

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

The nationally recognized Interdisciplinary Studies major promotes the educational goals of Christian liberal arts learning, emphasizing the importance of becoming a whole human being who can integrate knowledge from various disciplines and express it with critical understanding, creative skill, and redemptive purpose. Students who become IDS majors complete their undergraduate education in an unconventional way, designing a unique “program of study” (POS). Each POS integrates selected coursework from various disciplines.

An IDS major must submit a final version of their unique POS that specifies upper-divisional course work from any two or three of the College’s existing academic majors. This POS must be approved by the IDS program director and IDS Faculty Committee. Once approval has been given, the POS may not be altered by the student without the express written approval of the IDS program director. The POS should be informed by the student’s “guiding directives,” which serve to clarify the rationale for the IDS major’s integrative work. These guiding directives are as follows:

1. examining a worthwhile “wicked problem”,
2. asking a “vital question” pertaining to the problem, and
3. exploring a theme of “sticky ideas” related to the problem.

These guiding directives establish the basis for the student’s choice of courses in their POS. Courses selected for the POS must be thematically congruous and reflect the ideal of a coherent, integrated whole. The culmination of the IDS major’s POS will be the IDS research project, which will require the student to complete qualitative or quantitative research writing on a topic related to their specific POS. This final project will be presented to peers and evaluated by two faculty members knowledgeable about the topic. IDS majors focus their projects on key issues pertaining to the arts, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. Certificates such as HNGR are often included.

Interested students may apply to the IDS program after attaining 30 credit hours; no student may apply after the fourth week of the fourth semester prior to graduation. All applicants must complete a three-part application comprising an academic self-assessment, short-answer questions, a tentative POS with courses approved by faculty designates from each major represented, and three brief essays. The completed application will then be submitted to the IDS office coordinator in advance of the scheduled deadline (which is two weeks before the end of each quad) with enough time to schedule a personal interview with the IDS program director before the deadline date. The application will then be evaluated by the IDS Faculty Committee, comprising the IDS director and 9-10 faculty members across the disciplines. Following a review of their application, students will be informed of their standing. Candidates should understand that the application process is rigorous, the IDS program is selective, and that they are only allowed to apply twice to the program.

Students who complete an Interdisciplinary Studies major are granted a Bachelor of Arts degree unless they request a Bachelor of Science degree and meet the following criteria:

- If the student chooses the two-discipline option, one of the disciplines must be in a field that offers a B.S. degree.
- If the student chooses the three-discipline option, two of the disciplines must be in a field that offers a B.S. degree.

Faculty

Director, Jeffry C. Davis

IDS Faculty Member, Robert Bishop

Programs

- Interdisciplinary Studies Major (<https://catalog.wheaton.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/interdisciplinary-studies/interdisciplinary-studies-major/>)
- Extended Studies in Major Endorsement: Interdisciplinary Studies (<https://catalog.wheaton.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/interdisciplinary-studies/extended-studies-in-major-endorsement-interdisciplinary-studies/>)
- General Studies Endorsement for Fourth-Year Majors in Interdisciplinary Studies (<https://catalog.wheaton.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/interdisciplinary-studies/general-studies-endorsement-for-fourth-year-majors-in-interdisciplinary-studies/>)

Courses

Interdisciplinary Studies Major Courses

IDS 291. Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies. (2 Credits)

An orientation to the increasingly important work of interdisciplinary thinking, this course is designed to encourage students to become holistic explorers of knowledge and to see the interdependent aspects of all academic disciplines and courses within a liberal arts college.

IDS 371. Interdisciplinary Research: Methods and Design. (4 Credits)

This course is for approved IDS majors, facilitating preliminary work on integrative research projects, which will be qualitative, quantitative, or creative, depending upon each student’s program of study (POS). IDS majors will acquire an understanding of the representative research methods of their chosen academic disciplinary areas, along with the assumptions made about the nature of knowledge in each discipline, write a proposal including the tentative thesis and organizational design of their chosen project. They will conduct a topical literature review, gathering and annotating a body of research in preparation for their capstone course. In addition, they will examine their respective “wicked problems,” “vital questions,” and “sticky ideas,” characteristic of their training in interdisciplinary research methods. This course is required of all IDS majors and is only offered in the fall. It should be taken in the student’s junior year. Prerequisite: IDS 291.

IDS 494. Senior Seminar. (4 Credits)

This capstone course provides the interdisciplinary studies major the opportunity for integration by means of interaction with other IDS majors. The seminar requires full participation of students through daily reading, writing, speaking, and listening—conducted according to a central theme and common texts, drawing upon the students’ varied academic experiences. An integrative research project is mandatory—one that is qualitative, quantitative, or creative, depending upon each student’s program of study. Required of all IDS majors, and only offered in the spring semester, it should be taken just prior to graduation. Prerequisite: IDS 371.

General Education: SHAR

IDS 495. Independent Study. (2 Credits)

A regimen of reading scholarly articles and writing abstract reviews is typical; however, this course also provides the IDS major with the opportunity for research to meet the individual's needs and interests, as approved by the Interdisciplinary Studies director. IDS majors are strongly encouraged to take the IDS independent study prior to the IDS Senior Seminar, providing solid preparation for the final IDS project.

IDS 496. Internship. (2 to 8 Credits)

Graded pass/fail. Prerequisite: junior or senior standing within the Interdisciplinary Studies major.