

# INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN THE LIBERAL ARTS

Faculty Office Building (Bldg. 47), Room 36L  
Phone: 805.756.2740  
<https://isla.calpoly.edu>  
<https://sts.calpoly.edu>

Department Chair: David Kirby

## Academic Programs

Program name	Program type
Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology	Minor
Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology	Minor
Interdisciplinary Studies	BA
Media Arts, Society and Technology	Minor
Science Communication	Minor

The Department offers interdisciplinary and international classes in a wide variety of subject areas, from applied practice in media arts and technologies; to the study of social, cultural, political, and ethical issues involved in science and technology; to courses that examine world cultures. Many ISLA classes satisfy University general education and breadth requirements.

In addition to the BA in Interdisciplinary Studies, ISLA also offers four interdisciplinary Science, Technology and Society (STS) minors: Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology; Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology; Media Arts, Society and Technology and Science Communication. These STS minors are available to students throughout the University, regardless of their technical backgrounds.

## Undergraduate Programs

### BA Interdisciplinary Studies

The BA Interdisciplinary Studies degree provides a flexible, coherent and rigorous baccalaureate education designed around a central theme or guiding question and culminating in an interdisciplinary senior project that draws upon the perspectives or methodologies of at least two disciplines.

The degree reflects the university's commitment to empower students with a holistic, interdisciplinary experience that prepares them for success in the global economy. The core IS courses facilitate students' integration of the multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledges they gain through their other coursework. The culminating senior project draws upon the insights and methodologies gained through students' chosen course of study. This process of honing a guiding question or theme, identifying the methodologies and knowledges necessary to pursue it, and completing an original research or creative project in response to it, develops the habits of mind of a lifelong learner.

The program also reflects the university's commitment to learn by doing, most notably through the senior project, in which students will produce a piece of original interdisciplinary scholarship or a hands-on project that integrates the methods and perspectives of more than one discipline. Students' experiential learning will be further enhanced through the varied opportunities to participate in learn by doing that occurs in classes

throughout the college's curriculum, including through internships and project-based coursework.

## Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology Minor

The Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology (EPPST) minor enables students to understand the complexities of contemporary science and technology policies as they relate to the broader public, ethical theories and applications, and personal and societal values; appreciate the historical influences on existing policies and practices; evaluate current policies; and assess the potential outcomes of proposed policy changes. A broad range of elective courses provides students with the opportunity to customize the EPPST minor to their particular interests, allowing them to pursue further knowledge in a focused subject area —such as biotechnology, sustainability and the environment, genetic engineering, health, development, agriculture, and the technologies of war. Students completing the EPPST minor will gain important skills for creating, proposing, promoting, and evaluating policies that respond to the profound challenges and choices we face related to science and technology in the 21st century at local, national, and international levels. The EPPST minor is not open to students who have declared a minor in one of the other STS minors: Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology (GRCST); Media Arts, Society and Technology (MAST); and Science Communication (SC).

## Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology Minor

The Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology (GRCST) minor provides students with the opportunity to explore and analyze the historical and contemporary relationships between gender, race, culture, science, technology, and medicine in local, national, and transnational contexts. Utilizing feminist and critical race approaches from the fields of gender and ethnic studies, the GRCST minor examines the role of cultural, ethical, social, political, and economic factors in determining the norms, values and meanings of scientific, technological, and medical practices, with an emphasis on the ways in which the production and applications of science, technology, and medicine shape and are shaped by knowledge and beliefs about gender, race, class, and sexuality. Students completing the GRCST minor will gain important intellectual and practical skills for creating, enacting, and evaluating efforts to create more socially just, equitable, and inclusive science, technology, and medicine in an increasingly diverse and globalized world. The GRCST minor is not open to students who have declared a minor in one of the other STS minors: Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology (EPPST); Media Arts, Society and Technology (MAST); and Science Communication (SC).

## Media Arts, Society and Technology Minor

The Media Arts, Society and Technology (MAST) minor encourages students to explore the ways in which the media arts are enabled and shaped by progress in science and technology while also being uniquely situated to promote engagement with and critical reflection about the meanings of scientific, technical, and social progress. Throughout the MAST minor, students are provided with the opportunity to develop and refine their expertise in the creative, visual, communicative, and performing arts, such as film, video, still photography, sound design, stage and lighting design, computer graphics, and interactive

entertainment. Through hands-on projects and explorations of media history and theory, students completing the MAST minor will develop and apply knowledge and skills in conceptual and critical thinking, media literacy, teamwork, leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and project management, and will be prepared to function as both cultural commentators and creators positioned to address and respond to the profound challenges and choices we face in the 21st century. The MAST minor is not open to students who have declared a minor in one of the other STS minors: Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology (EPPST); Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology (GRCST); and Science Communication (SC).

## Science Communication Minor

The Science Communication (SC) minor enables students to investigate how individuals and societies create, disseminate, maintain, and challenge perceptions of science, technology, and risk in multiple contexts. The minor focuses on key debates and controversies involving science and technology, public understandings and misunderstandings of scientific and technical expertise, industry-public relations, cultures of regulation and compliance, hazards, uncertainties, crisis management, and the politics of evidence. Through hands-on projects, SC students will develop and practice specific skills for communicating about science and technology to various audiences across multiple media formats. A broad range of elective courses allows students to customize the SC minor to their particular interests, enabling them to pursue knowledge in a focused subject area or further refine communication production skills. Students completing the SC minor will be prepared to understand, engage with, respond to, and communicate about the profound challenges and choices we face related to science and technology in the 21st century. The SC minor is not open to students who have declared a minor in one of the other STS minors: Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology (EPPST); Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology (GRCST); and Media Arts, Society and Technology (MAST).

## ISLA Courses

### ISLA 123. Introduction to Science, Technology & Society. 4 units

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Introductory exploration of science, technology, and society relationships from interdisciplinary perspectives in the arts, communications, humanities, and social sciences. Topic areas include ethics and public policy; gender, race and culture; media arts and society; science and risk communication. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures.

### ISLA 201. Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies. 4 units

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 218, ES 112, HIST 206, HIST 216, ISLA 123, JOUR 219, JOUR 228, RELS 201, WGQS 201, or WGQS 210.

Focus on methods, concepts and skills in the Interdisciplinary Studies major, and on career and graduate school opportunities. Refinement of individualized plan of study to reflect professional, educational, and personal goals. 4 lectures.

### ISLA 240. Introduction to Media Arts and Technologies. 4 units

Term Typically Offered: W

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area C1 (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs). Recommended: TH 210.

The intimate connection between the desire for artistic expression and current technologies that can assist that expression. Examination of technologies for theater, sound, cinema, gaming, and embodied media. Guest speakers with expertise. 4 lectures.

### ISLA 255. Introduction to Interdisciplinary Theory and Methods. 4 units

Term Typically Offered: F, W

Prerequisite: ISLA 201.

Introduces students to interdisciplinary research and how interdisciplinarity integrates with disciplinary methods and theories. Course content develops integrated foundational knowledge and perspective for conducting original interdisciplinary research in higher level courses. Preparation for ISLA 355, senior project, and senior portfolio. 4 lectures.

### ISLA 303. Values and Technology. 4 units

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area C

2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C4

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and one course in GE Area C.

Humanistic investigation into the theoretical and practical applications of technology with specific reference to the social effects of technological change. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. For all majors. Non-technical. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as HNRS 304/ISLA 303. Fulfills GE Upper-Division C (GE Area C4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

### ISLA 305. Topics in Public Engagements with STEM. 4 units

Term Typically Offered: SP

2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area B

2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area B5, B6, or B7

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; completion of GE Areas B1 and B2 with a grade of C- or better; and completion of one course in GE Area B4 (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs) with a grade of C- or better. Recommended: STAT 130, STAT 217, STAT 218 or STAT 313.

Exploration of contemporary issues in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), with an emphasis on public engagements with STEM research and teaching cultures. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Area Upper-Division B (GE Areas B5, B6, or B7 for students on the 2019-20 catalog).

**ISLA 316. London: From Roman Colony to World Capital. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area D

2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area D5

Prerequisite: Junior standing; enrollment in London Study program; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and one lower-division course in GE Area D.  
Corequisite: ISLA 319.

Selective examination of the historical and cultural legacy of London within the development of Western civilization as well as its influence on the submission and eventual emergence of the non-Western world in the twentieth century. An analytical and interpretive study of how London shaped the social, economic, political and legal institutions of Western society. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Upper-Division D (GE Area D5 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

**ISLA 319. London Activities. 2 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

CR/NC

Prerequisite: Enrollment in London Study program.

Analytical and interpretive survey of the principal center of the English speaking world. The development of London from Roman administrative capital to modern cultural, financial and political colossus. Credit/No Credit grading only. 2 activities.

**ISLA 320. Topics and Issues in Values, Media and Culture. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area C

2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C4

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and one lower-division course in GE Area C.

The interplay of values, media, and culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. Descriptive subtitles assigned to each course. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. 4 lectures. Total credit limited to 8 units with different subtopic; repeatable in same term. Crosslisted as HNRS/ISLA 320. Fulfills GE Upper-Division C (GE Area C4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

**ISLA 330. Cal Poly Land: Nature, Technology, and Society. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area B

2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area B5, B6, or B7

Sustainability Focused

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course from GE Area B1 (GE Area B4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); one course from GE Area B2; and one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

Scientific investigation of the natural features of the Cal Poly landscape and their transformations by land management technology. Environmental, economic, social, and political effects of agriculture, resource extraction, construction technology. Educational, land-use, long term planning issues. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as AG/ISLA/SCM/UNIV 330. Fulfills GE Area Upper-Division B (GE Areas B5, B6, or B7 for students on the 2019-20 catalog).

**ISLA 335. Feminist Studies of Popular Culture and Whiteness. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area C

2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C4

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and one lower-division course in GE Area C.

Feminist approaches to the analysis of representations of whiteness in contemporary media, and considerations of the U.S. cultural values these images illuminate. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as ISLA/WGQS 335. Fulfills GE Upper-Division C (GE Area C4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs). Formerly WGS 335.

**ISLA 340. Media Arts and Technologies: Storytelling. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 240 or the completion of an ART or TH course in GE Area C1 (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

Creation of expressive technology-based pre-production works for standard television and film presentation to interactive technological environments. Pre-production script work, storyboarding, flow chart design, collaborative story creation, audience testing, and basic animatic construction. Visiting professionals work with students directly in collaborative workshops. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

**ISLA 341. Media Arts and Technologies: Cinematic Process. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 340.

Cinematic production including adapting a narrative for different presentation formats, storyboarding, lighting, sound recording, cinematography and editing. Production of short works designed as foundational pieces that can be built upon individually or in teams in independent study. Visiting professionals run collaborative production workshops. 2 lectures, 2 activities.

**ISLA 350. The Global Environment. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area B

2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area B5, B6, or B7

Sustainability Focused

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; and completion of GE Areas B1 through B4, with a grade of C- or better in one course in GE Area B4 (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

Interdisciplinary investigation of how human activities impact the Earth's environment on a global scale. Examination of population, resource use, climate change, and biodiversity from scientific/technical and social/economic/historical/political perspectives. Use of remote sensing maps. Sustainable solutions. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as AG/EDES/ENGR/GEOG/ISLA/SCM/UNIV 350. Fulfills GE Area Upper-Division B (GE Areas B5, B6, or B7 for students on the 2019-20 catalog).

**ISLA 355. Interdisciplinary Research Methods. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W

Prerequisite: ISLA 201. Recommended: STAT 130, STAT 217, STAT 218, or STAT 251.

Exploration of interdisciplinary research strategies, theory, and process, including contextualization, perspective taking, and integration. Development of knowledge and skills needed to conduct original interdisciplinary research. Preparation for senior project or senior portfolio. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures.

**ISLA 393. Action-oriented Ethnography. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area D2 (or in GE Area D3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and one of the following: ANT 201, ANT 202, ANT 250, ISLA 123, any Ethnic Studies (ES) course, any Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) course.

Development of knowledge and skills needed to conduct original action-oriented ethnographic research. Grounded in the reflexive 'turn' in anthropology and critical race, science, technology and society, queer and feminist studies, students will engage questions of authority, representation, critical consciousness and justice. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as ANT/ISLA 393.

**ISLA 395. Science Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F

Sustainability Related

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better and completion of one GE Area B course.

Examination of science communication in a variety of contexts. Issues covered may include: scientific journal articles, boundary-work, information deficit models, public understanding/awareness of science, accommodated science, mediated science, popular science. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as COMS/ISLA 395.

**ISLA 400. Independent Study Project. 1-4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: Junior or senior standing and consent of instructor.

Independent study project focusing more than one discipline on a problem of study related to the liberal arts. May involve travel and/or independent research. Bibliography and study plan submitted in advance. Total credit limited to 8 units.

**ISLA 411. Technology and Community Engagement. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; and sophomore standing.

Onsite work with community and design team to develop and evaluate the use of innovative technologies as tools for community development and empowerment. Through guided discussion with instructor, guests, and community members, work through intercultural collaboration and design issues, conduct qualitative and quantitative research, and present works-in-progress. Field trip may be required. Total credit limited to 8 units. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as ISLA/LAES 411.

**ISLA 440. Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies Seminar. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 201. Recommended: ISLA 355.

Advanced examination of selected interdisciplinary topic. Topics will be examined from perspective of multiple disciplines. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures.

**ISLA 450. Summer Internship in London. 12 units**

Term Typically Offered: SU

CR/NC

Prerequisite: Junior standing and consent of the Director of London Study.

Extensive work experience in London. Administration, orientation, and supervision of independent work by the service provider. Intensive two-week orientation, eight-week full-time work assignment. Evaluation by instructor, internship supervisor, and employer. Credit/No Credit grading only. 4 lectures, 8 units of independent study.

**ISLA 456. Advanced Project-Based Learning in Science, Technology & Society. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 123; completion of GE area A with grades of C- or better; completion of GE Area B1 (GE Area B3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs) or completion of GE Area B2; junior standing; and minor in one of the following: Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology; Gender, Race, Culture, Science, and Technology; Media Arts, Society and Technology; or Science and Risk Communication.

Develop, maintain and lead teams in a project investigating complex multi-disciplinary issues in science, technology and society. Integrate knowledge across the minors. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 2 lectures, 2 activities.

**ISLA 461. Senior Project. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Prerequisite: Senior standing; and ISLA 355.

Selection and completion of an interdisciplinary research or creative project that draws upon at least two disciplines. 4 seminars.

**ISLA 465. Internship. 2-12 units**

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

CR/NC

Prerequisite: ISLA 201 and consent of instructor.

Supervised training, research, and work in public and private organizations. Evaluations by supervisor and written reports by student required. Major credit limited to 4 units; total credit limited to 12 units. Credit/No Credit grading only.

**ISLA 470. Selected Advanced Topics. 2-4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Junior standing; and completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better.

Focused interdisciplinary study of an issue impacting or impacted by the liberal arts, combining the insight and expertise of more than one of the liberal arts disciplines, especially as they interface with the sciences and technology and/or international studies in a study abroad setting. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units; repeatable in same term. 2 to 4 lectures.