The Interdisciplinary English Major

• What is the Interdisciplinary English Major?
The Interdisciplinary English Major is a track designed to accommodate students of English and American literature who are studying an issue or topic that requires an interdisciplinary approach. English majors who elect this track are able to bring the research tools and methods developed in other disciplines to bear on their thinking about literature and literary analysis. There are several features of this track that distinguish it from the other tracks in the English major, and some very specific requirements that must be met before a student is allowed to sign up for the track.

• What distinguishes the interdisciplinary track from the other English major tracks?
The primary features that distinguish the interdisciplinary track from other English major tracks are: 1) that students satisfy some of their requirements by taking classes in other disciplines and departments; and 2) that they complete a final interdisciplinary project. Both of these features are discussed in detail below.

• What do students need to do before they can declare the interdisciplinary track?
Before students can declare the interdisciplinary track, they must identify a proposed thematic focus or topic around which they can organize their major. (Students who are unsure about their topics are encouraged to discuss options with the Director.) The topic should be specific enough to guide students’ course choices, but flexible enough so that if one particular course is not available in a given year, they can substitute a similar course. Past topics have included “Race and Justice,” for which the student supplemented the English curriculum with classes in Philosophy and the Program in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity. A second was “The Graphic Novel,” for which the student took classes in Art and Art History (studio art and art history) in addition to English literature and Creative Writing courses. Yet another topic was “South Asian Ethnic Identity” for which the student took courses in Anthropology, History, Comparative Literature, and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in addition to English courses. And yet a fourth was “Digital Literacy and Network Narratology” for which the student took courses in the departments of Computer Science, Communication, and Comparative Literature in addition to regular English courses.

A second requirement for declaring the track is that students must identify a faculty member in the English Department who is willing to serve as their Interdisciplinary Major advisor. This advisor must be a member of the Academic Council, and must also agree to supervise the student’s interdisciplinary project and submit a short written evaluation when the project is finished that judges it as worthy of satisfying the requirement.

• What is the interdisciplinary project?
The precise nature of the project varies according to the interests of the individual student, but there are some requirements that must be observed. First, the interdisciplinary project will
draw on the scholarship or employ the methods developed in a discipline other than literary studies. Second, it should be of sufficient weight as to require the effort that would be put into a 15 - 20 page interdisciplinary research paper that is written over the course of a quarter under the supervision of an engaged faculty mentor. Students should develop their project in close consultation with their major advisor and faculty mentor; the Director is also able to help students determine what sorts of projects are appropriate and feasible. (The Department encourages that students’ faculty mentor be the same person as their major advisor as he/she is actively engaged with students’ projects.) In addition to interdisciplinary research papers that bring together scholarship from at least two different disciplines, past projects have included the writing and drawing of a graphic short story, and the writing of a Platonic dialogue in which the characters debated the best way to achieve racial justice, taking positions inspired by the views articulated by an interdisciplinary collection of scholars in the volume *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century*. Note Bene: Although not required to do so, students are strongly encouraged to put aside time in their schedules to sign up for a 5-unit independent study course with their advisor during which they complete their project.

• **What are the responsibilities of the Interdisciplinary English major advisor?**
  Advisors who agree to mentor a student in this track must understand the range of responsibilities they have agreed to accept. As indicated above, the advisor must agree to supervise the student’s interdisciplinary project over the course of at least one quarter, and they must be willing to submit to both the Director of the Interdisciplinary Track and the Undergraduate Students Services Specialist a short written evaluation testifying that they judge the project to have satisfied the interdisciplinary project requirement.

• **How do students choose their courses?**
  Students who elect this track satisfy the core requirements of the English major, plus seven additional courses. Four of these courses are English elective courses, of which two must be specifically related to the interdisciplinary focus. In addition, students must complete three additional courses from an outside department, all of which must be related to the interdisciplinary focus. These courses will be determined in consultation with the Director of the English Interdisciplinary Track and their major advisor. After the declaration is made, the Director must approve in writing to the Undergraduate Student Services Specialist any substitutions to the proposed list of courses.

• **Checklist for declaring the Interdisciplinary English major track:**

  - [ ] Meet with the Director of the Interdisciplinary English to identify a proposed thematic focus or topic
  - [ ] Identify an Interdisciplinary English Faculty mentor (Recommended that it be the same person as your major advisor)
☐ Consult with Director of Interdisciplinary English and major advisor a proposed course list for the major

☐ Submit proposed course list for the major to Student Services Specialist, English

☐ Proposed Final Interdisciplinary Project