



## NEWS | FACULTY | STUDENT STORIES

### DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Autumn in Colorado is often breathtaking, with blue skies, pleasantly warm temperatures, and a quiet, subtle display of color as the leaves and shrubs begin to change. We are now in the middle of our semester, with classes settled into their routines and many of our larger first assignments quickly approaching. It's the first hurdle to overcome, and the biggest challenge isn't so much the work itself but our mindsets. Too often, around this time, it feels like a mountain of work is ahead. Yes, that's true, but the trick is to break down this work—and your efforts toward it—into smaller, manageable chunks. See the work you have to do not as one huge leap but as a series of steps, each one bringing you closer to your goal. It might not always be obvious, but it's the same for us on this side of the classroom. And the one trick I have learned in the many years I've spent as both a student and a professor is something within everyone's reach: time management. Yes, intelligence and brilliance help, but what allows you to succeed in every one of your courses is how you manage your time and effort. Okay, it's not glamorous. But it's dependable. And it is what allows your brilliance and intelligence to shine bright.



Last year, one of our main program goals was to improve academic assessment. Each academic unit on campus is responsible for evaluating how well our programs equip you with the knowledge and skills needed to meet not only our program learning outcomes but also your future career requirements. This goal was divided into two parts. First, we updated our academic assessment process, introducing new protocols, rubrics, and outcomes reporting for four key academic areas: (1) writing and interdisciplinarity, (2) fact-based argumentation, (3) verbal skills, and (4) graphic-visual communication. Second, we carried out our first assessment under the new system. The good news from the results is that Interdisciplinary

Liberal Arts majors perform and master key skills at a level comparable to students in other liberal arts programs.

Equally, we are seeing early empirical evidence that shows you all are graduating with crucial skills for future career success—skills employers are desperately looking for in college graduates.

So, this is excellent early news. Given that we now have a robust assessment program in place, we will continue with our five-year project to evaluate how well ILA is meeting your academic and career needs.

### COMMENTS FROM CAITLIN, ASC

As a student majoring in interdisciplinary liberal arts, your curricular, co-curricular, and post-graduation options are limitless. Students in this program pursue opportunities in nonprofit work, creative fields, public policy, community organizing, business, law, international affairs, and more. Our hope, of course, is that students feel energized and empowered by this freedom. However, I know from advising meetings that students occasionally get overwhelmed by so many options.

In a 2020 peer-reviewed study titled “What You Don’t Know Can Hurt You: Uncertainty Impairs Executive Function,” Alquist, Baumeister, Tice, et al found that our brains are strained not only by making decisions but also by uncertainty itself. In their experiment, participants who were told they might have to give a speech later performed worse on logic puzzles than those who were told they would have to give a speech. The researchers suggest this happens because ambiguity requires cognitive energy, and therefore, an unsure mind has less bandwidth for problem-solving.

Have you ever been unsure of how to get started on an assignment, so you avoided it altogether until the deadline loomed near? Same idea. Your brain believes it is protecting you by resisting uncertainty.

When we sense the future is unknown – “What minor is best? How am I going to use this degree? Will going to office hours be awkward?” – that discomfort can trigger avoidance or endless information gathering. Paralysis somehow feels safer than risking an unknown outcome.

In a degree like interdisciplinary liberal arts, where everything from your classes to your faculty to your post-graduation opportunities is flexible, students are susceptible to decision fatigue and fear of choosing “wrong.”

Don’t worry, though: there is a path forward, and understanding this pattern can be a helpful first step in shifting your mindset and behavior. Consider completing one small task this week that you’ve been putting off. You could email a faculty member who is knowledgeable about a topic of interest, attend a new club meeting, or invite a classmate to coffee.

Building resiliency to uncertainty is the key to forward motion, and it is a skill that can be practiced and improved upon. You don’t need to have everything figured out today. You

just need to start something, because small actions lead to clarity and growth. One step – any step – is better than standing still.



### A MESSAGE FROM PROF O'TIERNEY

My name is Bryce M. O'Tierney (she/her), and I teach 492 in person and 392 & 492 online for the ILA program. I am also an instructor in the departments of English and Music, where I teach courses in literature, poetics, creative writing, and music appreciation. I am an interdisciplinary artist (music, poetry, movement), originally from Anchorage, Alaska. Improvisational process, practice, and performance are areas of central interest and experience for me; thematic focuses include musicmaking as a site of intergenerational encounter and exchange between



the human and the greater-than-human. This fall 2025, I am an inaugural faculty member for the CSU Spur Start Program on the CSU Spur/Denver campus.

Additionally, dance faculty Madeline Jazz Harvey's ballet *The Wild Little Horse*, for which I composed, performed, and recorded the violin score, will be staged at this November's Fall Dance Concert. And I am a current Fellow and co-facilitator for Writing Women, an 8-week online course in Meditative Creative Writing, taught by award-winning author and professor Rachel Jamison Webster. This past July 2025, I was selected to

participate in the workshop intensive "Improvisation: in music, dance and elsewhere" at the Exploratorium Berlin, led by musician Simon Rose and dancer Ingo Reulecke. Poetry and prose publications in the past year include *About Place Journal* and *Apricity Press*; I am the recipient of the Poetry Scholarship for the 2026 Minnesota Northwoods Writers Conference. For the past decade, I have composed, recorded, and performed in the musical duo *maeve & quinn* with my twin, Maris; commissions and collaborations include the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Stepwolf Theatre, the Poetry Foundation, and the Chicago Composers Orchestra.

### A MESSAGE FROM PROF MCGREGOR

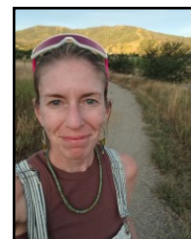
Hi! I am Kelly McGregor, an Academic Support Coordinator working with students majoring in International Studies, Languages, Literature, & Cultures, and Political Science. I teach a first-year seminar abroad in Ireland and courses for the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts Program, including Liberal Arts & Meaningful Work and Senior Capstone Portfolio. For Key Communities, I have taught *Rebels, Outcasts, & Society*, an interdisciplinary course focused on social change agents, the ethics of rebellion, and representations of good and evil. I received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and English and a Master of Arts in English Literature from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Before becoming an advisor at Colorado State, I worked as a residence hall director at the University of Colorado, where I worked closely with residential academic programs and taught several courses, including *Banned Books* and the *First Amendment*, *First-Year Writing Seminar*, and *Comics and the Interpretive Arts*. I firmly believe that an education in the Liberal Arts trains students to be strong critical thinkers and engaged global citizens. I was born and raised in Fort Collins



and love spending time outside in the Colorado sun. Reading fiction, listening to music, skiing, biking, and watching Rockies baseball are some of my interests outside of work. Oh, and I'm pretty good at YoYo, too.

### A MESSAGE FROM PROF DOXEY

This semester, I'm teaching an HONR 392 class that I've developed around the theme "Expanding the Field of Ecopoetry: Self In/Of Landscape." Though yes, poetry is the focus, this class is wholly interdisciplinary as we contemplate the climate change crisis through various lenses, the intersection of poetry & science (yes, there is an intersection!), and how in crises we need art and poetry more than ever. I'm also teaching an online version of E 210: *Beginning Creative Writing* for the first time, which has been really fun! In addition to those, I teach the 1-credit portfolio class LB 490 that helps senior capstone students gather their accomplishments and work samples. In the spring, I'm looking forward to teaching my HONR 193: *Imaginative Obsessions & Creative Writing* – another interdisciplinary class. I also just went for a quick visit to Santa Fe, where I happened to stumble upon an inspiring talk with Sandra Cisneros.



### A MESSAGE FROM PROF SWANN

This summer I had the opportunity to visit several places in England with my family. One of my favorite stops was a beautiful coastal town named Whitby. This historic town has many charming things to see, but my absolute favorite was the Gothic architectural wonder of Whitby Abbey. From its perch on a cliff right next to a cemetery, this abandoned monastery looks like the stuff of nightmares, especially at night with the fog rolling in. At least, that's what Bram Stoker thought when he visited Whitby in 1890.

The spooky ruin and tales of a shipwreck inspired Stoker's more famous work, *Dracula*. Today, the remains of the abbey are a beautiful tourist attraction requiring visitors to climb the same 199 steps Stoker's "black dog" ran up in the novel. The best part of our daytrip, however, was the 3-person performance of *Dracula* performed alongside the abbey. Using exaggerated accents and pulling wigs and props from trunks, the actors led visitors of all ages all over the ruin, performing scenes from the novel along the way. They made the story playful and accessible, introducing my 13-year-old son to the tale in an engaging, fun way.



I found the intersection of my love of theatre, literature, and history truly inspirational and invigorating, which was a welcomed experience in early August before classes would resume



## A MESSAGE FROM PROF SABBATH

Hi, I'm Dr. Karyl Sabbath! I've been teaching in the Communication Studies Department since 2010 and am excited to join Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts this Fall, as an instructor for the Junior Seminar course! Teaching for the Interdisciplinary major makes sense to me. Throughout my education, career, and community involvement, I have been drawn to integrating my various passions, interests, and knowledge structures.

My university experiences began as a Sociology major with a minor in Psychology. While an undergraduate, I interned with the Ohio Youth Commission for both Boys' and Girls' Residential Group Homes. These experiences led to a firmly held belief in the importance of student internships. Additionally, they solidified my desire to work with troubled youth, which led me to my master's program in Applied Sociology.

Doing graduate work in Applied Sociology led to an opportunity to teach a semester in the Honor's Cottage at the men's medium-security prison in Scottsdale, AZ. What an experience as a 22-year-old! At the time, I had a growing interest in alcohol and drug dependency, which led to the writing of my Master's thesis on "How are the 12 steps of AA relevant to sustainable or unsustainable recovery?" Three years later, I moved my career to a 30-day Adult Residential Treatment Unit, as one of four lead counselors. All of my commitments led to a growing interest in teaching, which eventually led me to shift to a PhD program in the School of Interpersonal Communication at Ohio University. The program helped further integrate my various interests and meshed my studies of sociology and psychology with my counseling background. In 1988, I accepted an offer for an Assistant Professor in Ohio.



There, I continued to do community work throughout the next 22 years as a faculty member. In 2010, my interdisciplinary soul called for change, and I moved to Colorado.

During the past 15 years, I've worked on various boards for children & teen wellness and gained my Addiction Counseling license in Colorado as well as becoming a professor at Colorado State University. I teach the ILA junior seminar and various other classes in the communications department. Integration of my experiences, knowledge, and passions has led me to where I am today, feeling blessed to have the support and trust from so many individuals in my life, allowing me to continually pivot and grow as an interdisciplinary.

## ILA REMINDERS &amp; NEWS

Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts sponsors several Study Abroad scholarships each year. If you're considering a study abroad semester and are curious about available options, consider cost-effective programs, exchange programs, CSU faculty-led programs, and international internships. When it comes to scholarships, you might want to explore opportunities like (1) the CSU Passport Scholarship and (2) the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts Education Abroad Scholarships. For more information on study abroad opportunities and scholarships, see the Office of International Programs at <https://international.colostate.edu/educationabroad/>. Here you will find tons of information on international academic programs, passport requirements, study abroad credit transfer, and more. The Education Abroad team is ready to support you every step of the way, from choosing a program to navigating financial aid, academics, housing, and safety abroad. At CSU, more than 1,600 students explore the world each year through Education Abroad—traveling to over 80 countries for experiences that last from one week to an entire year. Whether you're interested in studying, interning, researching, or making an impact through service, there's a program out there for you.



## INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN MODERN EDUCATION

Interdisciplinarity has emerged as an essential approach for navigating the complexity of contemporary challenges. In an increasingly interconnected world, problems such as climate change, global poverty, and environmental degradation transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, requiring comprehensive multi-perspective solutions that no single field can adequately provide.

Rather than replacing specialized knowledge, interdisciplinarity complements academic disciplines by fostering a new kind of expertise: the ability to manage, coordinate, and integrate diverse perspectives. This addresses concerns about knowledge fragmentation while maintaining the crucial role of specialization. The result is a more holistic understanding that emerges from identifying connections between complex phenomena and creatively synthesizing insights.

For students, interdisciplinarity offers invaluable transferable skills essential for modern careers. It develops analytical thinking—the capacity to evaluate and collect relevant information—alongside innovative thinking, which enables creative reassembly of insights in novel combinations. Additionally, critical reflection allows individuals to assess their processes and continuously improve their understanding.

As technology and globalization rapidly reshape workplace environments, interdisciplinarity prepares graduates for diverse career paths rather than a single predetermined trajectory. By teaching students to work effectively with multiple knowledge formations simultaneously, interdisciplinary education balances academic excellence with practical utility. It equips individuals with both problem-solving processes and an appreciation for diverse perspectives—competencies that remain valuable throughout their professional lives and enable them to address the multifaceted challenges of the twenty-first century.



## INTERDISCIPLINARITY AS A CAREER CHOICE

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, interdisciplinary studies programs have emerged as one of the most valuable educational paths for the 21st century. This approach, which combines knowledge from multiple academic disciplines, prepares students to tackle the multifaceted challenges that define our era. The modern workplace demands versatility and adaptability. Problems no longer fit neatly into single categories—climate change requires understanding science, policy, economics, and social behavior, and healthcare innovations blend medicine, technology, ethics, and business. Interdisciplinary studies equip graduates to think across boundaries, drawing connections that specialists might miss. This holistic perspective makes them invaluable in diverse professional settings, from tech startups to nonprofit organizations to government agencies.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary training develops critical transferable skills that transcend any single field. Students learn to synthesize information from varied sources, communicate across different professional languages, and approach problems from multiple angles. These capabilities are precisely what employers seek in an age of rapid technological change and evolving job markets. While specific technical skills may become obsolete, the ability to learn, adapt, and integrate new knowledge remains perpetually relevant.

The career flexibility offered by interdisciplinary studies is another significant advantage. Graduates aren't locked into a single career path but can pivot across industries and roles throughout their professional lives. This agility is essential in a job market where the average person changes careers multiple times and where jobs that don't yet exist will dominate the future economy.

Finally, interdisciplinary studies programs foster innovation by encouraging unconventional thinking. History's greatest breakthroughs often occur at the intersection of disciplines—where biology meets computer science, where art influences engineering. By training students to bridge these gaps, interdisciplinary programs cultivate the creative problem-solvers who will drive progress in the decades ahead.

## THE DEMOCRATIC FOUNDATION

Critical thinking is not merely an academic skill or intellectual exercise—it is fundamentally a democratic practice that requires humility, openness, and a commitment to shared standards of truth. Being critical isn't only a logical or intellectual process. It also demands reflection and recognition that effective reasoning depends as much on our emotional and social awareness as on our analytical abilities.

At the foundation of critical thinking lies a paradox: intelligence requires acknowledging the limits of our knowledge. We must be aware of what we know while simultaneously recognizing that our understanding is incomplete. This starting point establishes reasonability and humility as essential virtues. When we accept that no single truth captures the whole picture, we open ourselves to a pluralistic worldview in which multiple valid perspectives can coexist. Truth becomes not something we discover in isolation, but something we inhabit collectively—a human construction that allows us to live harmoniously with others and ourselves.

Practicing critical awareness demands rigorous intellectual standards. We must remain politely distrustful of all claims, including our own, and subject every belief to scrutiny for accuracy, factuality, and logic. This isn't cynicism but rather a commitment to holding all ideas accountable to observable reality. Demanding accuracy requires time, energy, and thoroughness—there are no shortcuts to genuine understanding. The temptation to accept quick answers or easy explanations must be resisted in favor of deeper investigation and careful testing of our conclusions.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of critical thinking involves managing our emotional investments in our own beliefs. We must never cling to opinions simply because they are ours or because abandoning them feels uncomfortable. The "I'm right, you're wrong" attitude transforms thinking from a process of validation into an exercise in ego protection. Overconfidence poses a particular danger for educated individuals who may mistake their credentials for wisdom. A degree does not automatically confer critical ability—only sustained practice, accumulated knowledge, and genuine humility can develop that capacity.

True critical thinking extends beyond individual reasoning to encompass social understanding. We must actively strive to understand why others hold the beliefs they do, recognizing that psychological and emotional factors shape opinions just as powerfully as rational considerations. This doesn't mean accepting all viewpoints as equally valid, but it does require giving different perspectives a fair opportunity to demonstrate their merit. Empathy and imagination become tools for expanding our own awareness while simultaneously making our arguments more persuasive.

Ultimately, critical thinking fails if we cannot get others to listen. By understanding where others come from, identifying their concerns, respecting different perspectives, and finding shared values, we create the conditions for genuine dialogue. Every rule reinforces the same underlying principle: critical thinking is inherently democratic and requires respect, fairness, generosity, and openness.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAVEL

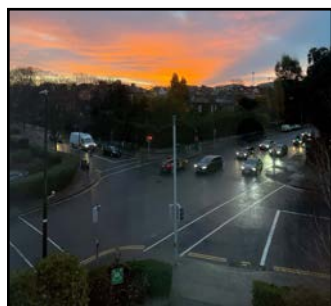
Two years ago, I met myself at a critical point in my academic journey. I had just finished my first year of university, and I was scared and unsure of what I wanted out of life. I had been desperately searching for that answer through the exploratory program at UNL, but ultimately fell short of finding an academic discipline that felt right. Thoughts racing and insecurities growing, I faced a pending lease contract that would effectively bind me to another year in a place where I knew I was miserable. I had to make a decision. Stay... or leave and figure something else out. I chose the latter and took a break from my education.



I needed a change and wanted to take advantage of this unique moment in my life, so I decided to take a gap year in Ireland. There, I travelled all around the Republic of Ireland. Hiking in places like Donegal, the Cliffs of Moher, Slieve League, and surfing in the west coast waters of Bundoran. I learned outdoor skills and practiced leadership in outdoor activities while building connections with locals. I got curious and learned the history behind the grassy terrains that looked so different from the ones I knew back home. All

experiences that I truly will never forget and am eternally grateful for.

All of these adventures started developing my interdisciplinary skills and made me realize the importance of an ILA degree. It provided fertile soil for my curiosity to grow, for me to think critically, and for me to see different people's perspectives while making connections, all abilities that are taught and enhanced through the ILA program. Being able to think critically about the changing world around you and to approach different



ways of life with an open and curious mind can take you anywhere you want to go for the rest of your life. Furthermore, everything is connected to us. Our history, the land we walk on, and the cultures we have. To experience the world enrichingly, one must be able to see its inherent interdisciplinarity. Whether you're considering studying abroad during your education or later in life, the ILA program will help you have an enhanced experience. Wander on, Signed Calli

## NARRATIVE FILM AS A LIBERAL ART

Narrative Film as a Liberal Art (LB 455) examines contemporary cinema as a powerful medium for exploring the human experience. This interdisciplinary course analyzes excellent modern films addressing diverse human conditions—from alienation and wartime experiences to homelessness, harassment, and family dynamics. You'll learn film analysis techniques, critical vocabulary, and interdisciplinary approaches as you view acclaimed international films such as *Ladybird*, *The Lives of Others*, *Roma*, and *Aftersun*. Through discussion, screening responses, podcasts, and analytical essays, you'll develop skills to interpret film as both artistic expression and sociocultural artifact. This course emphasizes active learning and collaborative exploration of contemporary issues through cinema. Of course, the best part is that you will get to watch a number of excellent contemporary films that explore a diversity of human situations and concerns. It's like being able to go to the movies every week.



## ACT HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

ILA is a proud sponsor of the ACT Human Rights Film Festival, which returns to Colorado State University for its 11th year, April 9–12, 2026.

This powerful event showcases the complexity and beauty of human life, celebrates resilience, and champions human rights in Fort Collins. The annual Kickoff Party at Odell Brewing happens on March 10, with festival passes available in late fall 2025. Produced by CSU's Department of Communication Studies, ACT (Awaken, Connect, Transform) brings together provocative documentaries, filmmaker Q&As, and community conversations. Join for four unforgettable days of bold films, big ideas, and powerful conversations featuring brave voices from all over the world speaking truth with vulnerability and carrying stories that stir the soul.



## ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES AS KNOWLEDGE FORMATIONS

Given that the core constituents of interdisciplinary studies are academic disciplines, we thought it might be useful to spend a moment discussing how they came about and how they participate as forms of knowledge. Academic disciplines represent highly formalized knowledge formations that evolved from quasi-informal intellectual societies of the 17th century—such as England's Royal Society and court institutions of the Islamic Golden Age—into today's institutionalized academic structures. This transformation occurred through academic institutionalization, a gradual process involving the consolidation of purpose, methodology, and assumptions; the development of self-governing bodies of thought; the production of recognizable intellectual output; and integration into university systems that became the dominant environment for scientific and intellectual discovery.

The modern discipline structure emerged primarily in the 18th century through the German university system, combined with developments in scientific research from France during the Scientific Revolution. This revolution, premised on empiricism—creating knowledge through observation and experience rather than pure theory—coupled with industrialization's social changes and technological advances, drove knowledge production to become increasingly specialized and compartmentalized. These developments led to major divisions like Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts, each containing further subdivisions into the distinct academic disciplines we recognize today. This momentum came from increased attention to specialization and reductionism—subdividing complexity into narrower windows of examination to achieve fundamental understanding.

Academic disciplines are defined as knowledge formations codified and institutionalized within academic environments. Crucially, they function simultaneously as codified bodies of knowledge and as communities of knowledge—a dual nature essential to understanding interdisciplinary work. Seven core principles characterize academic disciplines: they are distinct knowledge territories operating through specialization and consolidation; they possess borders and boundaries similar to geographical or political realities; they represent unique perspectives approaching their objects of study in discipline-specific ways; each offers particular value that interdisciplinary studies can combine; they're housed and regulated by academic institutions and professional organizations; they produce "legitimized" knowledge through specific vetting processes meeting disciplinary and general standards; and they're organized into general categories of disciplinary types. Understanding these operational principles is crucial for successful interdisciplinary work within university settings.



## HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS

## BRYNN PASCUAL

Hello! My name is Brynn, and I am majoring in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts and minoring in Music, Stage, and Sports Production! I am from Mililani, Hawai'i, and I am actually a transfer student! I attended University of Hawai'i at Mānoa for my first two years as a Psychology major, but decided to transfer to CSU when my family moved to Colorado for my dad's work. When I transferred here, however, I realized that there wasn't a BA program for Psychology, so my academic advisor suggested that I go for I-LA. I chose MSSP as my minor because I grew up with a love for the entertainment industry.

Initially, I encountered pushback and skepticism from others for choosing this major. It discouraged me to the point I started questioning my chances of finding success after graduation. Yet majoring in I-LA at CSU has been such a wonderful experience! I love my professors and the flexibility and versatility of this major. The support of the staff and other students and the new knowledge I have gained through my classes have taught me to greatly appreciate everything this major has to offer. I am excited about the numerous opportunities that will be available to me in the future!

I hope to find a career within the entertainment industry,

potentially in Hawai'i, Denver, or NYC! I currently model, act, and have released music on all streaming platforms, so my goal is to continue down this path.

After this semester, however, I am now slowly opening up to the idea of working behind the camera as well. I am so grateful for how much CSU has guided me in my career path, and I am so happy that I transferred here!



**Fueled by** *curiosity.*  
**Charged with** *interdisciplinary.*



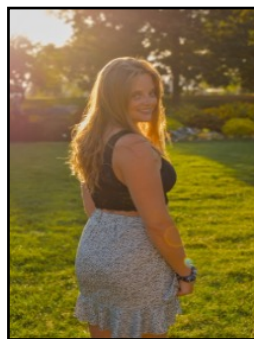
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## ALIYA FISKE SENIOR

Hi! My name is Aliya Fiske, and I am a fourth-year student here at CSU. I am an ILA major with a second major in Women's and Gender Studies. I also have minors in Sociology, Political Science, and Global Environmental Sustainability. As this collection of majors and minors might show, I cannot make decisions. On the other hand, my academic catalogue proves a stubbornness and unwillingness to compromise my interests. Coming to CSU straight from high school, I had no idea what I wanted to pursue. I loved taking biology in high school and envisioned myself in something Earthy and environmental, though I especially excelled in social studies-type classes and felt like I naturally had a social science lens for life. So, I started in exploratory studies, feeling discouraged because I hadn't found my one true path/passion that everyone prophesied would unfold for me. I thought the issue was that I hated everything and that nothing interested me; however, the truth was quite the opposite. Actually, everything interested me, just nothing stood elevated enough from another to be worth dedicating my entire undergraduate career. I was really an interdisciplinary student before I even knew ILA was an option. I had already approached issues interdisciplinarily and was thus frustrated, feeling like I had to limit my career to a single category of thought. It was not until I took a few Women's and Gender Studies classes that I really saw potential in any one major, yet I still felt like I wanted more. This is why I am so

grateful CSU offers the ILA major. I finally feel like I can get exactly what I want out of my degree, and like I am allowed to love everything that I do! I am still passionate about the environment, particularly environmental justice, which I get to explore through ILA and my Global Environmental Sustainability minor. But I get to do so much more than that at the same time! I love looking at gender from different angles in the liberal arts, and studying the intersections of gender and the environment has been fascinating! I am considering law school in my future, but I genuinely believe my degree has prepared me for any career path I might encounter.



## ALEX WALTER

Hi, my name is Alex Walter, and my experience at CSU has been unique. As an incoming transfer student from Front Range Community College, I have changed my major several times. I graduated from FRCC with an Associate of Arts degree in Music.



When applying to CSU, I planned to do music, but shortly after submitting the audition requirement, it was rejected, and I was told that it needed to be an aria or something more classically oriented. Although I would have loved to pursue music here, it's unfortunate that CSU doesn't have an accepted contemporary music program. I felt disappointed at first, but realized that I would much rather do music for fun than be unhappy in a program focused solely on classical theory and training. The truth is, I have no idea what I plan to do after college, so I decided to become an Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts major. I've learned that unless you are going into a specific field that requires a particular concentration (such as medicine), the specifics of the degree don't really matter. What truly matters is having a degree and the dedication and grit to work hard toward a successful future. I have been able to discover the classes I like and don't like through this degree, as it covers a wide range of learning. This degree is truly one of a kind; it has allowed me to develop skills from a wide range of classes and disciplines. I've learned how to think critically, adapt to new challenges, and connect ideas across different fields. I recommend this degree if you do not yet know what you want to do in the future.

## HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS

### JARED MORROW

As a transfer student and veteran, I've never really known what degree path was the best fit for me. College was never a thought in high school since I enlisted in the infantry during my junior year. After getting out, I was told none of my skills were useful in the real world, so I felt aimless. Without a plan, I spent my first year in



a community college knocking out my general education credits, since we all must at some point in our higher education quest. In turn, I was exposed to a wide variety of subjects I would never have considered interesting, such as art history and creative writing. Further thought on this led me to realize that the process of learning something completely alien to me is what I connect with most. Rather than focusing on a single subject, becoming well educated across a wide range of fields is the bread and butter of our current society, for the most part. That is why I am ecstatic about becoming an Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts major. I've never even heard of this degree until I explained what I stated above to my advisor. Having the opportunity to attend pretty much any class within the College of liberal arts and have it count towards my degree seems otherworldly. With my experiences in the military dropping me into new situations and environments rapidly, it's a clear parallel to how snug I've adapted in this learning setting. Currently, I am taking a philosophy, critical thinking, and a global studies class, including German as my foreign language, which I've declared as my minor. All of which are vastly different courses but fall into the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. To anyone who feels as though they have some sort of duty to suffer through a degree that they have no interest in, but it might provide them with a miserable job in the long run, please talk with one of the Interdisciplinary advisors. They might shine light on an area of interest that never crossed your mind. No harm in greater exposure to fields that might just be your hidden passion.

### JACK LOONEY

My name is Jack, and I'm a transfer student from Front Range Community College. Throughout my academic career I've struggled to hone in on one degree. I've taken many classes in writing and film, and enjoy things like technical work and photography, but never really found anything that suited me. Because of this, my academic advisor recommended I pursue an Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts degree, all of these experiences and focus them towards one degree. So far my experience in ILA has been reassuring. Throughout my academic journey I've always been anxious about whether or not I'm taking the "right" classes for me. I've also found narrowing in and trying to pick one degree to be stressful, as I'm not sure if what I want now will change later in life. The nice thing about ILA is that I was able to keep all of my credits I gained from other classes and use them here. It's also nice knowing I am able to take past academic and work experiences and apply them to my degree, and knowing that I could point this degree in multiple directions. While I don't currently know where my academic journey will take me, pursuing an ILA degree has made me feel much more confident in my abilities as a student. It's reassuring to know that I am gaining the skills that I need that can help me land a job in one of my many areas of interests, and to know that I am not locked into just one job type defined by my degree.



### LAISHA GARNICA-AMARO

I chose to study Liberal Arts because I've always been drawn to learning about different subjects and how they connect with one another. This major allows me to explore a wide range of disciplines—like communication, history, culture, and philosophy—while developing critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the world around me. I love that it's not limited to just one field; instead, it gives me the flexibility to see life from multiple perspectives and apply that knowledge in meaningful ways.

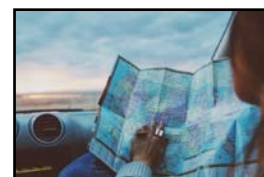
Through this degree, I've learned how everything—from language to social issues—intertwines and shapes the human experience. I believe that being well-rounded helps me grow both intellectually and personally. In the future, I plan to use what



I've learned to serve others, whether through health-care, mentorship, or community work. The Liberal Arts program has not only expanded my curiosity but also strengthened my purpose to make a positive impact wherever God leads me next.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR ILA COURSES

LB 490 Interdisciplinary Portfolio Workshop is an 8-week workshop preparing Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts students for post-graduation success. Students reflect on their academic journey, articulate the value of their interdisciplinary degree to employers, and build a professional portfolio showcasing skills in research, writing, analytical thinking, media, and communication. Graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory with on-line discussions and periodic meetings.





## HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS

## OLIVIA FISKE

As a senior Interdisciplinary Arts Major, I have found the experience to be invaluable to my character and academic journey. I chose this path because I was interested in English, history, art, and creative writing. In exploring all these different avenues, I found even more passions that have shaped my future. One of these is Women's Studies. After I chose a Feminist Theory class in my first semester, I identified as a feminist myself. Not only has this made me a better person and advocate, but it has also led me to the Survivor Advocacy and Foundational Education Center, where I now work and have found family. This one class opened the door to teach freshmen about consent and to continue my journey fighting for survivors on campus. Once I started working at SAFE, I was then recruited to represent them at the Associated Students of Colorado State University. On a personal level, I have lifelong friends through these organizations and have been able to make positive change on campus.

Another class I took that piqued my interest was Forensic Anthropology, which led me to take Osteology. Not only did this class challenge me in ways I didn't know I was capable of, but it also helped me understand how much I care about osteology and the proper care of human remains. I hope that in the future I can work in the museum field and create positive change regarding the bones held by institutions. There are deplorable practices of keeping remains that were illegally stolen from native peoples and used in entertainment. If I can make the places I work more ethical and employ better practices, I will feel satisfied wherever I land.

I am forever thankful for the opportunities I have gained through this program and recommend it for anyone interested!

## JOHN THOMPSON

I'm John and I'm a 57-year-old transfer student junior pursuing Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Photography. I spent eighteen years as a stay-at-home father of two boys with special needs and needed something more. So, in the spring of 2024, I returned to school at FRCC and graduated with a general Associate of Arts at the end of the spring semester this year and transferred here to CSU. My initial reason for choosing the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program was being able to choose my classes. I would like to write (speculative fiction, horror and mysteries mostly), but I'm not interested in an English degree; I was raised by a pair of college English teachers. So, I will be taking as many creative fiction writing classes as I can, and I'll figure the rest out as I go.

I've always been more interested in knowing some of this, a little of that, and so on, rather than trying to specialize in something. That was my original thoughts on choosing the degree, but now that I've started my Junior Seminar class, I've found ILAT to be far more challenging and thought provoking than I had anticipated, which is an additional impetus. In my photo, you can see some of my work from when I was messing around with some friends in Photo II class at FRCC.



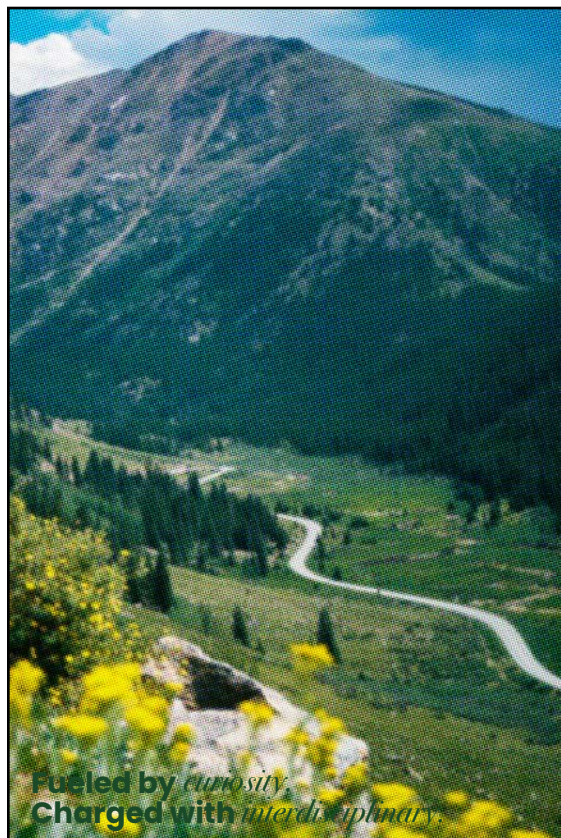
## DEVONTAY TOBE

My name is Devontay Tobe, and I was born and raised in Colorado. I actually just returned to CSU this fall, and during my time away, I feel as though I have grown since last being here. While I was gone, my sense of purpose has shifted. I am actually deeply interested in Public Health and creating systems in which all people can live happy and fulfilling lives. If I were to have told myself that maybe



three or so years ago, I probably would have laughed in my face.

Interdisciplinary Studies as my major truly excites me because it pushes me to think about health from many different perspectives. Public Health to me is really about understanding people and the environments in which they live, while analyzing the history and systems that foster these environments. Being back at CSU feels right, as it helps me feel like I'm finishing something I have started with a renewed purpose.





## HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS &amp; RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH MINDSETS

Cassandra Puletapuai is a doctoral candidate in Education and Human Resource Studies, specializing in Education, Equity, and Transformation. Her background encompasses geosciences, construction technology, and management. Cassandra dances in tap, modern, and Pasifika genres. Her passion for interdisciplinary studies stems in part from her Indigenous worldview, which blends culture, art, and science. In the past, she has used dance communication to tell scientific stories. Cassandra's research promotes STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education and creative practices in higher education to enhance participation among underserved populations, including first-generation and Indigenous groups.



As educators serve as role models and leaders for students, Indigenous educa-

tors make up less than 0.5 percent of the teaching workforce. Cassandra's lived experiences as the only Indigenous person in science and in some dance communities inspired her inquiry into the absence of Indigenous participation, especially at higher levels of educational leadership. Cassandra's dissertation examined the lived experiences of Indigenous women serving as STEM faculty members in higher education. As Indigenous experiences are understood as living knowledge encompassing mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional dimensions, they require interdisciplinary STEAM methods to honor both Indigenous and Western knowledge in creative ways. Therefore, Cassandra's dissertation combined autoethnography, art-based Photovoice, participatory action research, and Indigenous sharing circles and storytelling methods and methodology.

The fusion of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems and the encouragement of interdisciplinary research methods helped uncover the heart of Indigenous values. They revealed how Indigenous women employed creativity to challenge one-dimensional scientific thinking while maintaining their womanhood and Indigeneity values as part of their STEM identity. For example, an Indigenous instructor in an engineering class had the class construct and design a tepee that enriched the science, art, and culture for both the class and students. The creative practice reinforced interdisciplinary concepts and facilitated a co-learning journey. It deems education as a subjective humanizing process, which counters the objective human qualities promoted in some STEM environments.

STEAM in higher education strengthens the humanization of education. This work segues into Cassandra's future STEAM work in higher education to further interdisciplinary mindsets. Cassandra hopes her work will illuminate pathways that nurture intellectual diversity to solve the world's complex problems. She believes that STEAM approaches break down barriers between art and science disciplines, and by intertwining Western Science with Indigenous knowledge, they complement each other in a more humanizing way.



**Fueled by *curiosity*.**  
**Charged with *interdisciplinary*.**

## GREETINGS FROM THE ILA NEWSLETTER INTERN

Hi! My name is Calli Mawdsley, and I am the Fall 2025 Newsletter editor. As someone with an endless amount of questions and an ever-curious mind, it took me a while to find this major. At the beginning of my university journey, all other majors seemed too narrow for my liking. I knew deep down that what I wanted was to explore my curiosities without the boundaries a traditional degree would impose, but I didn't know how to make that path possible. So, being the stubborn and independent young woman I am, I held out hope for finding the right major. Then, like a moth to a flame, I found ILA. It was the solution I was looking for. In the program, I have pursued my curiosity and explored a wide range of topics, enhancing my critical thinking skills.



Though I must admit, when I first joined the program, I had a hard time discussing my major with others. It can be hard when having a non-traditional degree. However, I have learned that the ILA program is something to be proud of. So today, I encourage anyone who may feel lost and scared to talk about the ILA program with their family to do so with their full heart. Let me explain. Whether you know what you want to do after graduation or have no idea where your passions will take you yet, the ILA program gives us all a unique opportunity to be our authentic selves and to make our lives what we want them to be. Taking our major can sometimes require some guts. It can mean taking a chance and going against the grain, even when people tell you you HAVE to have a specific discipline. These reasons and more mean we should be brave enough to own our wonderful degree. Plus, on a personal note, this major has allowed me to explore and create the degree I wanted, as well as the woman I hope to be. All things to be proud of. So yes, I say I have an interdisciplinary arts degree with my whole chest.

If there is one thing I have learned throughout my undergraduate journey, it is that everybody has their own unique path. I am very thankful for ILA allowing me to create mine. Here's to this wonderful major and the various creative opportunities it gives us. Cheers and carpe diem!

