

INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

News | Faculty | Student Stories

COMMENTS FROM JESSIE STEWART, ASC

For the first time in my ten years working this campus, I attended convocation, the formal welcome ceremony, for our Class of 2025. There were quite a lot of firsts that day. It was the first time both freshman and sophomore students were invited (it is usually just for incoming students, but our second year folks did not get an in person welcome last year). It was held at a new location -- our stadium -- on a beautiful Friday morning. It was the first time that some in our band and cheer squads had performed to a CSU crowd. And, it was the largest gathering this campus has had since March 2020. For all these reasons, I had to go. The theme was clear: CSU is designed to create opportunity and access. Blanche Hughes, Vice President for Student Affairs, reiterated the message that each and every student in the crowd belongs here. They worked hard, they submitted all the proper forms and scores, they packed up their lives and moved. That is true for all of you. You were accepted to come here and so you belong here. It doesn't mean you won't have moments of hardship. It doesn't mean that you won't have doubts. You chose to come here to work towards a goal of educating yourself, of earning a degree, of cultivating your place in this community. You chose this path and with that choice comes more effort, more inquisitiveness, more responsibility, and more expectations. And after seeing the crowd that gathered on this beautiful campus together for the first time, another first new class of students, I know it is worth all the energy we put forth for each other.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY & CREATIVITY

Much research & numerous studies show that increasingly, employers are seeking individuals who have the creative edge in terms of their career skillsets. Creativity is crucial to both innovation and entrepreneurship—two key demands for success in the 21st century career workspace. Interdisciplinarity is increasingly being seen as a popular strategy for enhancing creativity since innovation and application are two principal skills we learn to master as Interdisciplinary students.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

First off, I would like to welcome everyone to another school year, our second one during the Covid-19 pandemic. Unlike last fall, we are now mostly back on campus and a little bit wiser about the pandemic and what it means to take classes (you) and teach classes (us) during such times. Again, as I've said many times, your adaptability and persistence in keeping on track with your courses and life here at university is a testimony to your resilience. It is a skill that we learn when we are faced with adversity, and it is one of the key skills you perfect here at school, as keeping on track in a 120 credit BA degree program is an accomplishment in addition to (and beyond) your grades or GPA. It demonstrates that you can take on a large and complex task that takes four years, and you complete it.

Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts is now in its 7th year, having moved from a general studies program -- since the 1970s -- to that of an interdisciplinary focused undergraduate major. During the past 7 years, I-LA has developed a clear academic purpose (e.g., Interdisciplinarity), a proud identity (e.g., Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts majors), and a core 3 course sequence that stands as the centerpiece and reasoning for your choice of courses within the College of Liberal Arts. As you all well know, we have the most flexible, adaptive, and expansive undergraduate degree program of any offered here at CSU. We feel your degree program is one that is adeptly suitable for the changing and unpredictable career world and workplace awaiting you after graduation.

In our efforts of making your major the best it can be, we have been working on a few program initiatives. First, I-LA received a grant this past summer so we could create a course textbook on Interdisciplinarity for our Junior Seminar, the course that introduces the concept and practice of Interdisciplinarity. This textbook will be part of the Open Text publication format where it will be accessible and available to students at no cost, not only those of you here but anywhere in the world. I-LA is committed to working with the best course materials that are out there but at a cost to students that is affordable. More on this will come as the textbook is developed and vetted via our program curriculum process. Second, I-LA is working on the final stages of bringing onboard a local chapter of the National Honors society for Interdisciplinary Studies. I-LA is proud of its majors, and we want to give all of you as many opportunities for acknowledging your accomplishments and achievements as we can. Expect more news soon on both fronts.



In closing I do hope everyone keeps well as we head into the final weeks of our semester.



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A MESSAGE FROM PROF. WERNISING

Sarah Wernising — I-LA Faculty

As we jump back into classes this fall, it feels somewhat like we're trying to return to normal, everyday life after a crazy last year, but it also feels as if we're mourning a pre-pandemic life that will not return to us again. We've all been changed and impacted by this past year in ways that we're still figuring out.



My own life has taken several turns in the last year. I moved last August to Santa Fe with my family for my partner's job, and it has been a huge transition. While teaching online, I've also been at home with my kids in virtual school for most of last year. Many of the students in my classes were in the same boat I was-- not only trying to work but also help kids or other family members through the pandemic while still engaging in learning and academic coursework. I felt very grateful to be part of my students' lives during that time and to have the space to think and learn together even as my daytime hours were filled with the needs of young children.

Now, as my kids are back in school and I have more time to teach and write, I've been pondering a lot about how to do the best work I can, even in the midst of ongoing uncertainty. I've been wondering and sometimes worrying over what the future will look like as we continue to grapple with the fear and stress we've experienced. This prose poem from Mary Oliver has been both a comfort and an inspiration, so I'd like to share it with you in hopes that it may speak to you as you struggle with and rejoice in what this year will bring:

“Don't Hesitate”

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still life has some possibility left. Perhaps this is its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happened better than all the riches or power in the world. It could be anything, but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

A MESSAGE FROM DR. MURILLO

[Insert text here]

ALPHA IOTA SIGMA

Alpha Iota Sigma is a national honors society that recognizes and advances academic scholarships and achievements of undergraduate and graduate interdisciplinary students. CSU's chapter of Alpha Iota Sigma will be holding an induction ceremony to welcome new members in the Fall of 2021 and we encourage all I-LA members to apply for this rich opportunity for interdisciplinary research, connection, and collaboration. Every year, Alpha Iota Sigma hosts a Paper/Poster competition in conjunction with the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies annual conference where CSU students have the opportunity to connect with other Alpha Iota Sigma students from various colleges and universities across the country.

This honor society is designed to promote excellence in interdisciplinary studies and is a terrific resume builder, allowing members the chance to forge a network with other honors students that can lead to great careers down the road. Please check out our Facebook page which is a great platform to facilitate virtual communication among all the student members and update activities with which the honor society members are engaged.

Please contact Dr. Cindy Murillo at cmurillo@colostate.edu if you are interested in applying for membership.



STUDY ABROAD WITH PROF. ROBINSON

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Comparative legal studies in Italy: Summer 2021

Last June I took a group of 10 students to Italy. The class was called “Comparative Legal Studies in Italy” and it was a three-credit class (also counts in the legal studies minor). We 11 brave souls flew to Italy in the middle of the pandemic and it was well worth it.

Our home base was in Florence, where we stayed about 30 feet from the Duomo. We studied business law, Vatican law, the Mafia, health law, criminal law and the court systems in Italy. We then compared the law to our law here in the United States. We learned through lectures and guest speakers as well as tour guides and hands-on learning. We were also able to really enjoy the culture and living as locals for three weeks. We took a trip to Venice, where we visited the Bridge of Signs, St. Mark’s Square and Cathedral and, of course, took a gondola ride. We also traveled to Rome and saw the Vatican, Colosseum, Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Sistine Chapel, Trevi fountain, and the Euro cup.

One of my favorite excursions was to the Chianti wine region for a wine tasting and lecture by a business owner and professor. We tasted wine made right there in the vineyard and enjoyed the gorgeous scenery while we learned all about running a business in Italy. Another one of my favorite experiences was our cooking class. We learned how to make homemade pasta, bolognese sauce, tiramisu and pizza. It was a great hands-on experience. We felt like locals after about a week and ate our way through Tuscany. If you are interested in joining me on this adventure next summer May 30—June 21, please reach out to me (gina.robinson@colostate.edu) or go directly to the study abroad site and get your application in! Ciao!



Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts

College of Liberal Arts | Colorado State University

THE CLEAR ADVANTAGE YOUR INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE AWARDS YOU IS A SET OF INVALUABLE CAREER SKILLS YOU CAN DEPEND ON WHEN YOU GRADUATE.

- Critical-Thinking and Problem-Solving
- Researched, Fact-Based Persuasion
- Communication Proficiency
- Media | Digital Information Competency
- Collaborative Agency
- Integrative Thinking
- Humanistic & Cultural Understanding
- Interdisciplinary Awareness
- Design Innovation

AJA CARNEY ON STUDYING ABROAD

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This past summer I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Florence, Italy as a part of the Comparative Legal Studies program. When I initially heard about the program I was hesitant to apply, which is funny because looking back now, it was the best decision I have ever made. There is nothing that can compare to the friends I made, everything I learned, and the experiences created over the three weeks in Florence.

The program was centered around how the Italian Legal System compares to the American Legal System. Lectures often took place at a local coffee shop where we would order pastries and coffee and immerse ourselves in how the Italian Legal System functions. Classes were led by CSU Professor Gina Robinson as well as guest speakers from Italy who are experts in their respective fields of law. By the end of the program, we were able to identify the processes involved in Italian Law as well as how Vatican Law differs, and how business in Italy is conducted as compared to business in America.



Outside of lectures, the group was able to explore and get to know Florence very well. The program included several tours which often reflected the legal and political history of Florence. One thing that I found most interesting is that all of the art in Florence tells a legal or political story. When we were not in lecture or on tours, we also had free time to explore the city ourselves. In doing so, we made good friends with some of the locals and created our own little community during our time in Italy. To this day, I still keep in touch with the people I met in Italy. In fact, I valued the program so much that myself and some others are planning on returning to Italy over winter break!

Traveling to Florence, Italy (as well as Rome and Venice) was one of the best experiences of my life. It is something that I will never forget and I am so thankful for. With that being said, I highly recommend this program to anyone interested in the law and learning about other cultures.



HEARING FROM I-LA MAJORS

KATE TRULSON

My name is Kate Trulson, and I grew up in Bellevue, Washington, and moved to Fort Collins in 2018 to attend CSU! I chose CSU because I fell in love with the beautiful campus, the cute old town of Fort Collins, and the friendly people. I started at CSU as an Undeclared Exploring Major my freshman year because I had no idea what I wanted to do. I ended up declaring Journalism my next year as a sophomore, and then switched to Interior Architecture and Design my junior year. As you can see, I changed my mind a lot about what I wanted to study and often put too much pressure

on myself to make a career out of a specialized degree. During COVID I re-fell in love with a passion from my childhood: cooking. I realized that I really love to be in the kitchen and cook good food for people to enjoy.

I spent the summer working for a local Fort Collins bakeshop, and even began selling my homemade bread to my friends, and realized this is something I really enjoy and could continue doing. I hope to open my own business one day, whether it be a small café or a food truck, so getting a variety of studies in the I-LA major from all different disciplines makes it possible to personalize my education and learn about all the facets of starting a business. For this reason, I chose to finally declare my major as Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts with a minor in Food Systems. I was able to apply all the courses I have taken in nutrition, management, personal computing, economics, and interior design toward the major, and these are things that I will actually be able to apply to my future goals.

ADRIANNE THOMPSON

Hello! My name is Adrienne Thompson. This is my first year at CSU as a junior transfer student. I was born and raised in Loveland, Colorado. Colorado State University is a special kind of home to me personally. I enjoy adventuring to many places and I love trying new things. I am a little all over the place when it comes to career plans, so I made goals to keep my options open. I like to keep an idea of creating a career that allows me to connect with people and work in company that shares similar values as I do. I chose to major in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts because I literally love every subject and I can be intrigued about most things. By choosing this study, it allows me to dip into my interests of multiple subjects and apply my creative critical thinking to complex situations. I personally feel that I have a purpose that's meant for something bigger, by starting off with an interdisciplinary education, I am limitless to anything I choose to dive into. With an I-LA degree, I am able to look at my career's goal and integrate my knowledge from multiple lenses and innovate new ideas from that.

GAVIN BROWN

Hello my name is Gavin Brown, and I am from Virginia. I am a senior here at CSU, but am staying a 5th year and getting a masters degree! I found Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts because when I was a Communications major, I didn't feel like the discipline could help me pursue my passion of fundraising and philanthropy in the same way Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts could. I started off as Microbiology major, but I went down a flight of stairs and found that I can't really do the advanced math that was need for STEM, so I was able to drop what I thought I needed to do and decided to pursue what I



I love. This major helps with and fuels my passion of fundraising and philanthropy, as to do well in this field, you can't just use one discipline to succeed but rather you have to have skills in many disciplines including, but not limited to: business, hospitality, and interior design. So far, I have done pretty well in this field of fundraising, as I have done many events and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for nonprofits and charities ranging from Leukemia & Lymphoma Society to The Trevor Project to C.A.S.A. Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts has been able to set me up to be the best I can be and do the best work I am capable of in my desired career path.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY & KNOWLEDGE

One key aspect of Interdisciplinarity is its approach to knowledge. We work with knowledge diversity and we use diverse knowledges as the fuel for our integration of disciplinary insights for the task of addressing everyday problems and realities larger than any one perspective can adequately address. Knowledge diversity—in Interdisciplinarity—“creates synergies between different types of knowledge by strengthening the linkages, which eventual lead to improved innovation, which usually lead to improved innovation and performance.”*

* Creative Interdisciplinary collaboration: A systemic literature review. Thinking Skills and Creativity. (www.elsevier.com/locate/tsc)

HEARING FROM I-LA MAJORS

MARTIN MANWEILER

Hello! My name is Martin Manweiler and I am a Junior Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts major and a Music minor. I have grown up working for my parents appliance store in Windsor since I was a teenager. Music has always been important to me and I always sang in choirs in church and in school. When I was 13 I started taking guitar lessons and writing my own songs. My senior year in high school I started taking voice lessons and decided to pursue music in college. I started as a Vocal Performance major. I sang in a band and recorded some music with local artists and took some courses from Berklee online that allowed me to get a Singing Styles certificate. I wanted to get my degree but didn't want to be constrained to learning more classical type music that CSU offers so an advisor told me to look into ILA. I thought about taking courses in it but I just took a philosophy course and sang with the RAMblings and Concert Choir, as well as took a Modern Dance class. Then COVID struck and I decided to take a year off instead of taking classes through Zoom. It took me about two years to decide to switch to Interdisciplinary studies and now I'm here! I'm very excited to keep learning and see where this takes me! I am currently singing in Chamber Choir as well as Laudamus Chamber Chorale. I have an interest in learning about how the music industry works and would like to put out my own album at some point in the near future.

MAE MOHR

My decision to join I-LA was easy simply because of the discipline's emphasis on interconnectedness, an idea that was always prevalent within my life. I was born in Chicago and adopted into a family of eight. Split down the middle, the score of racial identity was even given that half of us were white and the other half black.

My personal positionality emphasized difference in comparison to white family members and black brothers, contributing to my loss within the game of identity. Now I can place concepts and theories towards my childhood experience as a result of interdisciplinary insights, but my arrival to the program itself was delayed. My freshmen year I entered as a psychology major, blissfully unaware the two electives I added would be the start of my journey to I-LA. These ethnic studies courses captivated me, furthering me along in my fascination with multifaceted perspectives. The knowledge my professors rained upon me felt so imperative, but I often left class weighed down by the waves of wisdom that settled on stains of my internalized whiteness. Overwhelmed with the need to produce action from my instruction, I switched to social work in hopes of specializing in child welfare to work with fellow adoptees. Alas, it became clear I overestimated my ability to work in relation to this emotionally exhaustive identity.



Going into my junior year I had completed a few internships implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the workplace, but had yet to fully commit to a major. I felt stuck in proceeding with the second half of my education, but upon learning about I-LA, my restlessness regarding a degree subsided. My inability to find satisfaction within one discipline reflected my personal reality as an intersectional individual, there is no particular box I fit into and I didn't want to confine my education as well. After joining I-LA, engagement with other disciplines has expanded to include communication studies, sociology, and journalism. I-LA has also allowed me to revisit previous ambitions by providing a lens to conduct further research into interracial adoption this upcoming semester. As for my future professional endeavors, I hope to explore public relations and project management in addition to continuing education for DEI semester. As for my future professional endeavors, I hope to explore public relations and project management in addition to continuing

education for DEI.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY & WICKED PROBLEMS

Another key aspect of Interdisciplinarity is its focus on what is often referred to as Wicked Problems. Large complex problems that defy single or dominate perspectives. Wicked Problems often require a host of diverse skills, tactics, understanding, and approaches. Interdisciplinarity utilizes a great many human abilities in addition to rationality, logic, analytical reasoning, and fact based argumentation. Interdisciplinarity relies on daring, the imagination, taking risks, and a willingness sometime to really go out on a limb. What's key here when dealing with Wicked Problems and which stands as a basic element we identify as Interdisciplinary Design is the utilization and collaboration of three vitally important liberal arts human abilities: research, creativity, and reflection. And these three abilities stand as the cornerstone of our senior capstone experience.

JENNA THOMAS

My name is Jenna Thomas. I am a second-semester junior and working through my second full year at Colorado State University. I transferred here in the fall of 2019 and have been finding myself as a student more and more every day. I originally thought I wanted to be a business major because it is rather broad and I would have a variety of options to choose from in most career paths. I quickly learned that I am not a math person, and my brain does not operate in the way a business mind conventionally would. I took some time off from school right before the pandemic hit and decided to come back to school after one semester to land into Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. I knew this was the major for me when I could take a variety of classes of my significant interests



that included sociology, history, and anthropology. My interests include traveling, being outdoors, and spending time with my friends and family. I plan on going to study abroad in London next fall for my last semester. Afterwards, I plan to

travel for a few months before attending graduate school in fall of 2023. I am not sure what career path I want to take, but I know I want to continue to be a student and learner for as long as I can. I am so happy that I was able to find a major that fits my interests and has allowed me to grow into the student I am today!

INTERDISCIPLINARITY & EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

A third key aspect of Interdisciplinarity has to do with expert knowledge. Often overlooked is one effect of our mastering Interdisciplinarity. Yes, we learn a key skill that increasingly will be required and needed in the 21st century career workspace. Yes, it is a skill I-LA majors practice and master each time we enter one of our classes. Being that we mostly work with and learn from courses offered by the major liberal arts disciplines, each class is always a new experience for us, a new way of encounter knowledge specific to disciplines. In short, we become experts in learning how to coordinate different kinds of expert knowledge. We, in fact, learn how to collaborate with the experts (e.g., economists, historians, social sciences, artists) of the existing liberal arts disciplines while always being outside any one discipline.

A NOTE FROM THE I-LA INTERN

Hi! My name is Cassie Lyons and I am the I-LA newsletter intern this semester. I am a senior I-LA major with a Spanish and an Indigenous Studies minor, and it is crazy to think that I am almost at the end of my college career. When I began looking into college and started choosing a major, I really had no idea what I wanted to do. I grew up in Fort Collins, so I chose to come to CSU because it is close to home (and, you know, that in-state tuition). As for my major though, I would say that I just simply love learning, and the idea of limiting myself to a certain subject when I wanted to study all of them was intimidating. I considered a major in theater arts, ethics, humanities, psychology and even astronomy and animation. I knew I had some sort of interest in the "bigger picture" of humanity and society, so I declared a philosophy major when I first enrolled, but it didn't come close to encompassing all that I was interested in. It wasn't until I came to a CSU visitation day where there were information sessions on different majors that I heard about I-LA, and the more the instructor explained what the major was, the more it felt right for me. I personally really enjoy the diversity within the major and the pretty major personalization available within it, in terms of subjects. It has also allowed me to enter into disciplines I had no idea about when I graduated high school but are now integral to my beliefs as a person. I found myself going down a sociological path with my education, which landed me in a class called Gender and Society in my sophomore year. This class challenged my views about gender and radically changed the way I understand the world and the ever-changing and ever-complex society we live in. This was just the beginning, as now I have taken many other classes related to the large scope of society in terms of not only gender but race, ethnicity, disability, and even religion. It also led me to a class called Queer Indigenous Studies that, as a queer Indigenous woman, also radically changed the way I relate to my own identity (in a very, very positive way!), and had it not been for the I-LA major, I probably never would have found my way to these classes that have shaped me so much as a person. I could not be more thankful that I found this major at the time I did, and I love the emphasis on diversity of knowledge, communication, critical thinking and humanistic understanding that is at the foundation of the discipline because it aligns with the things that I value in the world, and it allowed me to create a college education that encouraged and fulfilled my curiosities. Looking forward, I am still unsure of the career I want to go into, but I know that the skills I have developed in this major and the worldview that came from it I will carry with me into anything that I do.



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