

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN THE LIBERAL ARTS

<https://isla.calpoly.edu>

<https://sts.calpoly.edu>

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

- Interdisciplinary Studies (BA) (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/liberal-arts/interdisciplinary-studies/interdisciplinary-studies-ba/>)

Undergraduate Minors

- Ethics, Public Policy, Science and Technology Minor (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/liberal-arts/interdisciplinary-studies/ethics-public-policy-science-technology-minor/>)
- Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology Minor (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/liberal-arts/interdisciplinary-studies/gender-race-culture-science-technology-minor/>)
- Media Arts, Society and Technology Minor (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/liberal-arts/interdisciplinary-studies/media-arts-technologies-minor/>)
- Science Communication Minor (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/liberal-arts/interdisciplinary-studies/science-communication-minor/>)

ISLA Courses

ISLA 1101 Interdisciplinary Studies Major First Year Seminar (1 unit)

Term Typically Offered: F

CR/NC

Small, interactive course to help new Interdisciplinary Studies majors transition successfully to academic and student life. Insights into major, opportunity to interact with fellow majors, build a community of academic support, explore campus resources, and develop skills, identity, and interests. Credit/No Credit grading only. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 1 seminar.

ISLA 1123 Introduction to Science, Technology, and Society (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Introductory exploration of science, technology, and society relationships from interdisciplinary perspectives in the arts, communications, humanities, and social sciences. Ethics and public policy. Gender, race, and culture. Media arts and society. Science and risk communication. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Formerly ISLA 123.

ISLA 2201 Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: One of the following: ES 112, ES 1112, ISLA 123, ISLA 1123, HIST 206, HIST 2206, HIST 216, HIST 2216, JOUR 219, JOUR 2219, JOUR 228, JOUR 2228, RELS 201, RELS 2201, WGQS 201, WGQS 2201, WGQS 210, or WGQS 2210.

Introduces the foundations of interdisciplinary studies through a focus on methods, concepts and skills. Explorations of how interdisciplinary studies can help students better attain their professional, educational, and personal goals. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 seminars. Formerly ISLA 201.

ISLA 2240 Introduction to Media Arts and Technologies (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

2026-28 or later catalog: GE Area 3A

2020-26 catalogs: GE Area C1

Investigate the intersection of creativity and cutting-edge technologies in art, theater, sound, cinema, gaming, and embodied media. Engage in interdisciplinary practices to analyze and conceive of new possibilities for merging art and technology in contemporary artistic expression. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Fulfills GE Area 3A (GE Area C1 for students on the 2020-26 catalogs).

ISLA 2255 Introduction to Interdisciplinary Theory and Methods (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 201 or ISLA 2201.

Introduces students to interdisciplinary research and how interdisciplinarity integrates with disciplinary methods and theories. Develops integrated foundational knowledge and perspective for conducting original interdisciplinary research in higher level courses. Preparation for research methods, senior project, and senior portfolio. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 seminars. Formerly ISLA 255.

ISLA 3303 Values and Technology (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP, SU

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 3

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area C

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of one lower-division course in GE Area 3 (GE Areas C1 or C2 for the 2020-26 catalogs).

Humanistic and artistic investigation exploring the cultural values we associate with technology with specific reference to the social effects of technological change. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as HNRS/ISLA 3303. Fulfills GE Upper-Division 3 (GE Area Upper-Division C for students on the 2020-26 catalogs). Formerly HNRS 304/ISLA 303.

ISLA 3305 Public Engagements with STEM (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: SP

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 2/5

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area B

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of one course in GE Areas 5A or 5B (GE Areas B1 or B2 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs). Recommended: At least one prior course in Computer Science, Data Science, or Statistics.

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 subtitle selected. Repeatable up to 6 units. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Fulfills GE Area Upper-Division 2 or Upper-Division 5 (GE Area Upper-Division B for students on the 2020-26 catalogs). Formerly ISLA 305.

ISLA 3320 Issues in Values, Media and Culture (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP, SU

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 3

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area C

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of one lower-division course in GE Area 3 (GE Areas C1 or C2 for the 2020-26 catalogs).

The interplay of values, media, and culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. Descriptive subtitles assigned to each course. The Class Schedule will list subtitle selected. Repeatable up to 6 units. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as HNRS/ISLA 3320. Fulfills GE Upper-Division 3 (GE Area Upper-Division C for students on the 2020-26 catalogs). Formerly HNRS/ISLA 320.

ISLA 3330 Cal Poly Land: Nature, Technology, and Society (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: SP

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 2/5

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area B

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 5A (GE Area B1 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of GE Area 5B (GE Area B2 for the 2020-26 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. Field trip required. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as AG/ISLA/SCM/UNIV 3330. Fulfills GE Areas Upper-Division 2 or Upper-Division 5 (GE Area Upper-Division B for students on the 2020-26 catalogs). Formerly AG/ISLA/SCM/UNIV 330.

ISLA 3335 Feminist Studies of Popular Culture and Whiteness (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 3

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area C

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of one lower-division course in GE Area 3 (GE Areas C1 or C2 for the 2020-26 catalogs).

Feminist approaches to the analysis of representations of whiteness in contemporary media and considerations of the US cultural values these images illuminate. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as ISLA/WGQS 3335. Fulfills GE Upper-Division 3 (GE Area Upper-Division C for students on the 2020-26 catalogs). Formerly ISLA/WGS 335.

ISLA 3340 Media Arts and Technologies: Storytelling (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 240, ISLA 2240, or completion of one ART or TH course.

Creation of expressive technology-based pre-production and production works for standard television and film presentation to interactive technological environments. Pre-production screenwriting, collaborative story creation, and documentary production. Visiting professionals work with students directly in collaborative workshops. Course may be offered in classroom-based or hybrid format. 2 lectures, 1 laboratory. Formerly ISLA 340.

ISLA 3341 Media Arts and Technologies: Cinematic Process (4 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 340 or ISLA 3340.

Cinematic storytelling adapting original screenplays into narrative films. Collaborate on story development, storyboarding, casting, directing actors, sound design, cinematography, and editing. Produce public screening including poster creation, web design, and press coverage. Visiting professionals run collaborative production workshops. Course may be offered in classroom-based or hybrid format. 3 lectures, 1 laboratory. Formerly ISLA 341.

ISLA 3345 Independent Cinema and Film Festivals (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: SP, SU

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 3

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area C

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of one lower-division course in GE Area 3 (GE Areas C1 or C2 for the 2020-26 catalogs).

An exploration of the theories and practices of the independent film industry and its relationship with film festivals. Field trip required. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Fulfills GE Upper-Division 3 (GE Area Upper-Division C for students on the 2020-26 catalogs).

ISLA 3350 The Global Environment (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 2/5

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area B

Sustainability Focused

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of GE Area 5 (GE Areas B1 to B3 for the 2020-26 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. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as AG/EDES/ENGR/GEOG/ISLA/SCM/UNIV 3350. Fulfills GE Areas Upper-Division 2 or Upper-Division 5 (GE Area Upper-Division B for students on the 2020-26 catalogs). Formerly AG/EDES/ENGR/GEOG/ISLA/SCM/UNIV 350.

ISLA 3355 Interdisciplinary Research Methods (4 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 201 or ISLA 2201 and ISLA 255 or ISLA 2255.

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, online, or hybrid format. 4 seminars. Formerly ISLA 355.

ISLA 3360 Feminist Studies of Disability in Popular Culture (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: SP

2026-28 or later: Upper-Div GE Area 3

2020-26 catalogs: Upper-Div GE Area C

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 2 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B4 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and completion of one lower-division course in GE Area 3 (GE Areas C1 or C2 for the 2020-26 catalogs).

Feminist analysis of representations of disability in popular culture. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as ISLA/WGQS 3360. Fulfills GE Upper-Division 3 (GE Area Upper-Division C for students on the 2020-26 catalogs).

ISLA 3393 Action-oriented Ethnography (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); completion of GE Area 4B (GE Area D2 for the 2020-26 catalogs); and one of the following: ANT 201, ANT 2201, ANT 202, ANT 2202, ANT 250, ANT 2250, ISLA 123, ISLA 1123, any Ethnic Studies (ES) course, any Women's and Gender Studies (WGQS) 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. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as ANT/ISLA 3393. Formerly ANT/ISLA 393.

ISLA 3395 Science Communication (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2022-26 catalog); and completion of one course in GE Area 5 (GE Areas B1, B2, or Upper-Division B for the 2022-26 catalog).

Examination of science communication in a variety of contexts. Scientific journal articles, models of science communication, public understanding of and attitudes toward science, mediated science, popular science, science fiction, and pseudoscience. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as COMS/ISLA 3395. Formerly COMS/ISLA 395.

ISLA 4400 Independent Study Project (1-6 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: Junior standing and consent of instructor.

Independent study project focusing more than one discipline on a problem of study related to an interdisciplinary topic. Repeatable up to 6 units. Formerly ISLA 400.

ISLA 4411 Community and Meaning-Filled Design (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Junior standing; and completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs).

Learning how to address complex global problems through direct small-scale engagement with a local community and/or international community. Repeatable up to 6 units. 3 lectures. Crosslisted as ISLA/LAES 4411. Formerly ISLA/LAES 411.

ISLA 4440 Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies Seminar (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: SP

Prerequisite: ISLA 201 or ISLA 2201 and ISLA 255 or ISLA 2255. Recommended: ISLA 355 or ISLA 3355.

Advanced examination of selected interdisciplinary topic. Topics will be examined from perspective of multiple disciplines. The Class Schedule will list subtitle selected. Repeatable up to 6 units. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 3 seminars. Formerly ISLA 440.

ISLA 4456 Advanced Project-Based Learning in Science, Technology & Society (4 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs); ISLA 123 or ISLA 1123; 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 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. 4 seminars. Formerly ISLA 456.

ISLA 4460 Senior Project Seminar (1 unit)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

CR/NC

Prerequisite: Senior standing; and ISLA 355 or ISLA 3355. Concurrent: ISLA 4461.

Preparation and design for senior project; exploration of project management in research and creative projects. Credit/No Credit grading only. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 1 lecture.

ISLA 4461 Senior Project (3 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Concurrent: ISLA 4460.

Selection and completion of an interdisciplinary research or creative project that draws upon at least two disciplines. Formerly ISLA 461.

ISLA 4465 Internship (4 units)

Term Typically Offered: F, SP, SU

CR/NC

Prerequisite: ISLA 201 or ISLA 2201; and consent of instructor.

Supervised training, research, and work in public and private organizations. Evaluations by supervisor and written reports by student required. Credit/No Credit grading only. Formerly ISLA 465.

ISLA 4470 Special Advanced Topics (1-3 units)

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Junior standing, completion of GE Area 1 with grades of C- or better (GE Area A for the 2020-26 catalogs), and consent of instructor.

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. Repeatable up to 6 units. 1 to 3 lectures. Formerly ISLA 470.

ISLA 4480 Career Preparation for Interdisciplinary Studies Majors (1 unit)

Term Typically Offered: F

Prerequisite: Senior standing.

Preparation for senior year and post-graduation. Senior project preparation as well as deciding on occupations, learning about resumes, interviewing, and job search strategies. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 1 seminar.