed here. Your engagement extends beyond the historical buildings, beyond the classroom walls. Some of you are taking our courses hundreds or thousands of miles away and are still very much a part of Colorado State University and the cultivation of our academics. The expansion of your thought and widening the reach of university ideals is why educational opportunities are now a big part of what advisers talk about with students. We know that students who take advantage of study abroad programs report back that it was one of the most enriching experiences to their life as well as their learning. It is one of the best parts of college and students were not even “here.” CSU and the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts major have provided many ways to make education abroad a part of your plan:

- Education Abroad Office: CSU has an entire office of staff, advisers, and resources to help you plan your trip. The office also runs informational fairs and sessions on topics such as understanding financial aid and looking for scholarships. My favorite part of their website is the “Program Search” tab. Here you can do advanced searches of hundreds of programs and organize by region, country, program type, when you want to go, and even what kind of housing you want. Start your search at edabroad.colostate.edu.

- Semester at Sea: Semester at Sea just signed a five-year contract with CSU and their first official voyage as partners begins this fall. The ship will be a floating classroom and don’t you worry, say working in Mediterranean cities and cities 12 countries. Best of all, because it is now a CSU affiliated program, the wide variety of classes offered are all approved to fit with degree requirements. Take a look at semesteratsea.org.

Range of travel times: If you do not want or are not able to be gone from your home, job, or family for a full semester, there are many 3-6 credit programs that meet over winter or summer breaks for a few weeks to a month. Let me name just a few of the spectacular options: a travel writing program in Croatia and Italy, a criminal justice study in the Czech Republic, and a PR focused program in New Zealand. You also have the option of earning credit for an international internship.

The Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts major and credit transfers: Our degree is one of the most flexible when looking at how credits from education abroad programs transfer back in. We encourage a well-rounded liberal arts education, and most study abroad programs will have a course of class offerings in the liberal arts such as languages, history, media studies, journalism, economics, and so on.

CSU students are taught to be global citizens, and you traveling the extra mile for your education will be rewarded far beyond what you would imagine. If you have questions about how to get started, what programs to consider, how to pay for the travel, and what courses to look for please visit the Education Abroad office and make an appointment to see me. Bon voyage!

Jesse Stewart
Academic Success Coordinator
College of Liberal Arts

For appointments call 970.491.3117
Hi everyone, I’m MEG Schiel, a former graduate of the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program. Since then I’ve been combining my interests in the arts and a love of literature to help me define and reframe my career path. I’ve been working with a local non-profit publishing company, Wolverine Farm Publishing and in the past several years we’ve been bringing literary reality to other literary programs for children and teens. Equally, I’m currently considering returning to graduate school to earn a Master’s Degree in Arts Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Arts Advocacy. It’s really a direction I want to pursue more of in a professional capacity.

I promise you, there’s an interesting world that awaits you and you’ll never really know where it’s eventually going to take you—or where you’re going to be taking it. That’s the fun and beauty after graduation. And for most of us, where we will eventually end up is the novel mystery that awaits us—especially for those lucky enough to have both the wherewithal and opportunity to earn an interdisciplinary liberal arts degree. It really does prepare you for just about anything you might imagine.