

INTEG 475: Special Topics

INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

T & TH 2:30-3:50PM; EV2-2022

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Course Description

“Interdisciplinarity” is a popular buzzword these days, but what does it mean, exactly, and what makes it successful? In this course, we will examine the nature of interdisciplinarity (and cross-disciplinary research/collaboration more generally) by addressing the following questions:

- What is the difference between multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinarity?
- When are interdisciplinary approaches appropriate and what benefits do they bring?
- What are the barriers and challenges to working across disciplines? How might they be resolved?
- How can we foster and evaluate the success of interdisciplinary collaboration?

To address these questions, we will read central work in Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), the Philosophy of/as Interdisciplinarity (PIN), and other related areas.

This course will be taught using collaborative learning techniques that will give students significant opportunities to shape the direction of the course and to work with the instructor to create course assignments. The majority of the work done in the course will be aimed at producing publically available materials and resources on the philosophy of interdisciplinarity (e.g., an open-access bibliography and possibly a website on the topic). In addition, students will undertake an individual research project on a topic of their choosing, such as the role of design in interdisciplinary problem solving, how to evaluate the quality of integrative work, means of fostering interdisciplinary education, or a real-world case study, to name a few.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you should be able to do / have done the following:

Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the differences between mono-, multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary approaches.
Applying/analyzing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify research questions appropriate to these approaches. • Discuss barriers to interdisciplinary research and/or collaboration, as well as how they might be overcome.
Evaluating/synthesizing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate and justify your own views regarding course topics. • Reflect on the interdisciplinary nature of your own education.
Transferrable skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve your critical thinking and written/oral communication skills through participation and collaborative writing. • Help to create a respectful and engaging learning community by collaborating with others and providing constructive feedback.

Opportunities and Expectations for Students

This course will be taught using highly collaborative learning techniques. This means you will be given opportunities to help shape the course, *and* that you will be expected to do so. Many of the overarching course topics have already been set (such as the difference between multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinarity; challenges to interdisciplinary collaboration; and ways of fostering interdisciplinarity); however, there is still room for new topics, and flexibility regarding how we approach topics that have already been set. You will also contribute to course content by working in a small group to teach a class session on a topic of your choosing, as well as offering ideas for additional or alternative topics or readings. You will also be asked to offer suggestions for in-class activities and assignments, both in their form and their evaluation.

Required Reading Material and Submitting Assignments: Learn

There are no required textbooks for this course; instead, all readings will be posted on Learn. Please bring the readings with you to class. *Note: changes may be made to the schedule of topics or readings based on student interest; any changes will be announced in class and on Learn.*

(Possible) Grading/Evaluation

All graded work will be evaluated out of 100 points in 5-point increments (e.g., 75, 80, 85), though “in-between” grades (e.g., 75/80) will be assigned where appropriate. Each assignment carries a different weight in your course grade. *Note: there is no final exam for this course.*

Engagement & Contribution	20%	Throughout the course
Creative content (small group)	25%	Dates TBA
Collaborative teaching (small group)	25%	Dates TBA
Final project/paper	30%	Due Mon, April 14 th

Engagement with & Contributions to the Learning Community (20%)

- At the start of the course, you will write up a plan for how you will contribute to the course (i.e., our learning community). Below are some components, though you might add others.
- *Attendance:* I will take attendance by passing around a sign-in sheet – *you are responsible for signing your name.* If you know in advance that you must miss a class, please email me. You are allowed **2 unexcused absences** – additional absences will each result in a 5-point deduction from your engagement grade. Frequent late arrivals will also lower your grade. Students with perfect attendance records will receive bonus marks for participation.
- *Discussion:* You will be expected to participate in class, both by being an active listener when others are speaking, and by offering thoughtful, relevant and respectful contributions. You may also post comments, questions or replies on the course website; this can improve your participation grade but cannot completely make up for a lack of in-class discussion.
- *Peer feedback:* You will be asked to provide feedback on other students’ assignments and teaching, noting what was done well and how it could be improved.
- *Contributions on Learn:* Substantive contributions on the course website (Learn) will also count towards your participation grade.

Creative Content (25%) -- Possible assignment – see note at end of syllabus

You will work together in small groups to create material related to the course topics. This material can take a variety of forms; for example, one group might write a short paper or a Socratic dialogue, while another might create a visual representation, a video explaining the concept or topic, or perhaps a game that one can play to help with understanding the concept or topic. You will be expected to work with your group to create this content, to solicit feedback from your peers, and to work together revise your work in response to the feedback you receive. Your content will be made available on Learn, and may eventually be uploaded to a public website (where credit will be given to you as one of the content creators, with your permission). In addition, you will be asked to hand in a short written reflection along with your content.

Collaborative Teaching (25%) -- Possible assignment – see note at end of syllabus

During the last part of the course, you will teach one of the class sessions with a small group of your peers. Your group will choose a topic related to the philosophy of interdisciplinarity that you would like to learn more about and discuss with the class. You must have your topic approved by me one week in advance (I strongly encourage you to meet with me to discuss your topic and lesson plan once you've had your topic approved). In addition, you will need to turn in a "teaching module", consisting of a description of the topic, reading material, a lesson plan, and a reflection on the teaching experience, within one week of having taught the course.

Final Project/Paper (30%) -- Possible assignment – see note at end of syllabus

Complete an independent project related to the course on a topic of your choosing.

1. *Project proposal*: Write a one- to two-page proposal for your project, including a brief description of the project, some of the questions you intend to address, and some of your external sources. Your proposal will be graded on a check-minus/check/check-plus basis.
2. *Final project (25%)*: Write a final paper of 3000 to 3500 words (about 12 pages, double-spaced) on your topic. If you are interested in doing a project that is not essay based, please explain your idea in your proposal, noting how your project will have an equivalent weight to a 12-page essay; such projects should also include a short written report/reflection.

Late Policy

Assignments are due at by the start of class on the date specified in the assignment directions, unless otherwise noted. There will be a 5-point penalty for each day or part of a day an assignment is late, including weekends.

Claiming Assignments

Most assignments will be returned on Learn; paper assignments will be handed back in class. Unclaimed paper assignments will be retained for one month after grades are official in Quest, after which they will be destroyed in compliance with UW's confidential shredding procedures.

Academic Integrity:

- **Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ Students who are unsure what constitutes an academic offence are requested to visit the online tutorial at <http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait>
- **Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>.
- **Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70>. In addition, consult <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes> for the Faculty of Arts' grievance processes.
- **Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72>.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

- **Note for students with disabilities:** The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

NOTE: Mental health issues & Counseling Services

Mental health is a serious issue for everyone and can affect your ability to do your best work.

Counselling Services (www.uwaterloo.ca/counselling-services) is an inclusive, non-judgemental, and confidential space for anyone to seek support. They offer the following services:

- Confidential counselling for a variety of areas including anxiety, stress management, depression, grief, substance use, sexuality, relationship issues, and much more.
- Workshops held throughout term to assist you with areas like stress management, managing your mood, procrastination, mindfulness, depression, coping skills, etc.
- Assistance with academic accommodations due to a mental health issue (Counselling Services can help set you up with the Accessibility Office).

Possible Course Schedule: Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Day	Date	Topics/Activities	Readings (#pages)	Assignments
Tues	Jan 7	Course overview/planning		
Thurs	Jan 9	Intro to interdisciplinarity		Learn post
Tues	Jan 14	What is interdisciplinarity?	Repko, ch. 1 & Nissani	
Thurs	Jan 16	What is transdisciplinarity?	Leavy, chap. 1	
Tues	Jan 21	Interdisciplinary teamwork	Klein	
Thurs	Jan 23	Making collaboration work	Epstein	
Tues	Jan 28	Evaluating inter-/trans-disciplinarity	Leavy, ch. 6 + Boix M.	
Thurs	Jan 30	Barriers to Interdisciplinarity	[Your choice]	
Tues	Feb 4	Trading Zones & interactional expertise	Collins, Evans, Gorman	
Thurs	Feb 6	[Guest speaker & feedback on content]	[TBD]	Draft of projects due
Tues	Feb 11	[Discuss Creative projects]	Ribiero	
Thurs	Feb 13	Grad student presentation	[TBD]	Peer feedback due
<< Reading Week >>				
Tues	Feb 25	Toolbox Project	Eigenbrode, et al.	
Thurs	Feb 27	Toolbox Project	O'Rourke & Crowley	
Tues	Mar 4	Institutional barriers/challenges	Klein	Projects due
Thurs	Mar 6	Collaborative barriers	Sjolander	Peer feedback due
Tues	Mar 11	[Guest speaker]	[TBD]	Reflections due
Thurs	Mar 13	[TBD]	[TBD]	
Tues	Mar 18	Student-led classes	TBD	
Thurs	Mar 20	Student-led classes	TBD	
Tues	Mar 25	Student-led classes	TBD	(3/18 Module due)
Thurs	Mar 27	Student-led classes	TBD	(3/20 Module due)
Tues	Apr 1	[Discuss final projects]		(3/25 Module due)
Thurs	Apr 3	Wrap-up		(3/27 Module due)
Mon	Apr 14			Final project

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING THIS (DRAFT) SYLLABUS:

This course will be co-designed by the instructor and the students taking this class. Thus, most of the course content, assignments, and grading rubric are subject to change. During the first week of term, we will discuss the goals of the course, both in terms of the instructor's own aims and the students' individual objectives and interests. Based on those goals, together we will discuss and create/modify the assignments for the course (most of which will likely be collaborative and which will draw from different disciplinary norms and perspectives, given the topic of the course), as well as possible content that we might add. (Note that I've already included some suggestion for course content and assignments, above, based on what we did last year.) We will then finalize the syllabus so that we have an agreed-upon set of expectations for the course. We will also discuss if and how changes may be made to the nature of assignments, the due dates, and grading criteria/weights. However, as the course instructor, I reserve the right to make all final decisions based on what I deem to be best for the course as a whole (e.g., I will work to make sure that the workload is appropriate), based on my observations, teaching experience, and the feedback I receive from the students enrolled in this course.