

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 (personal or pre-set) integrates selected coursework from various disciplines.

For the personal option, the IDS major must submit a final version of the program of study that specifies upper-divisional course work from any two or three of the College’s existing academic majors, which must be approved by the IDS program director and IDS Faculty Committee. Thereafter, the program of study may not be altered by the student without the expressed written approval of the IDS program director. The program of study should be informed by the student’s “guiding directives,” which serve to clarify the rationale for the IDS major’s integrative work. The guiding directives include:

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.

The guiding directives establish the basis for the student’s choice of courses listed in the program of study. Courses selected for the program of study must be thematically congruous and reflect the ideal of a coherent, integrated whole. The culmination of the IDS major’s program of study will be the IDS research project, which will require the student to complete qualitative or quantitative research and writing on a topic related to the specified program of study. This final project will be completed in the IDS Senior Seminar, presented to peers, and evaluated by two faculty members knowledgeable about the topic. IDS majors often focus their projects on central issues pertaining to the arts, social sciences (including urban studies), humanities, natural sciences, HNGR, communication, modern culture, social policy, and the health professions, to name a few.

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 comprised of a questionnaire (including student personality profile, short answer questions, and tentative program of study, with courses approved by faculty designates from each of the majors represented), a personal interview with the IDS program director, and three brief essays. The completed application will then be submitted to the IDS administrative assistant by the scheduled deadline (two weeks before the end of each quad) and evaluated by the IDS Faculty Committee, represented by the IDS director and various faculty across the disciplines. Students will then be informed of their standing. Candidates should understand that the application process is rigorous, and the IDS program is selective. Students are allowed to apply only 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/>)

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 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 291.

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.