

INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

News | Faculty | Student Stories

COMMENTS FROM JESSIE, ASC



Fall 2020 was not the semester I expected to have. Instead of seeing the Oval full of students tossing frisbees and gathering to meet new friends, it was sparse. Instead of the hustle and bustle in the hallways of Clark every 50 minutes,

there was a small trickle of masked faces quietly and politely using the proper entry and exit doors. Instead of breathing in our Rocky Mountain air, we saw a blood-red sun through the smoke and falling ash. At first, I was angry about the state of things. It didn't seem fair to be experiencing so much devastation to health and the environment in a concentrated time. I was sad our campus didn't look or feel the same. I am now grateful that one thing has not changed: that I continue to learn more about resiliency and determination from all of you.

Interdisciplinary students know that history is happening now. Your training gives you the clarity to connect policy and rhetorical strategies. In a short time, you adapted to using new technologies and experimented with different schedules. Most importantly, you demonstrated compassion for the community by exemplifying what Rams taking care of Rams means. Your efforts and adjustments kept others safe and our university open. All who chose to be here this term were willing to do what we do best: research and experiment. You are here now for your future. You will overcome obstacles, you will unpack challenges, and you will keep learning in any climate.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As it has been for just about everyone, 2020 has been a rather challenging school year. It can't be understated just how unexpected and challenging our spring semester turned out this past year. The Covid-19 pandemic proved tremendously stressful for I-LA students, faculty, ASCs, and staff. Without the enormous patience, flexibility, innovation, ingenuity, and determination, on the part of everyone, we would not have been able to get through the spring & summer terms. But we did and now here we are midway through the fall semester. Yes, what seems equally impressive—and another testimony of everyone involved in I-LA—is how our fall semester has turned out so far. With the onslaught of new learning modalities (e.g., online, F2F during a pandemic, and hybrid) and on-campus health mandated routines and protocols, everyone has managed to figure it all out well enough to make a credible go of it—astonishingly.

Yes, while in lockdown this past spring and summer, thoughts of fall semester 2020 seemed ominous. I will be honest here—I think our fall semester is going much better than I had hoped for or had anticipated. Of course, more is to come, but, however our near future plays out, I do think we've gained enough confidence and tenacity to weather whatever is ahead for us this semester. Yes, although we are all wearing masks and our classrooms are now spacious and we're all spread out, we are still getting the work done. Again, to keep at a difficult task—as is any semester in college—but to do so with the added uncertainty of a pandemic is proof of our resiliency and ingenuity. I'm discovering new ways of teaching in the classroom and I'm relearning not only what works best in our new learning environments but also new 21st century teaching methods that are transforming my approaches to what I try and achieve in the classroom.

It is certainly understandable to feel bewildered by the fact that you just happen to be in college during a pandemic! However, with adversity also comes opportunities to learn new skills or to test the skills you now do possess. Refiguring what your classroom presence is now, what your organizational capacity needs are, how you're 'keeping straight' all of these sudden and shifting new demands on your time are, these are all invaluable challenges that do better prepare you for your career life to come after graduation. I could go on, but I won't. I will, however, leave you with the only message this semester makes obvious: you all do I-LA proud.



I-LA Program Director during the lock-down.



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HEARING FROM I-LA FACULTY

Dr. Cindy Murillo
Faculty, Interdisciplinary Studies
Internship Coordinator



Covid-19 has given me time to reflect on what life was like in college. I can't help but make connections with the courses I teach and the awesome students bearing this crazy climate. Life is a journey—we've been talking about this in my Global Encounters class as we've weaved up and down and in and out through myriad approaches to creation; we all have a beginning. I, for example, started in pharmacy school at Purdue University. This was really my dad's dream more than mine, but his heart was in the

was quite fond of bacteriology and chemistry back then. I wanted to learn so much more than I realized in college that I had so many options, most of which were more exciting to me than the periodic table and making (true story; I even mailed it home to my parents to show my chemical skills). My heart just wasn't into pharmacy. I was what any lost, naïve, and dumb 18-year-old kid from the time I sold my chemistry book for a dime bag and a six-pack of

beer. I'm not too proud of that moment, but I learned a lot from it. Fast forward three years—I ended up with an English degree and three minors! I was always an Interdisciplinary. Fast forward a decade—yes, it can and often does take that much time—and I received my Ph.D. I spent so much time in school that when my son was little, he asked if I would ever graduate. My answer then is the same as it is now: no; I'm always a student, even when I'm a teacher. As my journey continues, just like yours, I invent new ways of being and becoming, from an Associate Professor of English to an Instructor of Interdisciplinary Studies. Every day I write a new chapter and edit as I see fit, creating my personal narrative to convey my journey. Life teaches us lessons and errors don't have to remain permanent. I don't worry about where I'll end up because my narrative, just like yours, is still being created. In a way, creation stories are kind of like intellectual autobiographies: we can only know where we are going if we know where we have come from. Journeys may propel us forward, but reflection keeps us present.

DID YOU KNOW?

Our students acquire a well-rounded education and develop the *skills* that employers commonly cite as highly desirable in prospective employees, including *communication skills, problem solving, creativity, adaptability, leadership, writing, and analytical skills.*

Gina Robinson, J.D.
Faculty, Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts

Hello everyone. Welcome back to campus. I hope everyone is doing well during this crazy time. I am so proud of all of you for your drive and perseverance. It is great seeing you all on campus as well as online. We are in our 8th week, which is amazing. Hang in there. This too shall pass.

**Legal Studies minor:**

I am the Legal studies minor advisor. If you are interested in a great minor to go with your major, or you want to get some great law classes to help you in law school, the legal studies minor is a great minor. The minor consists of seven classes and you get to build the minor with a variety of law classes. Please email me if you are interested and I can get you signed up.

Pre-law Advising:

I am also the Pre-law advisor. If you are interested in going to law school, email me and we can set up an advising session on zoom to discuss your path to law school. It is always great to check-in during your sophomore year so you can see what the path entails, and start making a plan.

MOCK TRIAL PRACTICUM

We had great success with our first Mock Trial Practicum Spring 2020. The students received a case problem at the beginning of the semester and put on teams of six. They learned how to put on an entire trial from opening statements through closing arguments. The last six weeks of the class are spent putting on trials in a round-robin format. Despite having to put all the trials on via zoom in the spring, the students enjoyed the experience and finished the class ready for the real courtroom. The class is called LB360 and is an upper-level course in the Legal Studies minor. The pre-requisite is LB205.



Ruth Bader Ginsburg, image from Shape.com

HEARING FROM I-LA FACULTY AND STAFF

Sarah Wernsing
Faculty, Liberal Arts

My name is Sarah Wernsing, and I teach LB392, LB370, and LB490. Like many of you are experiencing, my semester has gone nothing as I expected. Last spring, I agreed to teach LB392 online starting this fall. At the time, coronavirus was a distant news story, my kids were all in school and daycare, and I was looking forward to having time to teach and write. So much has changed.

Maybe, like me, you're struggling to come to terms with the ways that your day-to-day reality no longer looks the way you hoped or expected it to look. Maybe, you've lost a job, or your job has changed dramatically. Maybe, you're at home alone way too much, or you're at home constantly taking care of kids. Maybe, you've had to help out with sick family members, or you have gotten sick yourself.

No matter what, life looks different than it did. I've been thinking about what that means for us in higher education and in the liberal arts. There are no easy ways out of this situation. Even with a vaccine, we'll still be rebuilding our lives and health care system, and our economy for years to come. Sometimes I despair at all the difficulties in front of us. But when I feel most despairing, I think of you, the students I get to teach. You inspire and encourage me in so many ways. I see your real desire to make a change in the world. You and so many other people are already thinking and working toward rebuilding in ways that are more just, equitable, and meaningful.

This is work for which your training in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts has prepared you—as you all have learned, there are no easy answers in interdisciplinary work, but that is what makes it useful for complicated situations like the one we find ourselves in now. I'm curious and excited to see what you all will do with your lives and your work.



Shara Bassler Mortensen, She/her/hers
Administrative Coordinator
CLA Interdisciplinary Programs

Living through a global pandemic and the ongoing quarantine and social distancing necessary to stay safe has taken a toll on us all. I don't know anyone who would say this is an easy or fun experience. After months of struggling, I have been trying to focus on the positive experiences that have come from all of this.

I have been reaching out to friends and family, many of whom live in other states many hours from me. I only get to see these people once or twice a year and by calling and scheduling video chats, I feel more

connected than ever. I make sure to set time aside every week to talk with someone that I haven't spoken to in a while. These chats help combat the feelings of being disconnected and lonely. I love hearing all of the exciting things that everyone has been doing with their time. I often feel inspired and revitalized afterward.

I have also been making sure that I have time every day for some self-care. For me, self-care is often doing something creative. I love to make art and I do sell my artwork as a side business. As much as I enjoy selling my art, I do make sure that I take the time to just make something for myself. I like to push myself creatively and even if a project doesn't work out the way that I want it to or fails completely, it's fun to flex the right side of my brain.

Overall, there are a lot of terrible, scary things happening in the world and just being positive isn't going to fix everything. But I have found leaning on my community of friends and colleagues and talking about anything that is going on in my life, good or bad, has made life just a little bit easier. Take this as a reminder to reach out to someone you love if you need it, or just a reminder to do something for yourself. We're all in this together!



Joanna Doxey, She/her/hers
Academic Success Coordinator
Faculty, Liberal Arts

Hello everyone! I am currently wrapping up LB 370, a course that assists liberal arts students in the transition from college to career. Students apply skills and theory from their degrees to their search in the job market, networking with professionals. I am looking forward to a range of final projects for the career informational interview and paper. LB 490 starts this week, a class that was revamped and updated with Sarah Wernsing this summer. This course offers I-LA students the chance to complete a senior portfolio of their work, demonstrating interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving.

I have also been advising, as well as teaching a class on ecopoetry and identity in landscape for English majors that, out of necessity in discussing climate change, is interdisciplinary. I have some recent poems published in Interim that are very much in the vein of ecopoetry, here:

<https://www.interimpoetics.org/37-2/joanna-doxey>

HEARING FROM LEGAL STUDIES MINORS

Bailey Shepherd, Junior

Hello! My name is Bailey Shepherd, and I would describe my time pursuing a minor in legal studies as enjoyable, thought-provoking, and very informative. I formally chose to minor in this field at the beginning of my sophomore year when I had to choose an interdisciplinary minor to pair with my major. The core class of this minor, LB 205 Contemporary Legal Studies, has been one of my favorite courses that I've taken at CSU. The topics covered in the class include a variety of legal ideas and situations, which I love. It is also extremely useful because it sets you up with a basic understanding of the law and its nuances, as well as prepares you for possible real-life situations where that information would be useful, such as the steps in filing a civil lawsuit. The other beneficial part of studying this minor is the advising experience. Gina is the primary advisor for the minor. Not only does she teach the aforementioned class to embody a real classroom feel for all of her students, but she is also a Bar certified attorney, bringing real-



world legal experience and insight to many of her students who aspire to attend law school in the future. Like I said before, I thoroughly enjoy my minor. I am looking forward to completing it very soon!

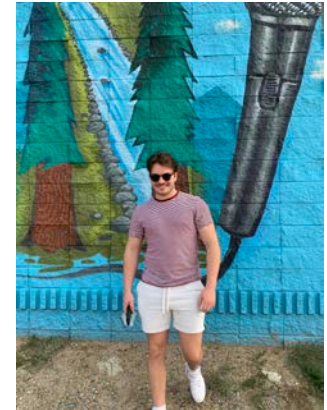
Jack Taylor, Junior

My time as a student studying CSU Legal Studies has been spent prowling the corridors of Clark, attempting to locate obscure closet-sized rooms, as well as drinking copious amounts of red-bull in the Morgan Library to combat my 5 hours a night sleep schedule. I have burned the candles at both ends. But I would not trade it for anything.

The learning curve for Legal Studies is steep as I was overcome with tears the first time reading the triple patty sized *Carper's Understanding the Law*. But as I progressed through the legal courses and gained the tools to formulate an argument and decipher the basic legal jargon, I was bewildered by the sheer amount of work lawyers put into creating a case. The workload is damn near enough to break anyone. However, adding the concluding assessment to a case brief and understanding each legislative precedent to the T sends shivers down my spine. I chase that feeling of accomplishment.

Law is unforgiving; it plays with your understanding of what is just and unjust. There is so much I still do not know. But as I continue to gain knowledge and experience about the Law, I find myself being equipped with a new lens to view the world.

I still have a long trail ahead of me; the energy drinks will continue to power me, I will continue to get lost in Clark, but I am grateful. I have learned and will continue to gain so much knowledge about our American legal system and myself.



HEARING FROM I-LA MAJORS



Hi everyone! My name is Alyssa Christensen and I am a third-year here at Colorado State University. I am graduating this December with a major in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts and a double minor in Business Administration and Entrepreneurship and Innovation. I am also a first-generation college student which fills me with a great sense of accomplishment as it has allowed me to create my legacy.

I came to be an I-LA major after taking a seminar course involving a final project that allowed us to pick a major and map out the required courses needed to fulfill that degree. I chose to look at the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts major. I admired the fact that it allowed me to incorporate more than one disciplinary study, thus providing me with multiple different perspectives in which to view the world and advancing my problem-solving skills immensely. After being in this major, I have been able to acquire insight from many different disciplines such as Music, Communications, Health, Psychology, English, etc.

I-LA has also provided me with many successes. It is something I enjoy studying which is why I have been able to keep a cumulative GPA of 3.907. I was also able to acquire an internship at The Buckle and a second interview at Kohl's (both for managerial role experiences). Though, COVID-19 halted these plans, it was amazing to achieve these opportunities! After graduation, I plan to look for another internship focused on business and communication. I would like to own an online retail business or work in the HR department for a retail company in the future. Both of these career paths require analyzing an issue from different perspectives. I feel that I-LA has prepared me for this and I cannot wait to get out into the world and see what I can accomplish with my amazing degree among all the great experiences I've had at CSU.

HEARING FROM I-LA MAJORS

Sabrynne Buchholz, Spring 2020 graduate
Reflections From A Past Student Editor

“Envisioning a New Place in the Basement of Clark A”

When building a new community in college, most of us look to our immediate surroundings, feeling more comfortable with those who have similar interests. I was no different; yet, after a while, I found myself enjoying the company of people across a wide array of disciplines and stumbled upon the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts field in which I soon declared it my new major. A few classes later, I had found my intellectual home among fellow interdisciplinarians. There were so many others just like me who struggled to wrap their minds around a single academic headspace and instead, chose to explore I-LA. Although we had that in common, the one thing we lacked was a solid place to call our own. Before we knew it, construction went underway to update and reinvigorate the Clark A basement, a bounded space for an unbounded degree.

I watched as the construction unfolded and felt like I was living my metanarrative—building my degree as my department was built. There is nothing more unique than building a degree path through I-LA, as the study changes and molds to every individual within the field. Picking classes and clustering them together in a way that helps us mark our career paths also allows us to fully embrace who we are, helping to make our college education as multifaceted as our identities and interests themselves. Now, those of us in I-LA can call the Clark A basement our home. But



to be clear, the I-LA basement is not at all the dark and dusty cellar many people may picture when they think of basements—there are no suspicious shadows or cobwebs, but rather, this space is both warm and welcoming. You might find an interdisciplinarian working on a project for a film studies class or an English minor working on her poetry portfolio – finally, a place for I-LA stu-

dents to call home.

On Friday the 13th of September, the I-LA department held an open house to boast about our new digs and allow students, faculty, and staff to get to know one another. There were tasty treats, great conversations, and a gathering of some amazing people who may not have met otherwise. As interdisciplinarians, we are writing our own special stories, creating distinctive histories, and traveling on an uncommon path in which we all share in this journey together.

Camryn Frankel, Junior

The 2020 fall semester has had not only bumps in the road, but giant potholes. While everyone is adjusting to this new virtual world, I am happy to say my Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts professors have been incredibly accommodating, understanding, and fantastic! We may only be six weeks in, but my I-LA classes have taught me more about myself and the amazing opportunities this program has to offer.

When I began my college search, I was hesitant and uncertain if college was right for me or if I would ever find my place. Colorado State University was my first college visit – I instantly fell in love. I saw a sign that read, “The Denver Broncos Sports Management Institute” minor, and I knew that this place was for me. I entered CSU as undeclared and then



transitioned into a Communications major. However, I quickly realized I was not passionate about communications and I did not enjoy studying a single discipline. I was lost, confused, and exhausted. I suppose whoever came up with the saying, “good things come to those who wait,” knew what they were talking about.

Freshman year, I made the best decision of my life and joined Kappa Kappa Gamma. Sophomore year, I was getting to know other girls in the house when one girl told me her major was “Interdisciplinary Studies.” With a confused look on my face, I asked, “What is that?” She gave me a summary of what I could expect and ten minutes later, I was on the phone with my advisor changing my major. With that, the best decisions thus far in my college career have been joining Kappa and becoming an Interdisciplinary Studies major. To this day, I could not be happier.

I want to give a big thanks to this department and everyone who has guided and supported me through this crazy but rewarding journey. Thank you, and remember to stay positive (but don’t test positive). This crazy life of ours will get better soon; I wish everyone the best.

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

Hailey Doucette, Senior

Hello everyone, my name is Hailey Doucette. I am a senior at Colorado State University, graduating in December 2020, and am majoring in History and Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts (I-LA). I am part of the 7th generation of women to graduate from college on my paternal grandmother’s side of the family. I always knew I was going to college, but I did not know what for. Before coming to CSU, I attended the University of Northern Colorado and Front Range Community College. In my four years at these schools, I declared a slew of majors but struggled to find one I was passionate about. In my first semester at CSU, I finally decided I wanted to major in history, and in this process, I found out about I-LA. I had credits from past courses that applied to my I-LA degree, and most importantly, it allowed me to take classes in various disciplines that interested me. Majoring in I-LA allowed me to study a variety of disciplines instead of choosing a minor and only focusing on the minor and my history major. I knew I wanted to study environmental history, so I set out to take as many environmental classes in as many disciplines as possible. I figured this was the best way to gain a well-rounded view of the environment through liberal arts. By taking environmental justice classes in the Sociology and Ethnic Studies departments, I realized that combining environmental justice with history was what I wanted to pursue in a career. In my junior seminar class, I was able to learn how disciplines work together to solve problems such as environmental justice issues. I applied this knowledge along with critical thinking to look at how effective the Clean Water Act has been. The following semester I was able to intern with the Agriculture and Natural Resource Archives on CSU’s campus for internship credits for my I-LA degree. This internship helped me



learn the archival process and how the archives fit into research. All of these components have helped confirm that I-LA was the perfect major choice for me, and I can’t wait to see where it takes me post-graduation.

John Stewart, Senior

“It Is Possible to Teach an Old Dog (non-traditional student) New Tricks”

My journey began thirty years ago when I started college in Southern California and never finished. I enlisted in the Marine Corps, was married young, and blazed a trail for the life of hard knocks. My whole life, I have been beleaguered with the regret of never completing my education until I applied and was accepted as an interdisciplinary liberal arts student four years ago. With this major in my back pocket, I now understand the emphasis for research, critical thinking, analyzing, synthesis, and metacognition.

While being a single father, working full time, and going to school three semesters every year for the past four years, I have accomplished a great many things. I authored a research paper, created a presentation poster, wrote speeches, authored a white paper, and presented the different genres to a State of Colorado Senator, State Representative, Poudre School District Assistant Superintendent, a Larimer County Department of Health Director, and a Mayoral candidate for the City of Windsor. I also stood up a website for Colorado writers with the idea of writer collaboration and publishing of papers from multiple genres. In my professional life, I have had different types of conversations with C-level executives because of what I have learned or researched. I ask consequential questions and have bolstered my communication skills tremendously.

After my graduation in December, I will be starting a master’s degree in the CSU Business School. My vision is to complete this MBA in 18 months and start-up an NGO-hybrid. In the four years at CSU, I have become both intrigued and highly empathetic for people in America that fall under the vulnerable classification; often, these Americans are discriminated against. I wish to start a local business that is scalable

and creates revenue to help vulnerable populations.

I want to leave you with one last thought: When you ask yourself, “what can I do with the I-



STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITY

Gina Robinson, J.D. Faculty, Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts
 Gina.robinson@colostate.edu
 Italy, Summer 2021

I am taking a group to Florence (home base), Rome, and Venice in June 2021. We were not able to go last year due to COVID-19, but things are looking up for this next summer. Our program dates are:

Start dates: Depart United States Saturday, June 19, 2021, Arrive Florence Sunday, June 20, 2021

End dates: Depart Florence Saturday, July 10, 2021

We will be studying the laws in Italy and how they compare to the laws in the United States. We will study business law, media law, tort law, visit a law firm, take a cooking class, and learn how to start a business in Italy, just to name a few. Our home base will be in Florence and we will travel to Rome and Venice. We will, of course, eat our way through these cities as we learn about the law! If you are interested, please email me for more info.

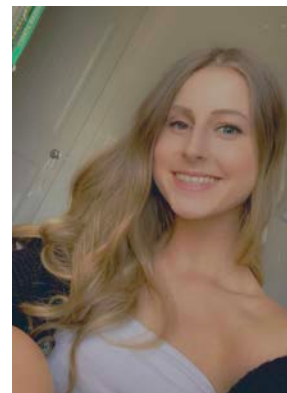


Other I-LA Education Abroad Featured Programs:

- Energy Transitions in Europe (Paris, France; Copenhagen, Denmark; Brussels, Belgium)
- International Internship Program (Dublin, Ireland)
- Kansai Gaidai University (Hirakata, Japan)
- Liberal Arts and Community Engagement (Todo Santos, Mexico)
- Semester at Sea
- Theatre and the Arts (London, England, UK)

GREETINGS FROM THE I-LA NEWS- LETTER SENIOR INTERN

Hello everyone! My name is Lakin Dickson and it has been a great privilege to be the I-LA newsletter intern for this Fall semester. As I know everyone is feeling, that this year has been draining. From the shift to online classes, social distancing in a college town, and finding new ways to keep positive while also staying safe, everyone has been through a whirlwind of changes; and most of us, such as myself, are still trying to fathom this new way of life.



Fortunately, working on this newsletter has allowed

me to read heartwarming stories from students and faculty about their own experiences back at school or dealing with COVID-19 in general. I think these stories have a certain unique quality in which we are acknowledging this drastic change; yet, we will proceed to carry on amid everything by focusing on future positives. And I think that says a lot about the I-LA department as a whole; the resiliency in students, faculty, and staff, the transformative ways in which we pair intellect with worldly situations, and the power of the program to push students toward success in whichever direction they choose.

Quite frankly, I am not sure what I want out of life just yet. However, being introduced to I-LA has taught me that it is okay to not know, to be so overwhelmed with an abundance of choices and disciplines that are all interesting. Rather than settling for a single discipline, I am developing skills and knowledge I did not think were possible in an interdisciplinary way. I have learned so much with the tools that I-LA has equipped me with and I will continue to learn, so when I finally branch out into the interdisciplinary 'real world,' I won't have to think twice about where I'm going; I'll know.



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