



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS

ADAPTIVE | INDIVIDUALIZED | FLEXIBLE

NEWS | FACULTY | STUDENT STORIES

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to spring, ILA Majors. As always, I hope your semester is progressing satisfactorily. Interdisciplinarity has been on my mind lately. The word itself is increasingly thrown about as one of the directions we (and society) might pursue in our search for new paths as we move further into the 21st century, a century that feels increasingly unpredictable and capricious, with developments and changes so rapid that they leave one a little dizzy. Perhaps the future has always felt this way?



I think about how the emergence of the railroads seemed to turn the world upside down, or, perhaps, the radio did in the early 20th century. In many ways, your degree program is perfectly aligned not only with our future but with any future. Consider the following: Interdisciplinarity as an academic major is perhaps the most future-proof intellectual training a student can pursue, precisely because it refuses to bet on any single vision of what the future will look like. History has repeatedly humbled those who assumed tomorrow's most pressing problems would resemble today's, and yet most traditional majors are built on exactly that assumption — that the tools of economics, or biology, or computer science, will remain the master keys of professional and civic life. I would never argue that our existing disciplinary fields and approaches are not invaluable keys. They are and remain so. However, I do believe an interdisciplinary education, by contrast, trains students in something equally—and increasingly—needed, the capacity to move fluidly between frameworks, to recognize when a problem that looks technical is actually ethical, when a question that looks cultural is actually ecological, and when the right tool hasn't yet been borrowed from the adjacent field. It cultivates intellectual humility alongside intellectual range, teaching students not merely what to think but how to restructure their thinking when the terrain shifts beneath them. In a world defined by cascading crises — climate disruption, artificial intelligence, geopolitical realignment — that skill is not a luxury but a necessity. Interdisciplinary thinkers don't just adapt to an unpredictable future; they are uniquely equipped to help imagine and build a better one. Wasn't it Einstein who said, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." I would only add: We cannot imagine our future with only what has been imagined." Or, as Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. put it: A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions. Yes, putting together things we haven't put together in new ways we haven't yet imagined is exactly what Interdisciplinarity is best at.

COMMENTS FROM CAITLIN, ASC

I recently attended a conference session about skills-based hiring. Skills-based hiring is a strategy that 70% of employers who responded to the National Association of Colleges and Employers 2026 Job Outlook Survey report using. Essentially, employers are no longer simply asking what graduates studied but rather, they're asking what candidates can do, and they want evidence.

I think this is a positive shift for interdisciplinary liberal arts students, but only if you understand how to navigate it.

In skills-based hiring, candidates may be asked to "explain how you would approach this scenario" or complete a writing sample, rather than simply being asked to tell the interviewer about their background.

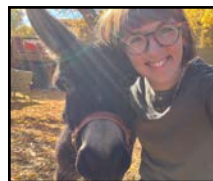
To successfully navigate these types of interviews, candidates are encouraged to think in three steps: (1) **Name it:** Identify a relevant skill. (2) **Prove it:** Discuss how you gained this skill through hands-on experience, such as group projects, campus involvement, internships, part-time employment, study abroad, or research. (3) **Tell it:** Be able to tell a story about how you used this skill to solve a problem.

This is where your interdisciplinary liberal arts degree is a strength. This program is designed to develop transferable skills employers consistently seek, such as critical thinking, communication, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and more. Your coursework—spanning multiple disciplines—gives you a broader toolkit than specialized majors.

However, in-class experiences alone may only take you so far. Experience outside the classroom will help strengthen the "prove it" and "tell it" portions of this selection process. Successful students should be slowly building real-world experience every term, not waiting until senior year.

As your academic success coordinator, I'm not a career counselor. However, we can discuss how your co-curricular experiences are supplementing your in-class experiences during our meetings. Also, I encourage you to utilize CSU's robust career support resources, early and often. If you haven't perused the Career Center website recently, please do so at career.colostate.edu.

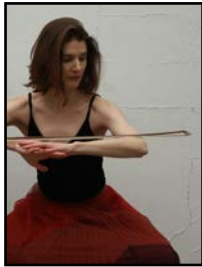
The bottom line: your interdisciplinary liberal arts education lays a powerful foundation. Your job before graduation is to say "yes" to out-of-class opportunities that can be translated into skills. In a skills-based hiring world, the students who succeed won't just have learned broadly, they'll be able to show it.



GETTING TO KNOW ILA FACULTY

A MESSAGE FROM PROF O'TIERNEY

My name is Bryce M. O'Tierney (she/her), and I currently teach 492 in person and 392 & 492 online; I will also teach 490 online this summer and 392 in person this coming fall 2026. 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 greater-than-human. For the past decade, I have composed, recorded, and performed in musical duo *maeve & quinn*, with my twin Maris; commissions and collaborations include Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Steppenwolf Theatre, Poetry Foundation, and Chicago Composers Orchestra.



This spring has brought some exciting musical developments! I am a new performing member with The Realm, a Fort Collins multidisciplinary arts collective; for the first event of the 2026 season, "Keepers of the Earth," I performed violin compositions by composers Raven Chacon (Diné) and Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate (Chickasaw), and improvised in collaboration with Lakota/Nakota storyteller Rose Red Elk. I am also a new violinist-collaborator with The Playground Ensemble, the Rocky Mountain Region's premier new music group; I'll be performing *The Music of The Shining* in March as part of MARATHON, a 20-hour performance program marking The Playground's 20th anniversary. 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 the CSU Spur/Denver campus in April, following its November premiere in Fort Collins. On the writing front: I am the Poetry Scholarship recipient for the 2026 Minnesota Northwoods Writers Conference this June.

COMMENTS FROM JESSIE STEWART, ASC

Joel Uili, philosopher and host of the podcast *The Career Archetypes*, talks a lot about callings to creativity. My friend sent me one of his quotes the other day: "They'll tell you that the arts and humanities aren't practical and then read poetry at funerals and weddings, cry over films, and search for meaning in ancient philosophy. Surviving is one type of practicality, knowing why we bother is another."



For the last decade, I have had the privilege of hearing about what Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts students are into—arts, politics, media, writing—all forms of communication to a deeper understanding of ourselves, each other, and our surroundings. I like this reminder from Uili that liberal artists prompt us all to remember what it means to be human and to live a fulfilled, deeply connected life.

An example of interdisciplinarity from my own life: This summer, I hiked a 14er with some friends, and I saw my first mountain goat. I drew a picture of it, then remembered there was a band called The Mountain Goats, so I listened to a few of their songs, and read a bit on what the Colorado legislature is doing to protect public land, wilderness, and wildlife. A "practical" way to spend a day!

A MESSAGE FROM PROF DOXEY

While my academic background is rooted in English and creative writing (poetry), with an MFA in poetry, I feel that my interests are more closely aligned with interdisciplinary studies.

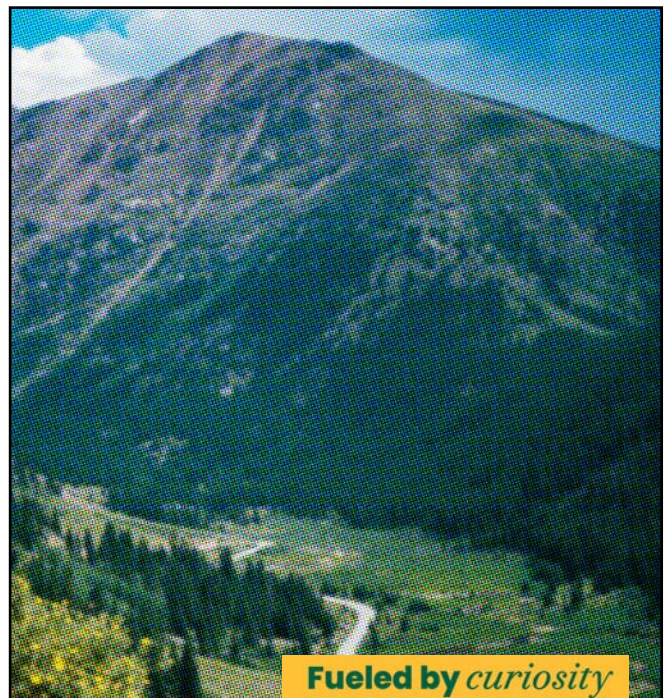


This semester, I'm teaching HONR 193: Imaginative Obsessions & Creative Writing, in which students examine various topics ("obsessions" in the most generative sense) through interdisciplinary lenses. We started this semester reading Ross Gay's *Book of Delights* to exercise our "delight muscle," as Gay puts it, noticing the joy in the daily. Next week, we get the pleasure of having writer Allison Cobb Zoom into our class to share her experience writing *Plastic: An Autobiography*, which is a deeply interdisciplinary look at... plastic. One of the

concepts Cobb employs in the writing and research of *Plastic* is inexpert investigation, an idea I hold dear. There's such an allowance to enter into a subject and look at it through all angles and really tell its story—that anybody can use their research and emotions to tell a true story.

Later this semester, I'll start teaching LB 490, a 1-credit portfolio class that graduating ILAR students take alongside the capstone. It is always a really rewarding class as I get to see students collect, reflect on, and appreciate the culmination of their interdisciplinary liberal arts degrees and their academic and personal accomplishments. In the fall, I'll be teaching the course that is probably the most near and dear to me, HONR 392: Ecopoetry, where we look at the intersection of poetry, science, identity in landscape, and environmental writing.

On a personal note, my recent manuscript, *Unfruitful*, was chosen for the Fledge Poetry Chapbook Award and will be published later this year (available for preorder [here](#)). I'm attaching the announcement because I'm really proud to have my second book of poetry published and because the cover is gorgeous. I have some newer poems published [here in Posit Literary Journal](#), versions of which are part of *Unfruitful*.



GETTING TO KNOW ILA FACULTY

A MESSAGE FROM PROF SABBATH

My name is Karyl Sabbath, and I am fortunate to be teaching the SP26 Liberal Arts Junior Seminar. My regular teaching load is in Communication Studies at CSU, with emphasis on Interpersonal & Organizational Communication, allowing for integration of a wide range of disciplinary knowledge. Importantly, having the opportunity to teach the Junior Seminar course has expanded my teaching and learning efforts with a deliberate, conscious emphasis on Interdisciplinarity. My early education concentrated on Sociology and Psychology, which led to professional development as a substance use counselor. The skills and practices applied within outpatient and inpatient treatment fostered a significant growth in my curiosity to understand how human behavior is interconnected with one's environment, family and social experiences, cultural & political norms, psychological well-being, and perceptions of the world. That curiosity led me to shift to the study of Communication at Ohio University's School of Interpersonal Communication PhD program.



When I was an undergraduate, I often questioned whether my interests spanned a variety of areas of study and wondered if I had a problem with a lack of focus or an inability to commit to one discipline. As my professional and personal life trajectories unfolded, I began to trust my intuition and genuine interests as legitimate reasons to pivot across various areas of formal and informal knowledge. Through my study, practice, and research, my critical thinking progressively grew throughout my life. As a note to all students, I want to share how my excitement for learning was accelerated by integrating subject knowledge, resulting in the wonderful flourishing of thinking, learning, and investigating within an interdisciplinary scope! Interdisciplinarity offers confidence as we integrate multiple lenses in pursuit of understanding ourselves, others, and our world. Enjoy!

A MESSAGE FROM PROF MCGREGOR

My name is Kelly McGregor, and I'm an Academic Success Coordinator and Instructor in the College of Liberal Arts. I advise students in Political Science, International Studies, and



Languages. All three programs require a high level of interdisciplinarity! Think, for example, about how studying Spanish or German isn't just about the vocabulary and grammar, but also about the cultural and historical context of the language and its development. I teach LB 370: Liberal Arts and Meaningful Work, a course designed to help Liberal Arts students begin their post-graduation journey. It's a self-guided Career Education course, and

one of my favorite things about it is that I get to work with and have dialogue with students from all across the spectrum of Liberal Arts programs. The creativity and experience that students have developed as seniors are always impressive. This course may be helpful during your senior year. You will learn how to apply skills and theory from their Liberal Arts degrees to search for meaningful work, to research the job market, and to begin building professional networks.

Additionally, I take first-year students to Ireland for 10 days before they start school at CSU as part of a first-year Study Abroad program. Our trip covers multiple subjects: History, Art, Literature, Politics, Economics, and Culture. This experience encourages students to be open-minded, find interest in multiple disciplines, and become better global citizens.

A MESSAGE FROM PROF MROZIAK

I am drawn to Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts at Colorado State because I believe the most important questions of our time do not stay within a single discipline. Artificial intelligence is not just a technical system. It is cultural, ethical, historical, and deeply human. The liberal arts, to me, are where we learn to hold those dimensions together with care.



My work sits at the intersection of AI, learning design, and social imagination. I have spent my career building bridges between educators, technologists, policy-makers, and communities... always asking not only what AI can do, but also what it should do and for whom. As former director of the EDSAFE AI Alliance, I helped lead national conversations about safe and equitable AI in education and launched the first National AI Literacy Day to turn policy into public learning.

What feels most personal to me, though, is how I approach teaching and design. I care about creating spaces where curiosity is protected, where students can wrestle with complexity without rushing to certainty, and where joy is not seen as separate from rigor. I often invite students to read philosophy alongside code, to examine algorithms through the lens of history and power, and to see themselves as authors of technological futures rather than as passive recipients.

Within Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts, I see myself as both a collaborator and a convener... someone who helps connect conversations across fields while grounding them in questions of justice and human dignity. I am not simply interested in integrating AI into classrooms. I am interested in helping students and colleagues imagine how we might shape technology in ways that reflect our deepest values.

At heart, I am a learning designer who believes that education is an act of care. Colorado State feels like a place where that belief can take root and grow in community.

LB-JTC 456 | DOCUMENTARY FILM AS A LIBERAL ART

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course examines how Documentary Film came to be what it is today and how it functions as an inexhaustible interdisciplinary forum (and vibrant artistic platform) suitable for the diverse set of perspectives and topics represented by the liberal arts disciplines.

Over the semester we shall (1) look at the history of documentary film, (2) survey its development as a political, social, and aesthetic cinematic communicative platform, (3) explore key theoretical concerns faced by documentary filmmakers, (4) employ documentary film as an interdisciplinary platform for examining human situations, while (5) watching 11 incredibly diverse contemporary documentary films.

Instructor: Kevin Folsin
Office: Clark, C 124
Office HRS: Arranged
Times: Class: Tuesday | Thursday, 5 - 5:50 pm
Film Lab: Tuesday, 6 - 8:30 pm
Email: kevin.folsin@colorado.edu

GETTING TO KNOW ILA FACULTY

ILA— A HIGH-WIRE ACT

Interdisciplinary thinking demands a rare and demanding combination of intellectual virtues: the rigorous analytical capacity to understand multiple fields deeply enough to work within them, and the creative audacity to forge unexpected connections between them. Analysis alone is insufficient — a thinker who can dissect a problem through an economic lens, a sociological lens, and a biological lens simultaneously has accomplished something impressive, but the true interdisciplinary leap comes in the synthesizing moment, when those lenses are not merely held side by side but fused into an entirely new way of seeing. That fusion is an act of creativity as much as cognition. It requires the willingness to tolerate ambiguity, to sit with the discomfort of frameworks that don't neatly align, and to trust that something generative lives in the tension between them. This is why interdisciplinary thinkers often produce the most transformative insights in intellectual history — not because they knew more than specialists, but because they were willing to let knowledge from one domain destabilize and illuminate another. The economist who reads anthropology, the engineer who studies philosophy, the ecologist who engages with political theory — each risks confusion, but each also opens a door that the pure specialist never approaches. High-level analysis provides the map; creativity determines whether you follow the established roads or cut across open terrain entirely. Neither is optional. Without analytical rigor, creative connections collapse into mere metaphor, superficial and untested. Without creativity, rigorous analysis becomes a sophisticated way of confirming what was already known. Together, however, they constitute the core of genuine intellectual innovation — the ability to ask questions that a single discipline would never have thought to pose, and to pursue answers that no single methodology could have reached on its own. Interdisciplinary education, at its best, is training in exactly this double movement.



A MESSAGE FROM PROF MEYER

Hello! My name is Andrew Meyer, and I am thrilled to join the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts community this fall as an Assistant Teaching Professor at Colorado State University. As an interdisciplinary artist, printmaker, and educator, my work and pedagogical approach have always lived at the intersection of historical tradition and modern innovation.



My foundation is rooted in non-toxic, alternative printmaking methods, photography, and philosophy, but my current artistic research explores the rapidly evolving dialogue between emerging technologies and material craft. Specifically, I investigate the use of Generative AI visual "hallucinations" as source material for traditional printmaking etching methods, translating these digital outputs into analog intaglio printmaking resists on copper plates using an Eco-UV printer. This process of pulling the digital ether down into the tangible, post-digital printed world is a central theme in both my studio practice and my classroom.

I am a firm believer that an interdisciplinary approach provides the perfect framework for navigating today's complex landscape. In my teaching, I merge design thinking with art practices, encouraging students to use creative methodologies for personal and professional "Life Design." This semester, I am teaching IU174: A Creatively Examined Life, alongside LB 393: Hand, Mind, Machine, a course that dives deep into the relationship between Generative AI and material craft, and the honors seminar HONR 193: The New Prometheus, which explores the broader implications of AI on human creativity. Through these courses—alongside previous curriculum designs like "The Iterative Self: Prototyping Through Print" and "Narrative Architectures: Binding the Future"—my ultimate goal is to help students explore their narrative identities and prototype their futures through hands-on making.

Before coming full-time to CSU, I served as a Printmaking Professor and Area Coordinator of Printmaking and Art Foundations. Making the shift to the interdisciplinary programs here has been an exciting new chapter, allowing me to fully embrace the collaborative ethos that drives my work.

When I'm not in the studio experimenting or in the classroom, I'm usually enjoying life down in Loveland with my wife, our daughter, and our cat. Whether we are exploring the local community or just enjoying a quiet weekend at home, I'm always looking for new ways to stay curious and inspired by the world around me. I am so looking forward to connecting with the students and faculty in the ILA program—please don't hesitate to reach out or stop by to talk about art, technology, or design thinking!



THE CASE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS: A DEGREE BUILT FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET

In an era defined by rapid technological change and increasingly complex global challenges, the interdisciplinary studies degree is often underestimated—and that is a mistake. Far from being a vague or unfocused credential, it may be one of the most strategically intelligent choices a student can make when entering today's workforce. The core strength of interdisciplinary studies lies in what it produces: graduates who can think across boundaries. Where a narrowly trained specialist might view a problem through a single lens, an interdisciplinary graduate brings together frameworks from multiple fields—psychology and business, technology and ethics, healthcare and policy—to generate more nuanced and effective solutions. This is not a soft advantage; it is precisely what employers are demanding. A survey by Hart Research Associates found that nearly all employers — 95% — prefer hiring college graduates with skills that enable them to contribute to workplace innovation, and that 93% agreed that a candidate's ability to think critically and solve complex problems is more relevant than their undergraduate major.

Critics sometimes point to lower starting salaries as a weakness of the degree, and there is some truth to that in certain fields. But this misses the longer arc. Because interdisciplinary graduates develop adaptable, transferable skill sets, they tend to grow in their careers rather than be locked into a single trajectory. As industries evolve and new roles emerge — ones that didn't exist a decade ago — the ability to learn, pivot, and synthesize across domains becomes an enormous competitive advantage. Ultimately, the question is not whether an interdisciplinary degree can get you a job. The evidence is clear that it can, and often in remarkable places.

The career outcomes back this up. Graduates of these programs are not confined to a narrow industry or role. They go on to work in education, healthcare, business, government, media, and technology. Workforce data show that 36% of graduates of interdisciplinary studies enter management positions, and a NACE survey found that over 90% of employers identify critical thinking, communication, and adaptability as top hiring priorities, all hallmarks of an interdisciplinary education. 93% say critical thinking and communication matter more than a candidate's actual major. 95% prioritize hiring for innovation-enabling skills. 82% want more emphasis on critical thinking in colleges. 80% believe all students should have a liberal arts education. 74% would recommend a liberal education to a young person they know, and 83% stress that e-Portfolios are incredibly beneficial when evaluating candidates.

ILA NEWS

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAVEL

Studying and traveling abroad has swept through academics, and for good reason. It allows students to travel to a foreign place, maybe for the first time in their lives, while remaining grounded in a structured academic experience. As ILA students, studying abroad gives you the opportunity and privilege to actualize much of what you've learned in the classroom, particularly multiculturalism and individualism.

In the spring of 2023, I completed an educational internship at a small organic farm and agritourism estate, Tenuta di Spannocchia, in Siena, Italy. I was nineteen years old, and I traveled to the boonies of Tuscany by myself. I felt extremely naive as I was overwhelmed by the Italian language, traditions, and customs. I felt much like a sponge. I learned extensively about many different facets of agriculture, including fermentation science, apiculture, permaculture, and social influence. The community I stepped into included an influx of young professionals passionate about agricultural niches. I held these stories and people closely. It was the most inspired moment of my life.



In the summer of 2024, I completed a study abroad program through Purpan Engineering School in Toulouse, France. The program fulfilled academic requirements in food biochemistry. In class, we made cheese, bread, and beer, working through

each process hands-on. Outside the classroom, we toured farms across southern France that played a major role in the region's economy. Additionally, students lived with tight-knit host families. The rigor of the program and the complexities of each discipline pushed me toward independence. I was my only motivation to engage with and observe a foreign culture in a foreign place. This was the most provoking moment of my life.

Furthermore, studying abroad through a university program versus traveling abroad through external or independent experiences can lead to vastly different opportunities and forms of growth. While studying abroad provides structure, mentorship, and academic grounding, traveling abroad often demands a different kind of self-direction and openness.

Ultimately, both study and travel abroad can be unpredictable and emotionally challenging. Even so, they remain deeply rich in self-actualization, resilience, and cultural immersion. They require a turning outward—an intentional shift away from the self and toward ways of thinking, living, and understanding that challenge the American repertoire. This experience is not about absorption, but about a willingness to be reshaped: to be proven wrong, and to recognize that there are other ways to exist. I am grateful to every academic and specialized mentor I encountered abroad, as each contributed to the mosaic that is interdisciplinarity.

DOCUMENTARY FILM AS A LIBERAL ART

Documentary Film as a Liberal Art (LB 456) examines contemporary documentary cinema as a powerful medium for exploring the human experience. This interdisciplinary course analyzes excellent modern documentary 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 contemporary films from the US and around the world. Through class discussions, podcasts, and analytical essays, you'll develop skills to interpret film as both an artistic expression and a socio-cultural artifact. This course emphasizes active learning and collaborative exploration of contemporary issues through cinema. Yes, it's like going to the movies every week.



ACT HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

Again, ILA was the proud sponsor of the ACT Human Rights Film Festival, which returned to Colorado State University for its 11th year, April 9–12, 2026. This powerful event showcased the complexity and beauty of human life, celebrated resilience, and championed human rights in Fort Collins. Produced by CSU's Department of



Communication Studies, ACT (Awaken, Connect, Transform) brought together provocative documentaries, filmmaker Q&As, and community conversations. There were four unforgettable days of bold films, big ideas, and powerful conversations featuring brave voices from around the world, speaking truth with vulnerability and carrying stories of resistance, resilience, courage, and the human will to make our world better. International films from around the world were screened, covering topics such as emancipatory art, grassroots environmental action, and the struggles deaf couples face in their ordinary—yet exceptional—desire to live normal lives.

WHY INTERDISCIPLINARITY NOW? | THREE REASONS

- **The first reason:** the challenges facing individuals and societies have grown too complex for any single disciplinary lens, is perhaps the most convincing. Complexity itself is not a modern invention; human existence has always been layered and multifaceted. What is distinctly modern, however, is the degree of connectivity linking local realities to global systems. The observation that "global problems are now local problems" is a particularly striking formulation. Climate change, economic disparity, and disease are no longer abstract, distant concerns—they arrive at our doorsteps, shaped by forces that no single discipline can fully map or address. This framing effectively dismantles any lingering perception that interdisciplinarity is simply an academic trend, positioning it instead as a practical response to a transformed world.
- **The second reason:** higher education itself is increasingly embracing interdisciplinary approaches — offers valuable historical context. We can trace the emergence of programs such as Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies as evidence of a broader institutional shift that has been building since the mid-twentieth century. This historical grounding strengthens the argument considerably, demonstrating that the turn toward interdisciplinarity is neither sudden nor arbitrary, but the result of decades of intellectual and institutional evolution. We urge caution that simply drawing on multiple disciplines does not automatically constitute interdisciplinarity — a point that adds important nuance and prevents the term from becoming diluted.
- **The third reason:** interdisciplinarity equips students with transferable career skills — is the most practical strand of the argument, and arguably the one most relevant to undergraduate readers. By linking interdisciplinarity thinking to skills such as analytical reasoning, communication, and problem-solving, the authors bridge the often-perceived gap between academic learning and professional readiness.

Conclusion: interdisciplinarity is not simply a response to academic fragmentation, but a forward-looking framework suited to a world defined by complexity, connectivity, and rapid change.

HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS

ELLA MCCARTY, SENIOR

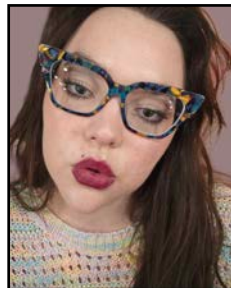
My name is Ella McCarty, and I transferred to CSU in my third year. I was on track to major in business and felt very unfulfilled. I knew I wanted to create my own business and work for myself, but accounting and finance were not allowing my creative side to flourish. I decided to transfer to an ILA major and minor in business. That way, I can still take classes and learn about entrepreneurship while also focusing more on the marketing and creative aspects I love. It has been amazing so far. I love my professors, and the major has allowed me to focus on my career goals while giving me a bit of creative freedom back. I am very passionate about making people feel good about themselves and in their skin, so I plan to become a medical esthetician. I want to start my own business and use my entrepreneurial knowledge to get there. I am also very passionate about traveling and want to create my own schedule to make time for it. I would recommend the ILA major to anyone who isn't exactly sure where they want to end up, or to people who want to study a subject in a specific way rather than how the major's curriculum is structured. It has allowed me to study marketing, business, and other subjects I'm interested in, helping me create a well-rounded schedule. It has made my experience at CSU enjoyable, and I am proud to graduate with an ILA degree.



CALLI MAWDSLEY, SENIOR

Hi, my name is Calli Mawdsley, and I am a fourth-year ILA student. I am from a small town in Iowa called Algona, and I have enjoyed experiencing the Coloradoan life since moving here 2 years ago. I actually first moved here for the fashion program, but then discovered ILA, where the minute I heard about it, I knew it was the major for me.

You see, my interests have always been all across the board, varying from agriculture to earth science to the humanities. However, the humanities have always held a special place in my heart, and to learn that I could study all of them in this degree path was an immense joy for me. I have focused my education on Sociology, English, and Visual Arts, while also dabbling in philosophy and the performing arts. I know that sounds like a lot (and it is), but it has allowed me to learn in various ways, giving me a versatile background to use and apply in my future career. Besides giving me the opportunity to explore all my interests, this degree has also given me an invaluable set of problem-solving skills and the ability to think critically. I have learned how to connect, properly articulate, and work through complicated, humanitarian issues that call for an interdisciplinary mindset. An ability that has allowed me to not only explore my interest in the humanities, but also how the humanities are connected to the other interests that I mentioned earlier. Overall, as I near the end of my college journey, I know these problem-solving and critical thinking skills will take me far in life, no matter what path I choose. I am thankful for the well-rounded education.



BRENDEN ADAMS, SENIOR

When I first came to CSU, I honestly wasn't completely sure what I wanted to do after graduating. I knew I had a lot of different interests, but none of them felt specific enough to commit to a single major right away. That's a big reason why I chose the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program. It gave me the flexibility to explore different areas while still building a degree that made sense for the things I care about.

One class that really stood out to me was an advertising course taught by Dr. Johnson. It ended up being one of my favorite classes during my time at CSU. The class opened my eyes to the world of marketing and creative communication in a way I hadn't really thought about before. What started as just an interesting elective actually ended up having a real impact on my career path.

Because of that class, I got the opportunity to start working in social media management. That experience helped me build real skills and opened doors that I probably wouldn't have expected when I first arrived at CSU. It also helped me realize that I really enjoy the marketing and sales side of business, especially when it involves building brands and connecting with people.

Looking ahead, I'm planning to continue working in marketing and sales, ideally in roles where creativity and strategy work together. In many ways, the ILA program helped me discover that direction by giving me the freedom to explore different interests until something really clicked.

Looking back, choosing ILA was one of the best decisions I made during my time at CSU.



AVERY CANO, SENIOR

Hi, I'm Avery! I'm a graduating senior in the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program with a minor in Ethnic Studies. I was drawn to the ILA degree for its unique blend of broad disciplinary exposure and an interdisciplinary approach to complex issues — a combination that's both intellectually rich and professionally valuable.

I've already seen this approach pay off in my work in the philanthropy sector, where I draw on insights from finance, political science, sociology, and beyond to tackle challenges like nonprofit fundraising and responsive grantmaking. These experiences have reinforced my belief that the most meaningful problems rarely fit neatly into a single discipline.

Looking ahead, I plan to channel my ILA degree and Ethnic Studies minor into a career in law — whether that takes the form of policymaking, community organizing, and coalition building, or litigation. While my exact path is still taking shape, I'm confident that my interdisciplinary foundation will guide me toward the role where I can make the greatest impact.



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

HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS

ELLIOT DENNY, FRESHMAN

Hi, I'm a social animal involved with ILA. Probably, that's true about you, too, reader—and because it's true, maybe you're thrown because I broke the conventions we thought we had for this letter. I gave you no name or biography (I will later). I'm sorry. For now, I want to make a point about both of us. About being human and being a student.

Last semester, when I first got here, a cycle of voices repeated the same advice. The chorus chanted: GO TO OFFICE HOURS! NOT ENOUGH FIRST-YEARS GO! I did, and here's (one of) my takeaways: learning is a relational exercise. How did I conclude that? I've been to most of my professors' offices at least once, from Eddy's third floor to the Biology Building, some so many times I've lost count. Usually, I like to let the conversation find us. Sometimes it's class, other times it's religion, interpersonal skills, grammar, anxiety, or literature. I couldn't call my professors peers, but I can call a few friends.

Early on, when my anxiety butchered me, one teacher had me write down each new experience I was having here, and it helped clear my head. And by the end of class, I wrote them snarky poetry for fun instead. Another professor helped me remember why I write at all. Yet another read me novels. My professors got to know me and meet me where I'm at, and I bettered my ability to communicate with them and make the most of class.

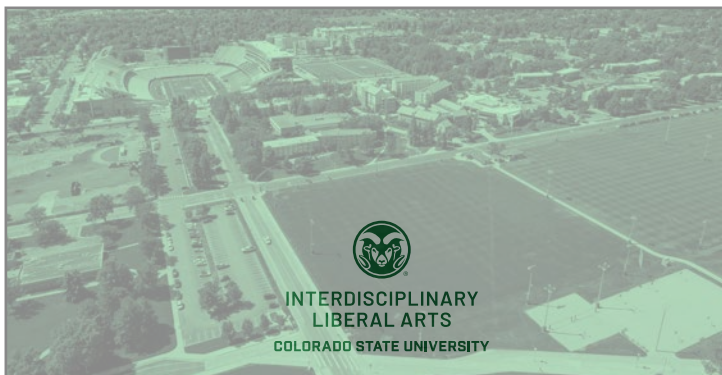
And that's what I mean when I say in college, learning is a relational exercise. You're not sitting alone with a textbook or web page. Why have a teacher if there's no benefit to being a social animal?

So, what was my point, reader? That our major's greatest strength is connection. Yes, connection across disciplines, but more importantly, connections between people. My best learning happens when everyone comes into teaching and learning as people. Thank you, Caitlin Kotnik, Maci Parratto, and the whole ILA team, for giving me the opportunity to write for our newsletter. And thank you, my professors, namely slp, Andrea, & Dr. Michael because I've been to your offices the most. The brief bio: howdy! Name's Eliot (He/ Él), I'm a first-year ILA major who spends his time pestering, reading, skateboarding, hoarding music, working out, writing, and drawing.



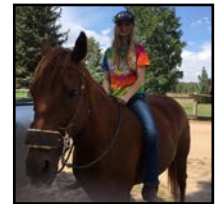
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR ILA COURSES

LB 490 Interdisciplinary Portfolio Workshop is an 8-week online workshop that begins mid-semester. This course prepares 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 online discussions and periodic online discussions.



CHARISSA MALONE, JUNIOR

Here at CSU, I have been working on my interdisciplinary Liberal Arts degree major with a horticulture minor. I transferred to CSU after completing my Associate of Arts degree at FRCC. I have changed my major a few times, but I settled on this combination because I have noticed that art and the natural world fit together like a puzzle. The natural world inspires us, so we create art from it, and from the art, we are inspired to seek out the natural world, whether for enjoyment or to satisfy curiosity and learn more. I have probably taken almost half of the horticulture classes that CSU and FRCC offer, which has given me knowledge of what is physically and chemically happening within plants and/or the soil, and how to respond to achieve a desired result. I have used this knowledge to create my own slices of nature through terrariums and aquascapes. Terrariums and aquascapes allow the creator to build a controlled environment to display in their home, office, etc. You are also rewarded by watching and learning about the inhabitants within these mini natural landscapes, which can range from watching your plants grow/multiply to seeing fish feel comfortable enough to reproduce in the environment you have created. It's almost like cutting a brick out of nature and placing it in your home, so that you can observe it whenever you feel like it. By valuing nature in my home, I feel more obligated to ensure it is protected and safe from human corruption in the wild as well. Although I began my college journey on a more farming-focused approach, I have been reminded about what gives me passion, and that is our beautiful earth and the diversity it offers living things to experience, and I am determined to do what I can to preserve, protect, and regenerate nature wherever and however I can.



THE THEORY OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Scholar William Newell argues that interdisciplinary study is justified specifically by the existence of complex systems—phenomena composed of many components linked by nonlinear relationships. Unlike simple or complicated systems, complex systems produce self-organizing behavioral patterns that cannot be fully understood from any single disciplinary perspective. Because each academic discipline examines only one "facet" or sub-system of a larger complex reality, no single discipline can adequately capture the whole. Interdisciplinary study draws insights from multiple disciplines and integrates them into a more comprehensive understanding of the system's overall pattern. Newell outlines a structured process: identifying relevant disciplines, developing disciplinary insights, resolving conflicting assumptions and terminology, creating common ground, and ultimately synthesizing a new understanding. This integration mirrors the self-organizing nature of complex systems themselves. The theory applies across the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, providing a unified theoretical rationale for why and how interdisciplinary inquiry should be conducted.

HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS

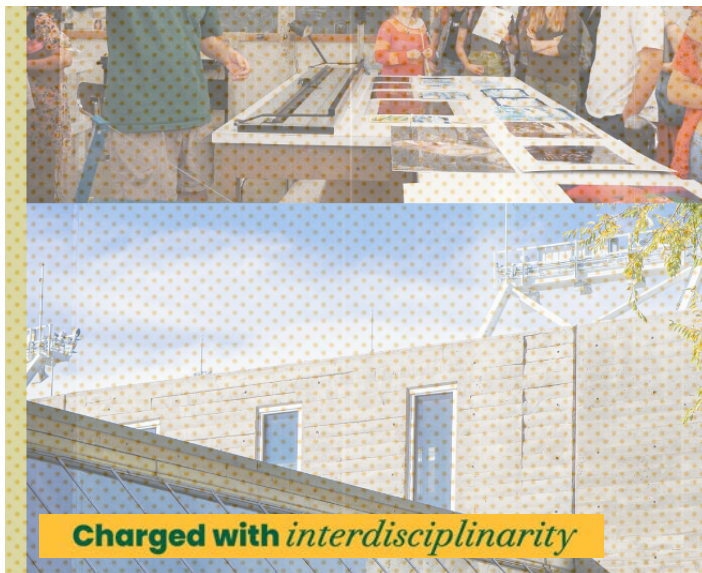
CONNOR KNAUER, SENIOR

My name is Connor Knauer. I'm a senior in the ILA major, and my path in choosing this major hasn't been the most typical. I actually started out undeclared in my major with a business minor, and then went into agricultural business and communication. After joining this major, I really didn't feel connected to the classes or my peers. I asked some of my friends about what they were learning in their classes to gain a better understanding of other majors. About sophomore year, I decided I wanted to switch to something more interesting to me.

While I've kept my business small, it's always been difficult for me to decide what I'm really passionate about when it comes to long-term goals. I've always wanted to start my own business, specifically in the snowboarding/skiing market, but I didn't want to limit my classes to just business and entrepreneurial classes. Instead, I wanted to find a major that would help me better understand human behavior and teach me about many different areas of life and careers. Switching to and soon receiving the ILA degree has been great for me. I finally feel like I'm on the right path for my goals, and I can use everything I'm learning in practice every day.



With such a well-rounded degree, I feel like I can really learn about and understand people, as well as explore other areas where I can improve. What I really enjoy is incorporating my long-term goals into what I'm learning currently. The range of classes I get to take is really amazing, and again, really helps me learn multiple things within one degree, instead of focusing on one thing for one degree. That said, I never feel bored or burnt out in my classes. Some great classes I've had the chance to take include organizational communication, journalism and media, and business, among others. The ILA major has really helped me to become a more well-rounded student and person, and I'm really proud to graduate this May with this degree. I plan to use it in the future to better understand my potential clients and my relationships with others, becoming a more well-rounded individual overall.



Charged with *interdisciplinarity*

ALEX HISE, SENIOR

I decided to major in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts after returning to CSU from a three-year break from school. Over the course of those three gap years, I gained a great deal of valuable life experience, spending time working, traveling, and generally exploring my personal curiosities and passions. I traveled through Europe and South America and lived and worked in Durango, Colorado, where I am from, as well as in Denver and New York City. Each of these places exposed me to important insights about culture, history, politics, languages, philosophy, and countless other topics that ultimately inspired my return to school. Still unsure of a clear future path when I returned, ILA felt like a logical progression and continuation of the kind of holistic learning I had engaged in while reading, writing, working, and traveling during my time away from school. Additionally, I was considering law as a viable career path and felt that ILA would provide the opportunities and resources to explore that interest.



Overall, it has been a great privilege to study Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts at CSU over the past three years. Although the major is unconventional and may not translate directly into a career path as many other CSU programs do, I believe I have received an incredibly valuable education that will undoubtedly serve me moving forward. The self-directed nature of the major has allowed me to explore many different subjects in depth that are personally meaningful to me. This has not only challenged me as a student and strengthened my skills as a critical thinker and communicator, but it has also encouraged my growth and understanding as a human being living in the world. As the job market and the world more broadly become increasingly uncertain, these skills have prepared me well to adapt to change and draw connections between seemingly disparate topics.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CLA COURSES

If you're looking for a relevant, hands-on English course that is geared toward your interests and major, **E375: Mindfulness Practices and Literacy Tools for Healing a Changing World** is it! You'll be immersed in a centuries-old conversation on mindfulness that is more relevant than ever, given today's challenges. The interdisciplinary course is rooted in compassion for self and others; geared toward justice, community, and intentional social action; and supported by neuroscientific research. Check out the syllabus at <https://tinyurl.com/2rsebzy2>. All majors are welcome!

HEARING FROM ILA MAJORS & RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

NESSA PAUSE, SENIOR

If we haven't met, my name is Nessa. I am a senior undergraduate student in ILA and Women and Gender Studies dedicated to intersectional, decolonial feminist praxis through community, anticapitalist resistance, and lifelong learning. My experiences in the ILA and WGS programs have radically shaped my passion for helping people and understanding how the world works. I came into college as an ILA major because I have always been a multi-passionate person. I didn't want to choose just one interest to become my career, because I knew I would never actually do just one thing. Through ILA,



I found Women and Gender Studies, made my way through Ethnic Studies (at the time they were still separate), Sociology, and Technical Theatre (Set Design concentration heyyy), and came out the other side a completely changed person. I learned about the world through different lenses and disciplines, while having the space to form my own thoughts and analyses of their meaning to me. ILA and WGS taught me a radically different way of thinking about the world. And it turns out, after you peek behind the curtain, you never really unsee what has been there the whole time. Seeing the world in systems and cycles helped me understand the why behind every issue, and more importantly, taught me that all the issues I was looking at were connected by the same whys. Recently, I have been thinking a lot about my role in the world after I graduate in May. Now that I am equipped with an education and a fancy sheet of paper, graduating into the "real world" feels... scary. Understatement of the year. But I love this work, and I am dedicated to finding a way to live by my politics, my art, and what fulfills my soul. After graduation, I plan to continue my undergraduate research in Feminist Masculinities— as in, how do feminists bring men in as critical allies to the struggle toward liberation— and dedicate more time to creating art, community, and healing my mental, spiritual, and psychological wounds (which come from surviving the horrors, in general). Here I'll share my WGS Capstone project, the Feminist Workbook, my most honest theoretical-praxis-artistic creation to date. It encompasses many of the lessons, reflections, connections, pieces of literature, elders, and guides that I have encountered and internalized throughout my time in the WGS and ILA programs. I am not on social media, but you can find me on Substack! Thanks for reading.



GREETINGS FROM THE ILA NEWSLETTER INTERN

Hi all. My name is Maci Parratto and I am this term's ILA Newsletter editor. Thank you to everyone who reads, and an even bigger thank you to those who contributed their writing—it's a testament to the breadth and diversity of our program.



I added ILA to my horticulture major to deepen my understanding of the social and environmental implications of agriculture as well as the industries that sustain it. I am interested in what it takes to re-illustrate human connections to agriculture. Immersed in the study of sociology, philosophy, and ethics, I came to feel an ongoing responsibility to question how agriculture organizes our relationships to land, labor, and one another. I bear this responsibility now, as should you, or any aspiring agriculturists. But I could not have come to this conclusion on my own; my ILA major was instrumental in demonstrating that science, particularly agriculture, cannot occur in isolation. Through courses in environmental ethics, food sovereignty, and sociological research, I have developed a crucial awareness of how agriculture shapes communities, environments, and personhood, and vice versa. Liberal arts engagement means investigating intersections; it means building bridges across differences, towards understanding. In both my studies and my community, this unique academic experience has fostered an attentive and merciful awareness.

I am thrilled to be graduating this May and plan to further explore agricultural education, localized agriculture, and informal art education. One of my greatest loves during my time at CSU has been working as an informal art teacher for Wild Roots Studio. I stepped into this work before declaring my ILA major and before ever working with elementary school kids, at a time when I quietly questioned what I was capable of. Teaching and being taught by elementary school children have helped me grow through reciprocity, revealing leadership as something shared. Reservations I had long kept close to my chest were confronted, prompting me to reconsider who an educator should be and the kind of presence and confidence they should carry. These sheltered ideas began to shatter through the exploratory virtues of art education and the charismas of childhood, reshaping how I understand what it means to teach and to learn.



As I prepare to leave my undergraduate studies behind, I am challenged to reconsider the walls of what should or should not be—the rights, wrongs, and prescribed paths that often misguide our perceptions of personhood and career. ILA has fostered an intrinsic curiosity within me, encouraging me to sit with uncertainty and grapple with familiar frameworks. In doing so, I have learned to remain open to new ways of becoming and understanding.