INTEGRATED STUDIES

Coordinator, Associate Professor Joseph Reisert

The Integrated Studies Program introduces methods of interdisciplinary analysis and interpretation and encourages students to use these methods to explore important questions about varied aspects of human experience. The goal is to enable students to “connect the dots”—to see connections and relationships that other people miss in order to achieve a deep understanding of central elements of the human experience. Taken together, integrated studies courses provide a strong foundation in the liberal arts, on which students can build during their four years at Colby. The program is supported by grants from the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation of New York.

Each year the program organizes several offerings of two or three linked courses that focus on a single topic or brief historical period. Students must sign up for all courses in the integrated study. All of the component courses have been designed to complement one another; each brings a distinct, disciplinary focus to the complex phenomena that the integrated study, as a whole, aims to explore.

This intensive experience fosters the growth of an intellectual community among the students and faculty and cultivates multiple intellectual capacities, including both disciplinary and interdisciplinary critical thinking and problem solving, critical writing, and meaningful participation in small-group discussions. Most integrated studies also fulfill several all-College area distribution requirements, providing a broad, interdisciplinary liberal arts foundation for students’ subsequent work at Colby.

The individual courses, which have no prerequisites, are described in the list of courses and are cross-listed in their respective departmental sections of this catalogue. Each course is offered for four credit hours. Enrollment in first-year integrated studies is limited to 16 students.

Course Offerings

[IS126]  The Green Cluster  Students explore central questions in environmental philosophy, ethics, and politics, and learn the history, theory, and practice of environmental activism as they pursue their own activist projects. See Environmental Studies 126, and Philosophy 126 for course descriptions. Satisfies the First-year Writing (W1) and Social Science (S) distribution requirements.  

Eight credit hours.

[IS135]  New York-Berlin: Modernism and its Discontents  New York and Berlin remain iconic locations of aesthetic, political, and social transformation. This two-course cluster asks what these pivotal cities of the 20th and 21st centuries—cities that occupy visual imaginations, underwrite ideals of social utopia, and destroy dreams and lives—teach us about the powerful forces that shape our worlds. We engage a range of cultural “texts”, from movies to literature to the built environment, and we situate them in larger historical, political, and economic contexts. An all-expenses-paid field trip to New York is central. See American Studies 135B and German 135 for course descriptions. Satisfies the First-Year Writing (W1), Arts (A), and Social Science (S) requirements.  

Eight credit hours.

IS138f New World Disorder: America between the Wars, 1919-1939  The United States emerged from World War I as the world's richest and most powerful nation, but Americans found this no guarantee of individual happiness, social peace, economic security, or political stability. This three-course integrated study examines the sources of Americans' soaring hopes and profound discontents; how literature expressed the yearnings and disappointments of intellectuals, African Americans, immigrants, and other groups; and how philosophers sought meaning in an age when nothing in life or logic seemed assured. See English 138, History 138, Philosophy 138 for course descriptions. Satisfies the First-Year Writing (W1), Historical Studies (H), Literature (L), and Social Sciences (S) requirements.  

Twelve credit hours.  

Cohen, STUBBS, WEISBROT

IS140f Understanding Law  The "rule of law" has often been contrasted with the "rule of men;" the basic idea is that it is better to be governed by impartial principles, fairly applied, than to be subject to the arbitrary decisions of some individual ruler — whoever that may be. But what is law? Different societies have adopted a variety of different legal systems with distinctive institutions and divergent principles. Are Islamic law and U.S. law fundamentally incompatible, or do they share important commonalities? We will explore these two quite different systems of law while also looking at philosophical reflections and literary narratives. See Government 140A and 140B, and History 140 for course descriptions. Satisfies the First-Year Writing (W1), Historical Studies (H), Literature (L), and Social Sciences (S) requirements.  

Twelve credit hours.  

Lee, Reisert, Turner

[IS224]  Global Maine  While Maine remains the whitest state in the union, demographic trends are rapidly changing many regions. Refugees, asylum seekers, medical and high-tech workers, undocumented farmworkers, and guest workers in the hospitality industry are transforming urban and rural areas alike. This two-course cluster introduces the diversity of immigrant experiences in Maine through ethnographic readings as well as collaborative documentary work with immigrant and immigrant-support organizations. It provides training in documentary techniques and the opportunity to create films with immigrant and immigrant-support community partners in Lewiston and Portland. See Anthropology 224 and Global Studies 224 for course descriptions. Satisfies Social Sciences (S) and U.S. Diversity (U) requirements.  

Eight credit hours.