

Interdisciplinary Studies Major

Revised: 06/2008

The Interdisciplinary Studies major is an alternative to the traditional majors and other upper-class options regularly available to students in the School of Arts and Sciences. Its purpose is to provide students with the opportunity to devise a coherent course of study with the breadth and depth appropriate to an Arts and Sciences major that is either (1) designed to lead to competence in a recognized discipline or sub discipline not now officially recognized as a major in the School of Arts and Sciences or (2) focused on a significant theme or group of problems whose understanding would require a multidisciplinary yet integrated curriculum.

Regulations

- 1) Each interdisciplinary studies major should consist of at least 42 credits of work earned in courses from at least two Arts and Sciences departments. The major should aim at integrated and cumulative learning. To this end, each major must have the following characteristics:
 - a) At least 21 credits must be earned from courses numbered 1000 or above;
 - b) Courses must be arranged in one, two, or three clusters or thematic groupings;
 - c) Each cluster must contain a minimum of 12 credits.
- 2) A W-course approved by the faculty sponsors must be completed as part of the major.
- 3) Up to 12 credits of independent study, directed reading, directed research, undergraduate teaching, and internships may be counted toward the major.
- 4) Except in special circumstances, no proposal for an interdisciplinary studies major that contains non-Arts and Sciences courses will be approved if the intent is to use the interdisciplinary studies major as the sole major. If the interdisciplinary studies major will be the second major, up to six non-Arts and Sciences courses may be utilized. Students should note Arts and Sciences regulations regarding non-Arts and Sciences courses.
- 5) A student pursuing the interdisciplinary studies major is exempt from the School of Arts and Science's related area requirement.
- 6) If the interdisciplinary major is a second major, up to 12 credits, if appropriate, may be counted for both majors.
- 7) Every student pursuing interdisciplinary studies major must have an advisory committee consisting of two full time Arts and Sciences faculty members from two different departments. The responsibilities of the advisory committee shall be as follows:
 - a. Approve the student's interdisciplinary studies major proposal;
 - b. Approve changes to the proposal;
 - c. Provide academic advising to the student at least once per term;
 - d. Certify completion of the major to the Office of the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies in the student's senior year.
- 8) Every student pursuing the interdisciplinary studies major must have his/her registration approved and signed by one member of his/her advisory committee.
- 9) All interdisciplinary studies major proposals must be submitted to the Director of Advising for final review and approval.
- 10) A student should declare the interdisciplinary studies major in the second term of the sophomore year or the first term of the junior year (i.e. before completion of 75-degree credits).
- 11) The following additional requirements apply:
 - a. A minimum 2.0 GPA must be maintained for all interdisciplinary studies course work;
 - b. Students may achieve honors in interdisciplinary studies by earning a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the courses for the major and approval of a final paper or thesis;
 - c. All regular Arts and Sciences degree requirements must be satisfied (e.g. minimum 120 credits, foundational skills and disciplinary approaches, 2.0 overall GPA).

Procedures

- 1) A student wishing to declare an interdisciplinary studies major should seek advice from relevant faculty members, the Advising Center, and the Dean's office.
- 2) The student should draft a proposal to explain and justify the proposed course of study and revise the proposal in light of comments from his/her advisor(s). (See below for "Guidelines for Drafting the Interdisciplinary Studies Major Proposal").
- 3) The proposal must be approved by two full time Arts and Sciences faculty members from two different departments, who would thereafter constitute the student's advisory committee.
- 4) The proposal should consist of a detailed explanation and justification of the major, together with a proposed curriculum (course list). So far as practicable, alternative courses should be specified in the event of scheduling problems.
- 5) The proposal, with the signatures of the student and the two faculty sponsors, must be submitted to the Director of Advising for approval.
- 6) If either faculty advisor should for any reason cease to function in that role, the student must find a replacement. In such cases, the faculty member should inform the advisee in advance of his/her impending resignation from the advisory committee, and so far as possible assist the student in finding a replacement. It is the student's responsibility to fill vacancies in his/her advisory committee whenever they occur, and to inform the Director of Advising of any changes.
- 7) Approval of changes in the major must be certified to the Director of Advising by both members of the advisory committee no later than the first week of the term prior to the term in which the student plans to graduate. The changes should be indicated on a copy of the original course list and initialed by the faculty sponsors before being submitted to the Director of Advising.
- 8) Both faculty sponsors must certify completion of the major to the Office of the Associate Dean in the student's final year.

Guidelines for Drafting the Interdisciplinary Studies Major Proposal

In general, the proposal should have three parts, normally three pages in length, although the second part may consist of more than one page.

- 1) The Title Page should contain the following information:
 - a) The title of the proposed major;
 - b) The date of the proposal;
 - c) The student's current mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address;
 - d) The names, departments, campus addresses and phone numbers of the two faculty sponsors.
- 2) The Proposal itself should be a clear statement of the purposes of the proposed course of study, the reasons for wishing to pursue this course of study, and how the various proposed courses would contribute to the achievement of those purposes. The statement should explain clearly the particular themes or problems that the major is designed to address. If this is not already obvious from the statement, explain why an existing departmental major would not accommodate those interests.

The Course List should contain the courses considered necessary or relevant to the major. Provide the course number, title, and number of credits for each course. Arrange the courses in one, two, or three clusters (thematic groupings), and use an asterisk to identify the courses that have been completed. The list must include at least 42 credits, 21 of which must be for courses numbered 1000 or above. Each cluster must contain a minimum of 12 credits.
- 3) The student should discuss the course list in detail with the faculty sponsors to determine which courses are required, and which are optional. The course list may be changed after the proposal has been approved only if the changes do not substantially alter the overall coherence of the major (see Procedures #7). Substantial modifications of the curriculum, if not approved by the faculty sponsors, may result in nullification of the major.

Advising: Barbara Mellix
Assistant Dean
Director of the Advising Center
201 Thackeray Hall
412-624-6444
mellix@pitt.edu