

# From General to Interdisciplinary Studies:

## A Multi-Stage Curriculum Intervention

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**Abstract:** The term “interdisciplinary” is an increasingly popular buzzword within higher education, yet varying interpretations of what constitutes interdisciplinary learning can dilute its meaning and potency. The Integrative Studies program at Kennesaw State University has participated in this dilution by offering an Integrative Studies degree that closely resembles a general studies, degree-completion curriculum. This article focuses on the first step of curricular overhaul, as I document the process of transitioning an introductory course from a general studies to an interdisciplinary studies approach to learning, including a discussion of qualitative data from students on how the course (post-intervention) now helps develop their interdisciplinary thinking skills.

**Keywords:** interdisciplinary learning, integrative learning, interdisciplinary studies, degree-completion, scholarship of teaching and learning, curriculum development

### Introduction

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) projects often tell a story—sometimes focusing on the beginning stages of a project including motivations and hypotheses, often concentrating on the end results and lessons learned, and occasionally focusing on how “the story progresses and the process . . . unfolds” (Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012, p. 105). This article focuses on the first phase of a multi-phase curriculum intervention—specifically the transformation of a program’s introductory course from a degree- and career-planning course to a truly interdisciplinary course appropriate for students new to interdisciplinary learning. The discussion centers on Kennesaw State University’s INTS 1198: Introduction to Integrative Studies, including how INTS 1198 fits into the degree requirements, the limitations of the course in its original form, student evaluations of the course and their learning experiences pre-intervention, how student evaluations of the course and their learning experiences changed post-intervention, and how revising

the introductory course set the stage for a degree overhaul. Via the discussion of the first phase of a curricular overhaul, readers will get a glimpse of some beginnings, some ends, and a lot of the process behind transforming a degree-completion program into a more rigorous, dynamic, and student-centered program that embraces interdisciplinary principles and practices.<sup>1</sup>

Interdisciplinary educators benefit from a wealth of scholarship demonstrating the value, challenges, and impact of interdisciplinary programs. Because interdisciplinary studies teaches students to draw upon and integrate different disciplinary insights in order to construct a “more comprehensive perspective” on a complex issue or problem (Klein & Newell, 1996, p. 394), interdisciplinary educators understand that the exposure to different insights helps students see all sides of a story including others’ perspectives (Newell, 1990). Interdisciplinary studies “promote[s] dialogue and community, problem-posing and problem solving capacities, and an integrative habit of mind” (Klein & Newell, 1996, p. 407), including the integration of “the personal, the educational, and the professional” (Augsburg, 2006a, p. xii), thus helping students cultivate the “knowledge and skills required to succeed personally and professionally in the 21st century” (Everett, 2016, p. 28). In addition to supporting students’ development, interdisciplinary studies programming can benefit the institution as evaluative studies yield data showing how these programs promote “academic improvement, retention, development of general education skills, and high levels of student engagement” (Carmichael & LaPierre, 2014, p. 74). Further, emphasis on the value of interdisciplinary work can benefit both the institution and its students by helping clarify the logic and potential of diverse and perhaps seemingly unconnected general education courses (Carmichael et al., 2017) and helping those in such courses bridge the disciplines (de Greef et al., 2017). Noting the wide-ranging benefits of interdisciplinary learning and programming, it is unsurprising that institutions of higher education increasingly create, develop, and invest in interdisciplinary offerings.

As an interdisciplinary teacher and scholar, I am inspired by the wealth of scholarly publications showcasing the creative, rigorous, and reflective work of colleagues around the world who are engaged in interdisciplinary work. I appreciate the commitment to sharing models, works in progress, and programmatic assessment (Augsburg & Chitewere, 2013; Carmichael &

1 Throughout the article, I use the terms “interdisciplinary” and “integrative” synonymously, as is the practice within the INTS program at KSU. This on-ground choice is partially the result of faculty preference, training, and research. Further, many of the major textbooks on interdisciplinarity use the term “interdisciplinary studies,” so this is the language students encounter most frequently as they are exposed to and cultivate an interdisciplinary mindset. With all of this said, I appreciate that the two terms have different meanings, resulting in philosophically and functionally different programs, and that interdisciplinary work does not necessarily involve instruction in and practice of integrative thinking.

LaPierre, 2014; Tayler, 2014; de Greef et al., 2017). Yet, like many of these colleagues, I am also mindful that interdisciplinary courses and programs do not always function as desired. And personal experience has reinforced what is apparent in much of the literature—curricular and programmatic issues can often be traced to lack of clarity about interdisciplinarity itself and best practices in the field.

This article focuses on one ostensibly interdisciplinary program and shows the ways in which a lack of clarity about what constitutes interdisciplinarity and the hallmarks of interdisciplinary coursework and degree programs (especially in comparison to multidisciplinary, general studies, and degree-completion coursework and programs) can dilute the power and status of interdisciplinary education. In my account of the Integrative Studies program at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, GA (US), I note that the terms “integrative” and “interdisciplinary” have been used to describe what has been a multidisciplinary or general studies degree program (depending on which track a student pursues, as explained below). In this article, I focus on the process of assessing and ultimately revising the program’s introductory course to ensure it prepares students to “draw effectively and critically on the disciplinary courses in their concentration and to place them in a holistic framework” (Newell, 1990, p. 84), so they may learn to do truly interdisciplinary work. Ultimately, I discuss how clarifying the goals and desired outcomes of the introductory course has helped faculty identify redundancies across the curriculum and reconsider how and when program-level goals are introduced and reinforced, and thereby set the stage for a total degree overhaul through which the program will live up to its name.

## Context

The Integrative Studies program (INTS) at Kennesaw State University allows students to design a program of study that meets their academic and career goals. At the program’s inception in 2005, what was then called the Interdisciplinary Studies program functioned as a small, honors-like program (supporting approximately 30 majors).<sup>2</sup> Early on, students pursued this degree option primarily because the institution did not offer a degree program in their field of choice and/or they recognized the need for training in more than one discipline in order to achieve their post-university goals. While both of these motivations remain true for many current students, the list

2 The program’s name changed to Integrative Studies in 2009. At KSU, the department now called Interdisciplinary Studies houses programs that focus on diversity, social justice, and community engagement (e.g. American Studies, Asian Studies, and Gender & Women’s Studies). Unsurprisingly, there is considerable confusion across campus about the difference between Integrative Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies.

of reasons for pursuing the degree has expanded to include the widespread perception that an INTS degree is less rigorous than other degree options. Furthermore, in surveys completed after advising appointments, students frequently indicate they have declared an INTS major so that previously earned credits can be counted (not “wasted”) helping to ensure degree completion.<sup>3</sup> Because many of our students consider themselves “academically adrift” (Arum & Roska, 2011), these perceptions of INTS (whether or not accurate) increase the program’s appeal for students even as they negatively impact its reputation among faculty and administrators across campus. Due, in part, to such misunderstandings regarding the program’s purpose and goals, the INTS program has ballooned to approximately 650 majors, and the program’s objectives and curriculum do not support the integrative or interdisciplinary learning indicated by its name.

The program offers students two pathways for earning a BS in Integrative Studies (see the table below for a side-by-side comparison). The “specialized track,” which closely resembles the original honors-like experience, requires students to identify two disciplinary or thematic areas of study, gain approval for the coursework from relevant department chairs, and take the INTS research methods course in addition to the INTS introductory and senior seminar courses. The specialized track requires students to act in a more informed and intentional way to accomplish goals that more closely resemble those of a truly interdisciplinary program. However, fewer than 5% of current INTS majors choose this track. More than 95% choose the “general studies” track, which launched in 2015. It purports to integrate a set of courses focused on career-based skills (emphasizing writing, public speaking, leadership, and critical thinking competencies) and a student-selected disciplinary or thematic area of study comprised of 15 upper-level hours. Like their peers in the specialized track, students pursuing the general studies track also take Introduction to Integrative Studies and the INTS senior seminar, though students can waive the introductory course requirement if they declare the major having already earned 90 credits, as many do. Additionally, they are not required to take the research methods course. The general studies track gives students maximum flexibility in earning a bachelor’s degree, including the ability to use already-earned credits, and it was designed to have particular appeal to non-traditional students working full-time (hence the emphasis on career-based skills, which are often deemed practical and relevant by KSU students).

3 Over half of INTS students have earned 90+ hours before they declare an INTS major. Thus, most new majors have senior-level standing before taking their first INTS course. Because current program requirements allow students entering the major with 90+ hours to waive the INTS 1198: Introduction to Integrative Studies course, late declarers often only complete one INTS course (Senior Seminar) before earning their B.S. in Integrative Studies.

<b>Specialized Track</b>	<b>General Studies Track</b>
<p><i>Lower Division Major Requirements (18 credit hours)</i></p> <p>INTS 1198: Introduction to Integrative Studies (3 hours)            INTS 2298: Integrative Studies Research Methods (3 hours)            12 hours of approved lower-level coursework</p>	<p><i>Lower Division Major Requirements (18 credit hours)</i></p> <p>INTS 1198: Introduction to Integrative Studies (3 hours)            ICT 2101: Information and Communications Technology or an approved lower-level course (3 hours)            Any lower-level communications, telecommunications, or foreign language course (3 hours)            Any lower-level leadership studies course (3 hours)            6 hours of approved lower-level coursework</p>
<p><i>Major Requirements (39 hours)</i></p> <p>INTS 4498: Senior Seminar in Integrative Studies (3 hours)            12 credit hours from a chosen upper-level academic area (approval from relevant department chair required)            12 credit hours from a second chosen upper-level academic area (approval from relevant department chair required)            12 credit hours of upper-level coursework approved by the INTS Coordinator reflecting integration and application of upper-level academic skills</p>	<p><i>Major Requirements (39 hours)</i></p> <p>INTS 4498: Senior Seminar in Integrative Studies (3 hours)            WRIT 3140: Writing in the Workplace or approved alternative course (3 hours)            INTS Cluster: 15 upper-level credit hours comprised of one or two related academic areas            18 credit hours of upper-level coursework approved by the INTS Coordinator reflecting integration and application of upper-level academic skills</p>

Ultimately, neither track gives students a scaffolded set of INTS courses or learning experiences, particularly as many students who declare the major late opt out of the introductory course. Without a series of courses that intentionally support students' efforts to integrate insights from different disciplines or courses that otherwise scaffold the development of interdisciplinary thinking and skills, the students' development of such capacities is left to chance. And, as Huber and Hutchings (2004) assert, chance cannot be relied upon to do the job: "[I]ntegrative learning does not just happen . . . whether one is talking about making connections within a major, between fields, between curriculum and co-curriculum, or between academic knowledge and practice, integrative learning requires work" (p. 3). In KSU's case, the minimal requirements for INTS credit hours and the fact students average just two

semesters as INTS majors before earning the degree limit their opportunities to engage in the work of integrative learning.

In April 2017, I interviewed for the position of Assistant Professor of Integrative Studies. During my campus interview, I noted the limited number of courses offered by the department. My future colleagues informed me I could propose additional course offerings. When I raised more specific questions about the minimal INTS-specific degree requirements, I was told the program was flexible and the new hire would have an opportunity to “make a mark.” Without directly addressing the lack of interdisciplinary training among the program’s three faculty (who comprised the search committee), my future colleagues were signaling they were looking for a new colleague whose training, teaching experience, and research agenda all reflected an understanding of and commitment to interdisciplinary and integrative studies, properly defined. I recognize this must seem like the most basic requirement for a faculty hire in Integrative Studies, but the department and program’s identity, degree requirements, and faculty/leadership had shifted quickly and unexpectedly, which had left INTS, like many interdisciplinary programs elsewhere, in a state of flux (Augsburg, 2006b).

My soon-to-be-colleagues—whose expertise was in developmental English and Mathematics—had been reassigned to teaching and administrative roles in Integrative Studies when the university phased out the developmental programs in which they previously taught (which had been housed in the Department of Leadership & Integrative Studies). Educators who deeply cared about the success of students who needed additional support (in English and Math) to thrive were suddenly assigned to teach in, coordinate, and grow the Integrative Studies program. I suspect this commitment to student success, particularly that of students struggling with institutional requirements, helped facilitate the expansion of the INTS degree to include the general studies track that followed (a track that now supports over 600 students—many of whom switched to INTS from majors with competitive admission standards and/or pre-requisites with high DFW rates).<sup>4</sup> As the department and faculty roles had rapidly changed, faculty were not given, nor did they claim, the time to think about the evolution of the program now under their aegis, assess learning outcomes and curricular needs, or plan for the future with our student body in mind (Newell, 1990). INTS became an academic unit where institutional concerns about retention and graduation rates could be addressed—namely by shifting toward a general studies curriculum that

4 DWF refers to students earning these D, W, F grades. My colleagues were truly devoted caretakers for the INTS program. While this article critiques the state of the INTS program and its failure to function as an interdisciplinary program, my colleagues deserve tremendous credit for leading and growing a program that did not align with their professional expertise and for seeking out and embracing new colleagues who could revise the program’s requirements and goals to reflect a more truly interdisciplinary orientation.

privileged coursework focused on career-based skills, accommodated completed credit hours, and allowed majors to forgo the requirement of at least two academic areas of focus (which might set up possibilities for integration) in favor of one 15-hour cluster of upper-level courses. It was clear that the stripping of INTS' interdisciplinary foundations in this process of adjustment would not be easily reversible. However, it is worth noting that a new department chair was hired in summer 2016 and a new dean in summer 2017, the same year in which I was hired. Due to the chair's early leadership and vision for a more structured degree program, new course proposals for Introduction to Integrative Studies and Integrative Studies Research Methods (along with an elective course on integrative thinking and diversity) had passed through the curriculum process by the time I began to teach. All three courses were offered for the first time during the 2017-2018 academic year (my first year at KSU).

After arriving on campus in fall 2017 and gaining a better understanding of the program's history, I raised several questions about the structure and objectives of INTS. My first question to both the program coordinator and the department chair was whether the department wanted to function as a general studies, multidisciplinary studies, interdisciplinary studies, or degree-completion program. There is an abundance of literature that discusses the differences between these approaches and resulting outcomes. I turned to already established definitions in order to provide language and context for my colleagues. Preliminary conversations were loosely informed by an understanding of multidisciplinary studies as programming promoting "the utilization of multiple disciplines to study a problem without an effort toward integration or synthesis" (Tanner, 2016, p. 8), interdisciplinary studies as programming integrating disciplinary insights in order to address "a complex problem with the goal of applying the understanding to a real-world problem" (Repko et al., 2017, p. 65), and general studies or degree completion programming as promoting "a smorgasbord of courses that check boxes . . . and negates the potential of [truly] interdisciplinary education" (Holley, 2019, p. 25).<sup>5</sup> While there is a value in and place for each of these approaches, the Integrative Studies program had come to function as an "undergraduate degree completion stream" (Dunlop & Burtch, 2003, p.12), which did not align with the goals I thought appropriate to the program and its supposed commitment to interdisciplinary education.

The issues plaguing the introductory course, which I was assigned to

5 Holley's characterization of degree-completion as a smorgasbord of courses aligns with the criticism of the INTS program, which was not intentionally designed as a degree-completion program even if it functions as one for many INTS majors. There is evidence that intentionally designed degree-completion programs, often serving working adults with previous college credits, are increasingly popular and effective in encouraging continuous growth and preparing learners for work opportunities (Hoyt & Allred, 2011; Murry & Hall 2011; Bergman, 2016).

teach two sections of during my first semester, were apparent even before I entered the classroom, in spite of the revision it had just undergone. The original and common syllabus I used during fall 2017 is available in the appendix (A). The course description and course learning objectives for Introduction to Integrative Studies read thus:

INTS 1198 is a portfolio-based course focusing on the skills necessary for success in the INTS major and beyond. In this course, you will learn about the field of integrative studies from historical, theoretical, and practical vantage points. This process involves research, articulating knowledge, self-reflection, goal setting, and career planning. By the end of INTS 1198, you will apply knowledge gained this semester to create an integrative studies degree plan and portfolio that you will complete in INTS 4498: Senior Seminar.

Upon completing INTS 1198, students will be able to:

1. Define interdisciplinary and integrative studies;
2. Discern between types of interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary research;
3. Develop an interdisciplinary research plan;
4. Explain how integrating your chosen areas of study will build a foundation for ongoing learning and growth;
5. Design and begin developing a reflective portfolio highlighting your academic and co-curricular accomplishments;
6. Identify career and/or graduate school options associated with your areas of study and develop a plan for pursuing these goals.

Although the course description and learning objectives include references to learning about interdisciplinary and integrative studies, the course design and instruction emphasized degree- and career-planning. This emphasis was intentional and reflective of the Integrative Studies program's understanding of the INTS student population. As noted earlier, INTS majors typically switch from other majors late in their academic career (often with senior standing in terms of earned credits). The faculty believed the introductory course should help students map their new INTS degree plans and develop the relevant language and tools to assess their past experiences and make a case to future employers and/or graduate programs about the value of an Integrative Studies degree. (The focus quite clearly speaks to INTS functioning for some students as a degree-completion program.) Given these goals, major assignments included creating a degree plan, writing a professional resume and cover letter, and presenting all materials in a reflective ePortfolio. While degree- and career-planning are necessary for student success at the institution and in preparation for post-graduation goals, I believed these concerns should not govern or dominate the introductory course as

they did in the common syllabus. I also believed that several of the learning objectives were quite appropriate to an INTS degree and deserved the attention of one or more courses (particularly objectives 3 and 5). However, I felt spreading the objectives across a redesigned INTS curriculum could more effectively facilitate interdisciplinary learning and skill development. After all, as noted above, I had learned that students frequently took the introductory course during their penultimate semester followed by senior seminar (which also, and more appropriately, focused on career preparation) the very next semester. It seemed to me that very few students' ID thinking and practice could develop much in a mere year of coursework, especially coursework involving similar non-ID content and assignments in back-to-back semesters. And indeed, as I knew, many students who took the introductory course complained in their senior seminar course evaluations that they found senior seminar repetitive. In short, as I began to teach INTS 1198, it was clear to me that the INTS program needed to address (or begin to address) the lack of scaffolding for integrative and interdisciplinary work in the program by reducing inappropriate content (over-emphasis on degree- and career-planning) in the introductory course.

Colleagues quickly came to regard me as the department's expert on interdisciplinarity and accepted my preliminary assessment of the INTS curriculum. Noting the faculty consensus for curricular change, department leadership agreed that, in spite of some recent revision, the INTS program was still not sufficiently interdisciplinary and that the curriculum needed to be revised to make it more truly interdisciplinary. However, because the program supports a large number of students—many of whom may not earn a degree from the institution without Integrative Studies—department leaders believed it would be prudent to justify requests for further curricular revision to the college's Dean as it was likely to result in a reduction in program enrollment. I was not actually charged with collecting data that would support a proposal for a new curricular plan.<sup>6</sup> I was, however, eager to move from conversation to action that might yield such data, and I found a path to do so. KSU's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) hosts a year-long program designed to support new faculty success that I had joined prior to the start of department-level curriculum conversations. One of the CETL program requirements was to make, document, and publically share a teaching intervention. I used the faculty success program requirement to build a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) study focused on learning outcomes in my 2017-2018 sections of INTS 1198: Introduction to Integrative Studies.

6 Looking back, I suspect this inaction was both an indication that a curricular overhaul was not the department's top priority and also an effort by my department chair to protect the time and reputation of a new junior faculty member.

During fall 2017, I gained IRB approval to conduct my SoTL study across three on-ground sections of my introductory course during the 2017-18 academic year. My proposal and the inquiry into student learning involved were strengthened by adhering to SoTL principles. Felten (2013) identifies five principles of good SoTL: inquiry into student learning, grounded in context, methodologically sound, conducted in partnership with students, and appropriately public (Felten, 2013). All five principles shaped this study, particularly the first principle, which underscores that SoTL must be an inquiry into student learning and the “attitudes or habits that connect to learning” (Felten, 2013, p. 122). My investigation focused on student learning outcomes in a supposedly interdisciplinary classroom. As noted, with a heavy emphasis on degree- and career-planning in the original version of INTS 1198, I was concerned the course left little space for an introduction to interdisciplinary thinking or the development of skills critical for interdisciplinary work. I sought specific data about how/if the course was helping students to develop skills such as perspective taking, critical thinking, and integrative analysis (Ivanitskaya et al., 2002). As I had hypothesized, this study and the data I collected show the original introductory course was not fostering skills such as communicative competence, abstract thinking, creative thinking, and metacognition that Repko et al. (2017) identify as necessary competencies for interdisciplinary students. Further study of the post-intervention version of INTS 1198, and ultimately of the fully revised course (both syllabi available in the appendix), has shown that both help students cultivate these crucial competencies.

## Pre-Intervention

### *Course Overview*

The version of Introduction to Integrative Studies I was studying was taught for the first time at KSU in fall 2017, which was also my first semester at the university. The department offered two on-ground sections and one online section; all three sections were semester-long and filled with 30 students. I taught both on-ground sections and used a previously developed common syllabus. The assigned course text was Tanner’s *Introduction to Integrative Studies* (2016). I added supplemental materials including blog posts, comics, and YouTube videos that offered additional insights on interdisciplinarity and raised questions about both the purpose and structure of higher education. While some of the early discussion board posts prompted students to explain concepts introduced in the course text (e.g. disciplinary vs interdisciplinary, experiential learning, common ground) and make connections to their educational experiences, major course assignments focused on developing a degree

plan, identifying potential jobs in a field of interest and writing a professional resume and cover letter, and archiving their collegiate experience through the design and development of a reflective electronic portfolio. Further, several course meetings were devoted to guest visits featuring staff from academic advising and career planning, thus allocating additional course time to the degree- and career-planning course content. In the only major assignment falling outside degree- and career-planning, students wrote an interdisciplinary research plan in which they developed a research question, identified at least two relevant disciplinary perspectives, and annotated three sources they deemed relevant to their question.

### *Data Collection*

The “pre-intervention” data collection took place during the final week of the fall 2017 semester. Forty-one students completed a survey that included both a Likert scale (1-5, with 5 as high) and space for written reflection. I designed the survey to gather student feedback on their experience in INTS 1198, particularly in terms of how/if the course helped them develop the competencies required of interdisciplinary thinkers.

The survey prompted students to read an abbreviated list of characteristics Ennis (2002) has assigned to integrative, critical thinkers and to reflect on their own development in each of these categories (as cited in Tanner, 2016, p. 38).<sup>7</sup> Using the Likert scale, students were given these instructions: “Assess how strongly you embody these characteristics. After you assign a numerical ranking, explain whether you value this characteristic and how/if the class helped you develop your ability in each area (e.g. point to specific assignments, in-class activities, etc.)” Pulled from the required course text, the list of characteristics for self-evaluation included the following:

1. Is open-minded and mindful of alternatives;
2. Desires to be, and is, well-informed;
3. Judges well the credibility of sources;
4. Identifies reasons, assumptions, and conclusions;
5. Asks appropriate clarifying questions;
6. Judges well the quality of an argument, including its reasons, assumptions, evidence, and their degree of support for the conclusion;
7. Can well develop and defend a reasonable position regarding a belief or an action, doing justice to challenges;
8. Defines terms in a way appropriate for the context;
9. Draws conclusions when warranted—but with caution;

<sup>7</sup> The list was narrowed from 12 to 10 characteristics—with “formulates plausible hypothesis” and “plans and conducts experiments well” omitted.

10. Integrates all of the above aspects of critical thinking.

The results of the survey revealed the course was not helping students cultivate these characteristics even though they were lauded by the required text. The course was not facilitating interdisciplinary thinking.

At the end of fall semester, I compiled the quantitative and qualitative data collected from students who participated in the study. Quantitative data, or the students' numerical rankings, were used to determine the average ranking of each characteristic. Meanwhile, qualitative data were transcribed and then mined for patterns and themes using inductive content analysis that resulted in coding for relevance (i.e. whether the response aligned with the characteristic) and reference or connection to course materials or activities. For responses that directly mentioned the course, I read for references to a specific reading or other assignment.

### *Findings and Discussion*

The table below features the pre-intervention survey results. I have listed the characteristics from highest to lowest rank in order to draw attention to the natural breaks I used to establish the high and low groupings discussed below.

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Average</b>
Is open-minded and mindful of alternatives	4.13
Asks appropriate clarifying questions	4.11
Desires to be, and is, well-informed	4.05
Identifies reasons, assumptions, and conclusions	3.97
Integrates all of the [other] aspects of critical thinking	3.95
Can well develop and defend a reasonable position regarding a belief or an action, doing justice to challenges	3.76
Defines terms in a way appropriate for the context	3.70
Judges well the quality of an argument, including its reasons, assumptions, evidence and their degree of support for the conclusion	3.58
Judges well the credibility of sources	3.53
Draws conclusions when warranted—but with caution	3.17

The three characteristics students ranked as those they most embodied were: is open-minded and mindful of alternatives (4.13), asks appropriate clarifying questions (4.11), and desires to be, and is, well-informed (4.05). Meanwhile, students ranked their embodiment of the following three characteristics lowest: judges well the quality of an argument, including its reasons,

assumptions, evidence and degree of support for the conclusion (3.58), judges well the credibility of sources (3.53), and draws conclusions when warranted—but with caution (3.17). While the numerical assessment paints a partial picture of how students felt the course did or did not help develop these characteristics, their narrative reflections provide greater detail and help fill in additional gaps.

A sample of students' qualitative responses on how/if the course helped them be open-minded and mindful of alternatives (4.13) includes the following:

- The class helped me to become more open-minded because of the major and what job opportunities it offers after graduation.
- The book we went over with all the pictures in it [*Unflattening*] was also really mind-opening and forced me to look at things through a different perspective.
- I would not have considered certain things for myself before, but this class has brought those to light and allowed those to be an option when they wouldn't have otherwise.

The three student responses featured above reflect the major themes in the pre-intervention survey results. Students pointed to the units on degree- and career-planning and the associated activities and assignments as evidence the course helped them develop the characteristic concerned. With less frequency, they referenced the one assigned chapter from Sousanis' *Unflattening* (2015), which was used to raise questions and spark discussion about one-size-fits-all education. This is the only reading students referenced throughout the pre-intervention surveys (students did not reference Tanner's *Introduction to Integrative Studies*, which was the required course text). The last notable pattern, as shown most clearly in the third response, is the lack of specificity or evidence to ground claims. Even among the comments on the highest ranked responses, students relied upon generic claims to back their numerical ranking. Overreliance on vague words such as "things" and "those" suggests the course did not offer sufficient opportunities for meaningful development of the open-minded and mindful of alternatives characteristic.

Regarding the asks appropriate clarifying questions characteristic (4.11), students indicated the class helped them develop this skill as follows:

- With doing in-class mock interviews, I have become more comfortable asking a potential employer about certain aspects of a job while remaining mindful and professional.
- Doing the interviews helped me big time on asking good questions and answering tough questions.
- Any time someone stated something we were always encouraged to explain it better or explain why we said it.

Reflective responses on asking clarifying questions largely revolved around an in-class mock interview activity. For this activity, students met in groups of three (two interviewers and one interviewee) to review each group member's job cover letter and professional resume and participate in a mock interview (questions were provided). I only devoted one 75-minute class session to this activity, but students cited it frequently—perhaps in part because the mock interview encouraged active learning and the application of course content to another setting, practices that students recognize as valuable. The final example points to a vague impression about my teaching, but the response does not provide the detail one might expect for a higher ranked characteristic.

Commenting on how the course helped cultivate a desire to be well-informed (4.05), students noted the following:

- The big topic that we talked about . . . and am now well-informed about is resumes, cover letters, and interview skills. This overall topic on how to present yourself to employers is important to know and is stressed in this class.
- This class definitely motivated me to want to know more about the process of some of the things we did in class like preparing for job interviews and building resumes and portfolios. I was always avoiding learning about those things because I thought they were much harder to do than they really are.
- I'm well informed in terms of the major and being an interdisciplinarian. The class helped in the readings that challenge your thought process to think differently about topics you may have overlooked before.

Again emphasizing the course's focus on career preparation, students indicated the attention to resumes, cover letters, and interviews helped them feel better prepared to go on the job market. The final comments offer a vague acknowledgement by one student on the impact of interdisciplinary instruction. Yet, in all three highest ranked areas, students generally failed to mention the value of the course outside of career preparation and did not articulate its value as a means for facilitating critical, interdisciplinary thinking and learning.

As noted earlier, the lowest ranked characteristics, or those characteristics the students thought the course helped them develop the least, included judges well the quality of an argument, including its reasons, assumptions, evidence and their degree of support for the conclusion (3.58), judges well the credibility of sources (3.53), and draws conclusions when warranted—but with caution (3.17). In their reflective comments on the lower ranked characteristics, students were more successful in pointing to specific areas where they wanted the course to do more to aid their thinking and development. Both the quantitative and qualitative data make a case for students needing more opportunities to practice the lowest ranked skills.

A sample of students' qualitative responses on how/if the course helped them judge well the quality of an argument (3.58) includes the following:

- I remember going over this in the beginning of the semester but it did not stick with me.
- I know how to recognize the quality of an argument but I feel as if we could have gone more in depth in this in class. We went over a lot on identifying the reasons, assumptions, and evidence but the degree of support isn't as clear as it could be.
- When we had to create a research question and find sources that supported our questions that helped me learn this.
- It was helpful to look at why/how the author/illustrator [Nick Sousanis] was wanting to relay something to their audience.

Assessments of this characteristic focused on the research project, with calls for greater depth in instruction related to the project, or on the selected chapter from *Unflattening*. Students understood that they were making or advancing an argument in their research proposals and that the authors of assigned texts were also crafting an argument. However, they pointed to the need for greater assistance in judging the quality of an argument.

Commenting on how useful the course was in helping them judge well the credibility of sources (3.53), students said the following:

- I feel like having people from this department [academic advisers] come in to talk to us was highly credible.
- I'm so-so with this. I know not to use Wikipedia or ".com" as credible sources, but that scholarly journals are more weighted and important.
- We went over using the library website but we could have [discussed] how to tell website credibility.
- Although this class has extensively informed me how to judge the credibility of a source, I still often find myself having a hard time finding a good source.

Students identified various types of sources including experts in a field (academic advisers), popular or gray literature, and peer-reviewed scholarship throughout their responses. In clear-cut cases, students recognized a source as more credible (academic advisers or scholarly journals) or inappropriate (Wikipedia). The scholarship-based examples point back to in-class activities connected to the research proposal. While students collectively assessed themselves as embodying the "judges well the credibility of sources" characteristic less well than other characteristics, they provided more specific evidence about how the course helped them cultivate this characteristic. Yet, they also pointed to gaps in their knowledge, including how to find relevant sources, which points to holes in the course curriculum before the intervention.

Commenting on how the course helped them draw conclusions when

warranted—but with caution (3.17), students noted the following:

- This course definitely helped me not jump the gun so often and think more through things and be patient in coming up with a conclusion before I present one.
- We worked on the importance of how words [affect] perceptions and reactions.
- Trained to do better because of the research we did in class.

Comments reveal that students' attitude toward the draw conclusions characteristic was generally positive, and even though they asserted that the course aided in their development in this area, they ranked it lowest among the characteristics the course helped to develop. Although positive in tone, the responses on this characteristic were quite vague (in line with many of the responses among the higher ranked characteristics) and not rooted in specific activities or aspects of an assignment.

### *Limitations*

My fall 2017 teaching assignment limited the sample size of this study to 41 students. Although the number of participants was small, the qualitative data demonstrated that these students understood that iteration of Introduction to Integrative Studies primarily as a degree- and career-planning course. Because these topics and resulting projects consumed the pre-intervention version of the introductory course, there was insufficient time to clarify other topics that should be central to an ID course—like what constitutes a discipline, how disciplinary insights differ or overlap, why interdisciplinary work is valuable, and how to begin integrating disciplinary insights to address “wicked problems” (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Conklin, 2005).

The pre-intervention stage of the SoTL project was also complicated by students' tendency to assign higher numerical rankings to the characteristics they were asked to rank in the survey than the qualitative data seemingly warranted, which is consistent with findings from Baxter Magolda (1992, 2001) and Leonard (2012). Less commonly, though still evident, students also assigned lower numerical rankings than the quantitative data seemingly warranted. A misunderstanding of the prompts and/or skewed perception of one's abilities can compromise the data. In an effort to address the gap between quantitative and qualitative data, I collected and reported quantitative and qualitative data and focused my analysis on qualitative responses.

Finally, I should note that my spring 2018 planning timeline presented some challenges for synthesizing the data (collected in late fall 2017) and acting on the findings. Even before collecting the data, I had already begun to plan on several interventions for my spring sections of INTS 1198 with the intention of creating opportunities for students to encounter complex issues,

evaluate sources and claims using evidence-based reasoning, and practice integrative reflection and analysis. While the data from fall 2017 sections reinforced my sense of the need for these opportunities, it raised questions of confirmation bias about the themes I identified in the data (whether I was more likely to identify patterns that aligned with my planned interventions). The major interventions for spring 2018 that I finally settled on included a new required text (Sousanis' *Unflattening*), a shift in point values and priorities with less emphasis on the degree plan, career project, and ePortfolio, and the introduction of readings and case studies on contemporary issues. Ultimately, these changes align with calls by interdisciplinary educators to "give students a 'feel' for" disciplinary thinking and how different disciplinary insights can be integrated to attack a problem" (Newell, 1990, p. 72) and to incorporate activities and assignments "such as case studies" that are "designed to measure outcomes associated with interdisciplinary learning" (Davis, 1995, pp. 71-72).

## Intervention

### *Course Overview*

I taught one on-ground section of INTS 1198 during spring 2018. The department also offered three online sections (including the one that I taught), but my on-ground section was the only INTS 1198 course included in the intervention stage of this study. The syllabus I used in spring 2018 is included in the appendix (B), but I will briefly discuss some of the significant changes between this version of the course and the earlier one. As noted above, I chose Sousanis's *Unflattening* (2015) as the required course text, and I did so in order to help students recognize and compare different disciplinary insights and consider how disciplinary insights inform and structure arguments.<sup>8</sup> *Unflattening* presents students with a model for how an expert's thinking is shaped by disciplinary insights and how such insights can be integrated in order to further understand and assess complex issues. However, I wanted to make sure students did more than merely appreciate the model of interdisciplinary work, as the primary goal for the intervention was to give students the opportunity to begin doing interdisciplinary work themselves. In support of this goal, the course also featured three AAC&U Scientific Thinking and Integrative Reasoning Skills (STIRS) case studies that focused on language policies, pipelines, and vaccines. The case studies are available for free

<sup>8</sup> While I replaced Tanner's *Introduction to Integrative Studies* as the required course text, that choice is not an indictment of the text. The text did not fit with the new goals for KSU's Introduction to Integrative Studies, as many of the topics covered in Introduction are more appropriate for our revised research and senior seminar courses.

download on the AAC&U website. Case studies help students develop systems thinking skills in order to see the parts of a system and how they interact (Singh, n.d.) and ultimately identify which parts different disciplines address. They help students cultivate an attitude of openness, evaluate data and credibility of sources, use evidence-based thinking when drawing conclusions, work collaboratively, and defend and develop a stance on an issue (Singh, n.d.). These skills align with the characteristics of interdisciplinary thinking being measured by this study. Finally, besides adding new readings and related course activities, I revised the number of points allocated to course assignments to give more weight to discussion boards and class participation (two opportunities for students to critically discuss and evaluate the course materials) while placing less weight on the degree plan and career portfolio projects.

### *Data Collection*

In contrast to fall 2017 students, spring 2018 students completed a survey at both the start and end of the semester. Since, as noted above, I only taught one on-ground section of Introduction to Integrative Studies during spring 2018, only 25 students participated in the study. The questions distributed at the start of the semester were revised slightly from those I used in the fall so as to gather information about how students assessed their prior development of the study's interdisciplinary learning characteristics and how they expected the course to aid in their further development of these characteristics. Instructions were as follows: "Using a scale of 1-5 (5 is high), please assess how strongly you embody these characteristics. After you assign a numerical ranking, explain whether you value this characteristic and whether you hope and/or expect the class to aid in your development." I also sought information about what motivated them as learners, amending the survey to include the following reflective questions:

- What motivates you as a learner? Ambrose et al. (2010) outlines several potential motivations, including a desire to perform well or earn a particular grade, a desire to learn or gain competence, and a desire to avoid work or finish it as quickly as possible. Please identify and discuss your motivations as a learner and goals for yourself this semester.
- Based upon your current level of interest in the course and your understanding of course expectations, do you believe you will be successful in achieving your goals? Please explain why/not. How do your expectations about success affect your motivation?
- Based upon your current knowledge of the course (including the course objectives and schedule), do you see value in the work we will do this semester? How does your current perception affect your motivation in this course?

- Based upon your experience to date, do you believe the class environment will be supportive? How does the course environment affect your motivation in the course?

### *Findings and Discussion*

Reporting on their motivations as learners during week two, students indicated factors including grades, interest, relevance of the course, and whether the course would aid in their personal development increased their motivation to prepare for and perform well in their courses. Most students reported seeing value in the introductory class, felt they would be supported in reaching their goals in the class, and believed they would be successful.

The average numerical assessments reported during week two are presented below as a benchmark for this cohort of students. The results provide a baseline for spring 2018 students' assessment of how strongly they embodied each of the characteristics. At the start of the semester, the highest ranked characteristics included open-minded and mindful of alternatives (4.0), identifies reasons, assumptions, and conclusions (3.96), and judges well the quality of an argument (3.96). In contrast, on average, they ranked themselves lowest in terms of characteristics such as defines terms (3.58), integrates all of the other listed aspects through critical thinking (3.58), and judges well the credibility of sources (3.38). As noted earlier, fall 2017 students also identified open-mindedness as their strongest characteristic and judging well the credibility of sources as among their weakest characteristics (though they gave these answers in the single survey they took at the end of the semester).

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Week 2 Averages</b>
Is open-minded and mindful of alternatives	4.00
Desires to be, and is, well-informed	3.63
Judges well the credibility of sources	3.38
Identifies reasons, assumptions, and conclusions	3.96
Asks appropriate clarifying questions	3.75
Judges well the quality of an argument, including its reasons, assumptions, evidence and their degree of support for the conclusion	3.96
Can well develop and defend a reasonable position regarding a belief or an action, doing justice to challenges	3.83
Defines terms in a way appropriate for the context	3.58
Draws conclusions when warranted—but with caution	3.67
Integrates all of the above aspects of critical thinking	3.58

Fast forward to week 14 and the post-survey, and the numerical averages revealed two clearly ranked high and low characteristics. On the high end, students indicated the class helped them develop as thinkers who are open-minded and mindful of alternatives and who desire to be, and are, well-informed. For this cohort of students, open-mindedness was also the highest ranked characteristic at the beginning of the semester (4.0), but the ranking had risen slightly (4.29) by the end of the semester. Meanwhile, the desire to be well-informed that had initially earned a mid-level ranking (3.63) had increased even more by the end of the semester (4.29).

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Week 14 Averages</b>
Is open-minded and mindful of alternatives	4.29
Desires to be, and is, well-informed	4.29
Judges well the credibility of sources	4.00
Identifies reasons, assumptions, and conclusions	3.90
Asks appropriate clarifying questions	3.86
Judges well the quality of an argument, including its reasons, assumptions, evidence and their degree of support for the conclusion	4.00
Can well develop and defend a reasonable position regarding a belief or an action, doing justice to challenges	3.95
Defines terms in a way appropriate for the context	3.50
Draws conclusions when warranted—but with caution	3.48
Integrates all of the above aspects of critical thinking	4.01

It cannot be said that the quantitative rankings show a statistically significant difference between weeks two and 14 or between fall 2017 students and spring 2018 students. The qualitative data, however, paint a more complete and compelling picture of how the post-intervention version of the course affected student learning. Commenting on how the course helped them develop open-mindedness (4.29), students reported the following:

- I truly believe using case studies to look at multiple perspectives has made me more open-minded and more concerned about the situation as a whole.
- Being open-minded is important to show empathy and compassion. Because of readings like *Unflattening*, this class helped me think about things through lenses I would have discounted.
- The case studies helped me to accept and critique other perspectives.

As demonstrated by these samples, the reflective comments on

open-mindedness focused largely on the use of case studies during spring semester. Students noted how the case studies introduced multiple perspectives on an issue, which helped them acknowledge, understand, and critique differing perspectives while also engaging with perspectives they might have previously discounted. Further, students connected open-mindedness to empathy, compassion, and concern about others and the world around them. While the reporting is, at times, still underdeveloped (e.g. What specific perspectives do the case studies help students accept and critique? Was one case study more impactful than others?), students in the post-intervention course were far more likely to ground their responses in activities and assignments from the course in order to make a case for the development of interdisciplinary characteristics. Further, none of the responses pointed to the degree- and career-planning assignments that dominated the evidence supportive of answers in fall 2017 responses. (Those assignments were still used in the course, but no longer took center stage.)

Regarding the desires to be, and is, well-informed characteristic (4.29), students indicated the post-intervention class helped them develop as follows:

- This class made me want to be more informed so I can have intellectual conversations about certain topics like Amazon HQ2 [a case study topic].
- By giving us case studies to read, this class made me want to be more informed on the world we live in and what goes on around us.
- The pipeline assignment helped me realize you need to know all the facts before you pick a side.

When assessing the desire to be well-informed or feel better informed, students pointed to the value of being able to communicate with others in order to understand an issue and its impact on their communities. In line with the responses above, students tied their desire to be well-informed to activities and assignments in the class. In particular, the case studies introduced in this version of the course provided students with a more holistic look at complex issues that warrant an interdisciplinary approach. And, once again, responses did not feature the assignments or activities focused on degree- or career-planning.

With regard to the lowest ranked characteristics, the numerical averages showed a gap between the lowest two and those with mid-level ranking. For this cohort, the lowest ranked characteristics included defines terms in a way appropriate for the context (3.5) and draws conclusions when warranted—but with caution (3.48). Defines terms appropriately was also among the lowest ranked characteristics for this cohort at the beginning of the semester (3.58) and draws conclusions when warranted was the lowest ranked characteristic in the spring (3.48) as it had been in the fall (3.17).

A sample of students' qualitative responses on how/if the course helped them define and/or use terms in a way appropriate for the context (3.5) includes the following:

- There weren't a lot of key terms in this class.
- I use appropriate terms so things are more understandable.
- Because of follow-up questions in class discussions, I am more conscious about the way I use my words or how I say things.
- Each field demands certain vocab to effectively describe the issue and this class helped me realize that.

Several themes emerged in the reflective comments, including the lack of key terms (which students noted they often understand as bold words in a text), the importance of precise language, and the recognition that language or terms can vary depending on context (including different disciplines). The fact that the rankings for this characteristic were lower in comparison to others was consistent with fall data. However, the qualitative responses post-intervention were more specific and richer in detail than those in the data from the previous semester. In particular, some students acknowledged that language and terms can have specific meaning within a discipline. This recognition sets students up for work in future courses, including their disciplinary coursework and the interdisciplinary senior seminar, as they will begin to examine the similarities and differences in disciplinary perspectives in order to seek common ground and advance a more integrative analysis of an issue or problem.

Commenting on how or if the course helped them draw conclusions when warranted—but with caution (3.48), students noted the following:

- It is important to be cautious when drawing conclusions.
- I am more mindful of jumping to conclusions.
- Not as much with caution, as I tend to still be blunt in my opinion and state it.
- A conclusion can be an assumption without proper reasoning. The case studies helped me make sure I know the facts before I draw a conclusion.

As noted, students ranked their ability to draw conclusions when warranted lowest at the end of both fall and spring semesters. However, in this case, the reflective data from the spring were less specific and more generic than the reflections the same students offered for the other lowest ranked category (discussed above). Some students acknowledged the problem of “jumping to conclusions” and that conclusions can be flawed without the “proper reasoning,” facts, and data to support the conclusions. However, most comments only affirmed and reiterated the characteristic—merely acknowledging the need to be cautious and conscientious when drawing conclusions. Although the students' reflections do not account for why the class failed to leave them

feeling as though they had developed this characteristic, I suspect some of the responsibility rests in the design of the assignments. The introduction of the case studies seems to have helped students cultivate other characteristics (e.g. open-mindedness, being well-informed) because of exposure to complex, topical issues that require interdisciplinary approaches. Yet, related class activities and assignments did not typically require students to align with a specific perspective on the case study topic or force them to take a side on an issue, which might have limited how confident they felt about drawing conclusions (e.g. I did not use small, in-class working groups focused on finding common ground among different stakeholders' perspectives and seemingly disciplinary-based concerns). At this stage of the intervention and course redesign, I was encouraging students to explore an issue, compare different perspectives, and evaluate the evidence embedded in the case studies.

### *Limitations of the Intervention Stage*

Some of the limitations affecting the pre-intervention study in the fall also apply to the intervention stage of the study. In particular, the sample size remains small (25 students) and the reliability of students' self-assessment of their academic development remains questionable. Yet, as noted previously, this study focuses primarily on the trends and quality of the reflective, qualitative data. When comparing pre-intervention and post-intervention outcomes, I discovered that the evidence of how students rate their development of specific ID-related characteristics is more detailed, course-specific, and thoughtful post-intervention.

### **Looking Ahead: Program Overhaul**

The assessment and partial revision of KSU's Introduction to Integrative Studies, as reported in this article, is the first step in a larger curricular overhaul intended to make the curriculum and INTS degree more truly interdisciplinary. Because the pre-intervention version of the introductory course treated Integrative Studies as a degree-completion program and privileged degree- and career-planning, it did not provide students with an appropriate and necessary introduction to foundational topics or skills to aid in the development of interdisciplinary thinking. The data collected in this study, which I presented to my department chair and faculty colleagues, gave credence to my desire to *further* rewrite the introductory course beyond what had been done before I arrived on campus. With the support of my department chair and dean, I rewrote the course during fall 2018 (including the description, learning objectives, and schedule).

The fully revised INTS 1198: Introduction to Integrative Studies passed through the university's curriculum review process during spring 2019 and

the department began offering the updated version in spring 2020 (appendix C). The updated course description reads thus:

Through INTS 1198, you will learn about the field of integrative studies and begin making connections between your experiences in the classroom and the broader world. In order to facilitate this exploration, we will examine issues in the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences and gain a familiarity with the academic and popular forms of writing, media, and research in these areas of study. We will also engage with disciplinary insights in order to examine complex contemporary issues using an integrative lens. Our integrative learning process will involve research, articulating knowledge, using evidence to draw conclusions, and self-reflection.

The redesigned course ensures students who take INTS 1198 gain a basic understanding of several disciplinary areas and how one might aim to “break down the barriers between disciplines and draw together the various disciplinary areas into comprehensive, connective units that demonstrate the relationships between the different fields of knowledge” (Carmichael, 2004, p. 6). The emphasis on a blend of disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge is also evident in the rewritten learning objectives:

1. Identify disciplines in the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences;
2. Discuss how disciplinary perspectives on reality differ;
3. Compare different disciplinary modes of thinking and theoretical lenses in order to make connections across disciplines;
4. Explain the relevance and need for interdisciplinary thinking and integrative studies;
5. Identify connections between personal experiences, academic texts, and ideas;
6. Apply integrative thinking skills when investigating complex contemporary issues;
7. Demonstrate research and presentation (written and oral) skills.

While rewriting INTS 1198, I returned time and again to the fact that students had responded positively to the case studies I had introduced earlier and were able to explain how related out-of-class assignments and in-class activities helped foster the development of specific characteristics valuable to interdisciplinary students. A case study is an excellent means for introducing students to a complex issue and illustrating how relevant disciplinary insights can be integrated to produce a solution to the problems such issues pose. And in fact, the real takeaway of my earlier SoTL work was that INTS 1198 needed to center opportunities for collaborative and interdisciplinary investigation of complex, “real-world” issues. Several learning objectives in the revised course support this goal (e.g. 2, 3, and 6), and the new assignments give students the opportunity to work together to investigate issues

that warrant interdisciplinary analysis. For example, the final “key concepts” assignment in the reinvented course draws upon Byrne’s AAC&U case study, “Exploring Lawns and Gardens as Complex Socio-Ecological Systems” (n.d.). The assignment’s prompt reads thus:

Last week we assessed whether lawns and gardens can be considered socio-ecological systems (thus drawing upon and beginning to integrate sociological and ecological insights on the topic). For our final key concepts assignment, respond to the following prompt: The “Interdisciplinary Integration” reading (Menken & Keestra, 2016) identified three techniques for integration—add, adjust, and connect—that help us find common ground across different perspectives. In the case study’s “neighborly debate,” we saw Neighbors 1 and 2 communicating different ideas/perspectives about disease, beauty, and private property. Pick a point of dispute/difference that arose in the case study (e.g. the Neighbors’ quarrel or the linked websites with different perspectives on lawns and gardens). Explain the different disciplinary perspectives informing each side of the argument, and use one of the techniques to integrate the perspectives/find common ground.

In this final “key concepts” assignment (assigned during week 13), students demonstrate their ability to identify disciplinary perspectives and apply a course concept (i.e. integration techniques) in order to find common ground across disciplinary insights. The assignment has been treated as a discussion board post for fully online classes and as an in-class activity for classes that meet on-ground (in which students work in groups to address the prompt and then present their work to the class).

As noted above, the new approach to the introductory INTS course represented in this latest version of the syllabus is the first step in a multi-stage intervention intended to transform the Integrative Studies program into a truly interdisciplinary program. By rethinking the scope and outcomes of INTS 1198, faculty were able to more clearly and effectively map the curriculum, demonstrate to the curriculum review committees what skills and outcomes were introduced by a rewritten INTS 1198, and make a case for how other revised courses would give students opportunities to reinforce and master skills and outcomes introduced in INTS 1198 while also developing more advanced skills connected to systems, contextual, and integrative thinking.

Other courses in the existing program of study, including the senior seminar, have also been revised and approved by KSU’s curriculum committees. The senior seminar revision was a collaboration between my colleague/program co-coordinator and myself. The original version of the senior seminar had been entirely forward-looking and focused on students preparing graduate school or job materials for their next steps post-graduation. The course description and learning objectives for the original version of the

senior seminar read as follows:

This is a capstone course providing a structure for seniors to bring closure to their undergraduate experience while preparing for the transition from the university to the workplace or further academic study. This course is a requirement for all Integrative Studies majors. Upon completing INTS 4498, you should be able to:

1. Recognize and articulate how integrating your academic interests [has] built a foundation for ongoing learning and growth.
2. Evaluate and present the personal and professional meaning of your collegiate educational experience, particularly in the area of skills acquisition.
3. Develop a plan for pursuing your selected career path based on the awareness of the variety of post-graduate choices available.
4. Develop the tools needed to conduct an effective search for a career, graduate school or other post-graduate choice.
5. Identify enhanced networking and people skills essential to aid in your success post-KSU.
6. Understand how life skills will help you make a successful transition to post-university life and deal with the cycles of change and transition.

The revised senior seminar, which was taught for the first time in fall 2020, still provides students the opportunity to reflect upon their past educational experiences and plan for the future—but it also requires they demonstrate their interdisciplinary skills and their application of those skills. The new course description and learning objectives read as follows:

This Capstone course prepares students in the INTS program to understand the methods and advantages of their integrative, interdisciplinary education. Students will demonstrate the ability to formulate, research, and solve problems through an interdisciplinary lens that reflects the unique degree each student has built through coursework at KSU. The culmination of this labor will be a major creative and/or scholastic work. Additionally, the course will help prepare students for graduation by developing post-graduate and career-oriented skills that connect directly to each student's individual degree. These two parts, the academic and applied, once integrated, represent the skills and knowledge needed to successfully transition from university to life after graduation. Upon successful completion of INTS 4498, students should be able to:

1. Apply broad-based knowledge and critical thinking in multiple discrete areas of study;
2. Construct written research and/or creative work reflecting strong interdisciplinary academic research practices;
3. Demonstrate an ability to partition and interpret information or events

- using the most appropriate area of study's toolset;
4. Integrate disciplinary perspectives and apply interdisciplinary research methods to contemporary political, social, scientific and/or humanitarian questions;
  5. Justify interdisciplinarity and integrative studies and their advantages;
  6. Compose a professional resume, cover letter or other relevant materials, and illustrate skills that will contribute to post-graduation career success.

The revised senior seminar continues to provide INTS majors with the space and support to plan for their future. Yet, the course now also serves as a more appropriate culminating academic experience, as students are required to conduct research demonstrating their ability to integrate relevant disciplinary perspectives (unique to their degree plan and future goals) and use interdisciplinary research methods to address contemporary political, social, scientific, and/or humanitarian questions and issues.

The next stage of the curricular intervention is intended to be a program-level revision of the general and specialized track requirements of the INTS major to further ensure INTS functions as a truly interdisciplinary program. There are several priorities for the revised degree program. The first priority is adding a core set of INTS courses to the degree requirements (INTS 1198: Introduction to Integrative Studies, INTS 2298: Research Methods, INTS 3598: Advanced Integrative Thinking, and INTS 4498: Senior Seminar), which will increase the number of required INTS courses from two to four. Second, each of the core classes will require a pre- or co-requisite (and INTS 1198 will no longer be waived), which will ensure students spend at least three semesters as an INTS major prior to graduation.<sup>9</sup> Ideally students will declare an INTS major during their first or second year, though even late-declaring majors will need at least three semesters to earn a B.S. in Integrative Studies (whereas it is currently possible for students to earn this degree the same semester they decide to declare the INTS major). Third, the new degree proposal will require all majors to take three additional upper-level INTS courses, which they may select from a list that includes Integrative Approaches to Social Justice, Critical Media Literacy, Critical Science Literacy, Global Perspectives, Integrative Studies Internship, and special topics courses. Finally, all majors will be required to complete two thematic or disciplinary tracks of 12 upper-level credit hours each. The new degree proposal resembles the “alternating disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses” curricular model proposed by de Greef et al. (2017), who assert, “When a series of

9 If this proposal is implemented, students will have to devote one semester to INTS 1198; a second semester to INTS 2298 (as 1198 will be the course pre-req), and a third semester (or more) to INTS 3598 and INTS 4498 (as 3598 will be a co-req to 4498).

interdisciplinary courses are woven throughout the curriculum, they create cohesion between the more discipline-based courses in a programme” (p. 79). In combination, these revisions should ensure that the program offers more truly integrative and interdisciplinary instruction.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

The curricular intervention in the introductory course was successful. The evidence collected from students pre-intervention, particularly the qualitative data, supported my preliminary assessment that the course was not functioning as a truly introductory interdisciplinary studies course nor was it helping prepare students to act as interdisciplinary thinkers. The post-intervention cohort provided concrete evidence—references to case studies, course texts, and specific class topics and discussions—of how they thought the revised course helped them develop the characteristics of an interdisciplinary thinker. Further, these same students rarely referenced degree- and career-planning assignments in their responses as students taking the earlier version of the course had done. Ultimately, the post-intervention effort focused on striking a balance between meeting the approved course goals (that placed particular focus on degree- and career-planning) and introducing students to interdisciplinary studies while also creating opportunities for them to practice integrative thinking. Even though I was displeased with and limited by the course description and learning objectives that I had to work with (and within) during the intervention stage, I was still mindful of M.C. Everett’s (2016) argument that “a greater understanding of interdisciplinary studies can affect students’ perceptions of the major and the nature of interdisciplinary thinking and research” (p. 35). I wanted my students to gain a greater understanding of interdisciplinary studies through INTS 1198, and I was willing to settle for the small gains of the post-intervention course while waiting for the fully overhauled course to pass through the curriculum review

10 The new degree proposal, initially submitted in August 2019, was supported by my then-department chair and -dean. However, the proposal was hung up in the university’s review process with concerns that the proposed degree requirements did not meet the institutional or accrediting organization’s standards. The disagreement stemmed from language about what constitutes a field and the fact that INTS majors’ “field” (comprised of upper-level INTS core requirements, electives, and two areas of emphasis) would vary depending upon a student’s academic interests and goals. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, all INTS curricular discussions were paused in March 2020. Adding an additional layer of complexity to the degree revision process, the department and college that previously housed Integrative Studies were both dissolved on July 1, 2020. The two full-time INTS faculty (a colleague and I) were reassigned to the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, and the INTS program is temporarily being housed in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Dean’s office. I have been asked to continue to serve as the program’s co-coordinator through the 2020-21 academic year. Decisions about the program’s future—including departmental home and degree requirements—will hopefully be made during fall 2020.

process that would allow others to teach it—and perhaps further evolved versions of it—too.

The data collected during this study showed a need for a more rigorous and intentional introduction to integrative studies and emphasis on the development of interdisciplinary characteristics. The post-intervention version of Introduction to Integrative Studies now introduces students to interdisciplinary thinking and learning. The course aligns more closely with the documented outcomes of successful interdisciplinary programs that feature “active and collaborative learning activities, critical and creative thinking skills development, high levels of student-faculty interactions, and continuous exposure to interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration” (Carmichael & LaPierre, 2014, p. 72). All of these components of effective interdisciplinary education inform the vision for and evolution of the Integrative Studies program at Kennesaw State University and our continuing investment in the function and future of interdisciplinary education and integrated knowledge-making. I hope this account of the challenges and successes of rethinking our interdisciplinary curriculum to make it more truly interdisciplinary in its goals and outcomes will inspire productive conversation and action among colleagues whose curricula might benefit from similar rethinking. Perhaps many will take heart from this evidence that even a little bit of SoTL work can go a long way toward persuading colleagues and administrators that changes that will enhance interdisciplinary studies can and should be made.

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## Biographical Note

**Katharine Schaab, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies and coordinator of the Integrative Studies degree program at Kennesaw State University (GA). In addition to her research on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Schaab’s work also traverses the fields of American Studies, Critical Race Studies, and Women’s & Gender Studies. Her recent work has appeared in *Critical Studies in Television*, *Feminist Formations*, *The Journal of American Culture*, and *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*. She can be contacted at [kschaab@kennesaw.edu](mailto:kschaab@kennesaw.edu)

## Appendix A: INTS 1198 Syllabus, Fall 2017, Pre-Intervention

### *Course Description*

Introduction to Integrative Studies is a portfolio-based course focusing on the skills necessary for success in the INTS major and beyond. In this course, you will learn about the field of integrative studies from historical, theoretical, and practical vantage points. This process involves research, articulating knowledge, self-reflection, goal setting, and career planning. By the end of INTS 1198, you will apply knowledge gained this semester to create an integrative studies degree plan and portfolio that you will complete in INTS 4498: Senior Seminar.

### *Learning Objectives*

Upon completing INTS 1198, you should be able to:

1. Define interdisciplinary and integrative studies;
2. Discern between types of interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary research;
3. Develop an interdisciplinary research plan;
4. Explain how integrating your chosen areas of study will build a foundation for ongoing learning and growth;
5. Design and begin developing a reflective portfolio highlighting your academic and co-curricular accomplishments;
6. Identify career and/or graduate school options associated with your areas of study and develop a plan for pursuing these goals.

### *Required Reading*

- Tanner, M. (2016). *Introduction to Integrative Studies*. 2nd Ed. Kendall-Hunt.
- I will provide any additional readings in class or on our D2L course page.

### *Major Assignments*

#### *Discussion Board (210 points)*

You will complete 6 discussion posts (not including the self intro in week 1) and reply to 2 of your classmates' posts each time a discussion has started. That means that you will complete 6 posts and 12 responses this semester.

#### *Discussion Posts (6): 150 points (25/post)*

Each post should be at least 200 words in length. Your work will be evaluated based upon:

- Length, language clarity, and correctness
- Coherence, synthesis, and logic
- Overall quality of discussion post

*Discussion Responses (12): 60 points (5/response)*

You will respond to 2 of your classmates' discussion posts each time a post is assigned. Your responses should go beyond "I dis/agree" or "I like your point." For example, if you say "I like your post" or "Good point," you must then explain exactly which aspect of the post you liked or agreed with and connect it with your understanding/experiencing of that theory or action.

*INTS Degree Plan/Presentation (200 points)*

All prospective Integrative Studies majors must create a degree plan that details their course selections to fulfill the academic integration they wish to pursue. In doing so, you will learn the categories of courses required for all majors as well as the possibilities for integrating academic areas of emphasis from selecting concentrations to actual courses. Once you have completed your degree plan, you will compose a rationale for why you have selected the Integrative Studies major and how the courses you have chosen will benefit you in terms of knowledge and practical skills necessary for success in achieving your career goals. You will present your plan to class and invite feedback from your classmates.

*Interdisciplinary Research Plan (100 points)*

After reading about interdisciplinary research types and methods in your textbook, you will construct a basic research plan and present it to the class.

*INTS Portfolio Draft (100 points)*

You will explore your integrative learning experience by beginning to archive your collegiate experience through the design and development of a reflective portfolio, which begins to give personal and professional meaning to your expertise development, particularly in the area of skills acquisition. (e.g., key learning events, service, leadership, communication, teamwork, transferable skills, college student 2.0 skills, etc.).

*Career Research Project (100 points)*

Conduct a basic job search based on your career aspirations. Research the design and content of resumes in your profession and disciplines. Discuss your findings. As a result of your research, discuss your plans for the design and development of your resume and/or curriculum vitae. Have your KSU Career Counselor review your resume draft making sure it aligns with your academic disciplines and career plan during the semester. The Department of Career Planning & Development conducts *Mock Interviews* and *Virtual Interviews*. Sign up for one interview format. Present an overview of your job search, application materials, and interview experience.

*Grad Portfolio Stories (GPS) Project/Presentation (200 points)*

Creating and sharing your public portfolio storyboard (mission + design + format). Review and discuss sample senior KSU Integrative Studies GPS and Integrative Studies Senior Student Portfolios from other universities. Present your portfolio and discuss what you learned about design and sharing your public learning story.

*Participation (90 points)*

Our course is an active learning community that thrives when you participate. You are expected to come to class prepared and to actively participate (this may include contributing to class discussions and/or small group activities). Students who are ill-prepared, make irrelevant comments, do not engage in classroom discussion, or do not attend class will not earn participation points that day.

*Grading Scale*

A = 900 - 1,000

B = 800 - 899

C = 700 - 799

D = 600 - 699

F = 0 - 599

*Tentative Class Plan*

Note: The following weekly schedule shows a general map of the semester and its major topics. Readings and assignments will be posted on D2L (KSU's online learning software). It is your responsibility to complete all assigned readings before the start of class meetings and to submit assignments on time. More detailed weekly instructions will be available on D2L at least one week ahead of time.

Week 1 (8/15 and 8/17): Introductions; learning about the course and expectations

Week 2 (8/22 and 8/24): Definitions and history of interdisciplinarity

Week 3 (8/29 and 8/31): Integrative learning

Week 4 (9/5 and 9/7): Integrative studies degree research and planning

Week 5 (9/12 and 9/14): Integrative studies degree proposal submission

Week 6 (9/19 and 9/21): Understanding interdisciplinary research

Week 7 (9/26 and 9/28): Interdisciplinary research: your research plan

Week 8 (10/3 and 10/5): Interdisciplinary portfolios: samples and building your own

Week 9 (10/10 and 10/12): Interdisciplinary portfolios: drafting your portfolio

Week 10 (10/17 and 10/19): Integrative studies & career planning

Week 11 (10/24 and 10/26): Career planning, part 2

Week 12 (10/31 and 11/2): Career planning, part 3

Week 13 (11/7 and 11/9): Grad Portfolio Story (GPS), evaluating samples

Week 14 (11/14 and 11/16): GPS reflection and creation

Week 15 (11/28 and 11/30): GPS presentations

## Appendix B: INTS 1198 Syllabus, Spring 2018, Post-Intervention

### *Course Description*

Introduction to Integrative Studies is a portfolio-based course focusing on the skills necessary for success in the INTS major and beyond. In this course, you will learn about the field of integrative studies from historical, theoretical, and practical vantage points. This process involves research, articulating knowledge, self-reflection, goal setting, and career planning. By the end of INTS 1198, you will apply knowledge gained this semester to create an integrative studies degree plan and portfolio that you will complete in INTS 4498: Senior Seminar.

### *Learning Objectives*

Upon completing INTS 1198, you should be able to:

1. Define interdisciplinary and integrative studies;
2. Discern between types of interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary research;
3. Develop an interdisciplinary research plan;
4. Explain how integrating your chosen areas of study will build a foundation for ongoing learning and growth;
5. Design and begin developing a reflective portfolio highlighting your academic and co-curricular accomplishments;
6. Identify career and/or graduate school options associated with your areas of study and develop a plan for pursuing these goals.

### *Required Reading*

- Sousanis, Nick. 2015. *Unflattening*. Harvard University Press. 978-0674744431.
- Note: I will provide additional readings in class or on our D2L course site.

## Assignments

### *Introductory Assignments, Week 1 (50 points)*

Your success and that of our learning community are built upon active, thoughtful, and timely engagement with the material and one another. It is important that you understand course expectations and start to build a rapport with your classmates and me. As such, there are 3 “introductory” assignments due during the first week of class. You will take a syllabus quiz (15 points), submit a self-introduction to D2L and respond to 2 classmate’s posts (15 points), and write me a letter about yourself (20 points). More information about each assignment is available in the Week 1 module.

### *Discussion Board (300 points), Learning Objectives 1, 2*

You will complete 6 discussion posts and reply to 2 of your classmates’ posts each time a discussion has started. That means that you will complete 6 posts and 12 responses this semester. The prompts will vary, but you will be asked to engage with course texts and ideas. The discussion boards allow you to display your understanding of the course content, while practicing your writing and communication skills.

### *Discussion Posts (6) 240 points (40/post)*

Each post should be at least 200 words in length. Your work will be evaluated based upon:

- Coherence, logic of your arguments
- Effective use of course text in supporting your arguments
- Overall quality of discussion post, including length, spelling, and grammar

### *Discussion Responses (12): 60 points (5/response)*

You will respond to 2 of your classmates’ discussion posts each time a post is assigned. Your responses should go beyond “I disagree” or “I like your point.” For example, if you say “I like your post” or “Good point,” you must then explain exactly which aspect of the post you liked or agreed with and connect it with your understanding/experiencing of that theory or action.

### *Career Research Project (100 points), Learning Objective 6*

You will conduct a basic job (or graduate school) search based on your career aspirations. This process will include researching the design and content of resumes in your profession and disciplines and producing/revising a resume or curriculum vitae, thus helping you prepare for the job market (or for graduate school). You will present an overview of your job search and application

materials to the class. You will receive additional information about the assignment later in the semester.

*INTS Degree Plan & Rationale (75 points), Learning Objective 4*

All prospective Integrative Studies majors must create a degree plan that details their course selections to fulfill the academic integration they wish to pursue. In doing so, you will discover possibilities for integrating academic areas of emphasis. Once you have completed your degree plan, you will compose a rationale for why you have selected the Integrative Studies major and how the courses you have chosen will benefit you in terms of knowledge and practical skills necessary for achieving your career goals. You will workshop your rationale in class. You will receive additional information about the assignment later in the semester. This assignment will prepare you to apply for and become an INTS major.<sup>11</sup>

*Interdisciplinary Research Plan (75 points), Learning Objective 3*

After reading about interdisciplinary research types and methods, you will construct a basic research plan connected to your fields of study and present it to the class. This project will help you identify questions for a research project that you might pursue in future courses. You will receive additional information about the assignment later in the semester.

*Reflective Portfolio Project (200 points), Course Objective 5*

You will explore your integrative learning experience by beginning to archive your collegiate experience through the design and development of a reflective portfolio. The portfolio will give personal and professional meaning to your development. You will also present your portfolio in class. You will receive additional information about the assignment later in the semester.

<sup>11</sup> Most students enrolled in 1198 were not yet majors, as they had not met at least one of the program admission requirements (i.e. submission of the rationale and a 2.0 institutional GPA). These students were classified as “INTS interest,” which meant they had met with an adviser and developed an unofficial plan of study to earn a BS in Integrative Studies (which, for students with fewer than 90 credit hours, included INTS 1198). Regarding the rationale, as of spring 2020, the INTS program no longer requires students to complete the rationale for entry into the major. As a result, most students enrolled in INTS 1198 for fall 2020 are INTS majors (aside from those who have yet to earn a 2.0 institutional GPA or students taking the course as an elective). Although the rationale is no longer a program admission or course requirement, the faculty still see value in the rationale. We planned on assigning it in INTS 2298 (Research Methods) once the course was required for all INTS majors. However, as noted above, the COVID-19 pandemic and dissolution of the program’s former department and college have delayed the curriculum overhaul; thus, we currently do not require students to write a rationale.

### *Participation (200 points)*

Our course is an active learning community that thrives when you contribute. You are expected to arrive on time, prepared, and ready to actively participate (this may include contributing to class discussions, small group activities, informal writing assignments, ungraded homework, etc.). You will not earn participation points for days you arrive more than five minutes late, are ill-prepared, make irrelevant comments, or do not attend class.

### *Grading Scale*

A = 900 - 1,000

B = 800 - 899

C = 700 - 799

D = 600 - 699

F = 0 - 599

### *Tentative Class Schedule*

Note: The following weekly schedule shows a general map of the semester and its major topics. I will post more specific instructions and deadlines to D2L, so please be in the habit of checking our course site. It is your responsibility to complete all assigned readings before the start of class meetings and to submit assignments on time.

Week 1 (1/09 and 1/11): Introductions; On Education

- Reading: Schank (D2L)
- Assignment: Syllabus Quiz, Self Intro, Letter

Week 2 (1/16 and 1/18): Integrative Studies, *Unflattening*

- Readings
  - » *Unflattening, Ch 1 & Interlude*
- Assignment: Post-responses #1 due

Week 3 (1/23 and 1/25): Disciplinary knowledge; *Unflattening*

- Readings
  - » *Interdisciplinary Research, pp. 2-9; 31-38 (D2L)*
  - » *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies, pp. 110-33 (D2L)*
  - » *Unflattening, Ch 2-3*
- Assignment: Post-responses #2 due

Week 4 (1/30 and 2/1): Integrative Thinking: Case Study 1

- Reading: Case Study, English Only Policy (D2L)
- Assignment: Post-responses #3 due

Week 5 (2/6 and 2/8): Career Planning (job search, materials, interviews)

- Reading: Tanner, pp. 123-7 (D2L)
- Guest on 2/6: KSU Department of Career Planning
- In class (Thurs): job searching and mock interviews

Week 6 (2/13 and 2/15): *Unflattening*; Career/Grad School Presentations

- Reading: *Unflattening*, Ch 4-5
- Presentations: small groups (Thurs)
- Assignment: Career Research Project due

Week 7 (2/20 and 2/22): Integrative Thinking: Case Study 2

- Reading: Case Study, Pipelines (D2L)
- Assignment: Post-responses #4 Due

Week 8 (2/27 and 3/1): INTS Degree Plan

- Guest on 2/27: KSU Academic Advising
- In class (Thurs): work day—building degree plan; bring computer

Week 9 (3/6 and 3/8): *Unflattening*; INTS degree rationale & workshop

- Reading: *Unflattening*, Ch 6, Interlude
- Workshop: rationale statements
- Assignment: INTS rationale due (and plan, completion check)

Week 10 (3/13 and 3/15): Integrative Thinking: Case Study 3

- Reading: Case Study, Vaccines (D2L)
- Assignment: Post-responses #5 Due

Week 11 (3/20 and 3/22): Interdisciplinary Research Plan; *Unflattening*

- Reading: *Academic Skills*, Ch 3 (D2L)
- In class: practice writing/refining research questions
- Reading: *Unflattening*, Ch 7-8

Week 12 (3/27 and 3/29): Interdisciplinary Research Presentations

- Assignment: Interdisciplinary Research Plan due
- In class: interdisciplinary research presentations

Week 13 (4/10 and 4/12): Evaluating sample portfolios; identifying artifacts

- Reading: Tanner, pp. 129-31 (D2L); Career Planning materials
- Guest on 4/12: KSU Department of Career Planning

Week 14 (4/17 and 4/19): Portfolios: reflection and creation

- Meetings week
- Assignment: Post-responses #6 due

Week 15 (4/24 and 4/26): Reflective Portfolios: presentations

- Assignment: portfolio due/presentations

## Appendix C: INTS 1198 Syllabus, Spring 2020\*

\*The fully revised INTS 1198 was taught for the first time in spring 2020. All faculty must use the approved course description and learning objectives, but full-time faculty may alter any of the assignments and readings. Part-time faculty are asked to teach the course based upon the common syllabus. We did not need to make any adjustments due to COVID-19, as all faculty using the readings and schedule listed below were already fully online.

### *Course Description*

Through INTS 1198, you will learn about the field of integrative studies and begin making connections between your experiences in the classroom and the broader world. In order to facilitate this exploration, we will examine issues in the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences and gain a familiarity with the academic and popular forms of writing, media, and research in these areas of study. We will also engage with disciplinary insights in order to examine complex contemporary issues using an integrative lens. Our integrative learning process will involve research, articulating knowledge, using evidence to draw conclusions, and self-reflection.

### *Learning Objectives*

Upon successful completion of INTS 1198, students should be able to:

1. Identify disciplines in the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences;
2. Discuss how disciplinary perspectives on reality differ;
3. Compare different disciplinary modes of thinking and theoretical lenses in order to make connections across disciplines;
4. Explain the relevance and need for interdisciplinary thinking and integrative studies;
5. Identify connections between personal experiences, academic texts, and ideas;
6. Apply integrative thinking skills when investigating complex contemporary issues;
7. Demonstrate research and presentation (written and oral) skills.

### Required Texts

- Horowitz, Alexandra. *On Looking: A Walker's Guide to the Art of Observation*. 1439191263
- *The Mask You Live In* (2015), documentary directed by J.S. Newsome
- *Miss Representation* (2011), documentary directed by J.S. Newsome
- Pyenson, Nick. *Spying on Whales*. 0735224587
- Quinn, Daniel. *Ishmael: A Novel*. 0553375407

Note: It's up to you whether you purchase or rent our course texts (be mindful of how rental restrictions might affect your access). I will provide additional texts on our D2L course site. Also, you will need a webcam for this course.

### Succeeding in INTS 1198

I believe each of you has the ability to learn, grow, and succeed in our course. A successful semester will depend on you prioritizing the class by being prepared, contributing to discussion and activities, asking questions when you need clarification, following assignment instructions, submitting assignments on time, and respectfully engaging with your classmates and me. In turn, you will have my full support as you work to achieve your goals. You can expect me to arrive on time and prepared, give timely feedback on your work, and be available to meet with you during office hours or by appointment. Please remember that I am a resource and your academic ally.

### Assignments

#### *Introductory Assignments (30 points)*

Your success and that of our learning community are built upon active, thoughtful, and timely engagement with the material and one another. It is important that you understand course expectations and start to build a rapport with your classmates and me. [Thus], you will take a syllabus quiz (10 points) and submit a self-introduction detailing your story in relation to INTS 1198 (20 points). More information is available in the Week 1 module.

#### *Key Concepts<sup>12</sup> (320 points), Learning Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7*

Through the semester, you will submit eight “key concept” assignments (40 points each). The nature of the task will vary (e.g. analysis, map, research, etc.), but you will be asked to demonstrate your understanding of the week's major texts and ideas. Key concept assignments are intended to help you keep

12 Like the Discussion Board postings and responses in earlier versions of this course syllabus, the Key Concepts assignments that replace them involve students responding to peers' posts most of the time.

up with the material and ensure you understand crucial concepts before we reach the higher stakes midterm and final assignments (i.e. oral exams).

*Exploration Journals (200 points), Learning Objectives 3, 4, 5*

Throughout the semester, you will submit five reflective journals (40 points each). The prompts will vary, but you will describe your environment, evaluate your experience and expectations, and make connections to course texts and ideas. The journals allow you to display your understanding of the course content while practicing your writing and communication skills. Details available on D2L.

*Oral Exams (200 points), Learning Objectives 2, 3, 5, 6, 7*

In conversation with a group of your peers, you will participate in two oral exams during the semester (the first is worth 75 points; the second is worth 125 points). Each oral exam will primarily focus on one course text, though you will also make connections to other course readings and ideas. During the exam, you should be able to demonstrate evidence of text preparation, critical thinking, communication skills, and an ability to make connections to other course topics or materials. I will provide a rubric for evaluation later in the semester.

*Grading Scale*

- A = 675 - 750
- B = 600 - 674
- C = 525 - 599
- D = 450 - 524
- F = 0 - 449

*Tentative Class Schedule*

Note: The following weekly schedule shows a general map of the semester and its major topics. I will post more specific instructions and deadlines to D2L, so please be in the habit of checking our course site each week. It is your responsibility to complete all assigned readings/viewings and to submit assignments on time.

*Module 1: Introducing Integrative Studies*

Week 1: Questioning the Familiar

- Readings:
  - » Schank, “No More Teacher’s Dirty Looks”
  - » Horowitz, “Amateur Eyes” (from *On Looking*)
- Assignments: Syllabus Quiz, Self Intro; Key Concepts 1

Week 2: Integrative Studies

- Readings:
  - » Repko et al. “*Interdisciplinary Studies in the Real World*”
  - » Williams, “*Caught in the Act: Integrative Studies Where I Least Expected It*”
- Assignments: Journal 1, Familiar Routes

Week 3: Disciplinary Knowledge

- Readings:
  - » Repko & Szostak, “*Introducing the Disciplines*”
  - » Sousanis, *Unflattening*, Ch1
- Assignments: Key Concepts 2

Module 2: The Arts & Humanities

Week 4: Arts & Humanities: Exploring

- Readings:
  - » *The Humanities Matter! And “How is HUM research conducted?”*
  - » *On Looking*, selections
  - » *Quinn’s Ishmael: A Novel*, Ch 1-5 (up to p. 91)
- Assignment: Journal 2, Unfamiliar Space

Week 5: Humanities: What Makes Us Human?

- Readings:
  - » *Ishmael*, Ch 6-9 (up to p. 184)
- Assignments: Key Concepts 3

Week 6: Humanities: What Makes Us Human?

- Readings:
  - » *Ishmael*, Ch 10-13 (finish the book)
- Assignments: Key Concepts 4

Module 3: The Social Sciences

Week 7: Social Sciences: Exploring

- Readings:
  - » *An Animated Introduction; Why Social Science?*
  - » *On Looking*, selections
- Assignment: Journal 3, With a Friend

Week 8: Social Sciences: Human Interactions

- View: *Miss Representation* and *The Mask You Live In*
- Assignments: Key Concepts 5

Week 9: Social Sciences: Oral Exam

- Assignment: Oral Exam

*Module 4: The Sciences*

Week 10: Sciences: Exploring

- Readings:
  - » *On Sciences*
  - » *On Looking, selections*
  - » *Pyenson, Spying on Whales, prologue, chapters 1-7*
- Assignment: Journal 4, Your Neighborhood

Week 11: Sciences: Explaining the Universe

- Readings:
  - » *Spying on Whales, Chapter 8-epilogue (finish the book)*
- Assignments: Key Concepts 6

*Module 5: Integrative Knowledge*

Week 12: Integrating Perspectives

- Reading: Learning with Case Method & Lawns Case Study
- Assignments: Key Concepts 7

Week 13: Integrative Thinking

- Readings:
  - » *Integration techniques; finish case study*
- Assignments: Key Concepts 8

Week 14: Integrative Oral Exam

- Assignment: Semester Oral Exam

Week 15: Wrapping Up

- Reading: *On Looking, "Seeing It"*
- Assignment: Journal: Semester End

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