

Explaining Interdisciplinary Studies

Having Interdisciplinary Interests
("It's a blessing and a curse")

- Blessing
 - Multiple perspectives
 - Complexity
 - Common ground
 - Integrate insights
 - Comprehensive understanding
 - Creative solutions

Having Interdisciplinary Interests
("It's a blessing and a curse")

- Curse
 - Choosing a major
 - Searching for jobs
 - Broader education
 - Needing to integrate
 - Dealing with complexity and ambiguity
 - Trying to describe your interests/major to others

“Interdisciplinary Studies”?

- Definition hotly contested since the 70’s
 - Includes methods, goals, philosophy
- Integration
 - Defining method/goal
 - Components of two disciplines are synthesized/connected/blended
- Generalist interdisciplinarians
 - Dialog or interaction between disciplines
 - Integration is not necessary
- Integrationist interdisciplinarians
 - Integration is the goal of interdisciplinary work
 - Addresses challenge of complexity

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Discipline
 - Branch of knowledge or body of learning
- Characterized by
 - Questions asked
 - Perspective/worldview
 - Assumptions about phenomena
 - Methods used to build a body of facts

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Categories of Traditional Disciplines
 - Natural Sciences
 - Social Sciences
 - Humanities
 - Visual and Performing Arts

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Categories of Traditional Disciplines
 - Natural Sciences
 - Includes biology, chemistry, earth science, mathematics, physics
- Perspective
- Natural Sciences and Creativity
 - Biological Creativity

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Categories of Traditional Disciplines
 - Social Sciences
 - Includes Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology
- Perspective
- Social Sciences and Creativity
 - Culture and creativity

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Categories of Traditional Disciplines
 - Humanities
 - Includes History, Literature, Philosophy, Religious Studies
- Perspective
- Humanities and Creativity
 - Philosophy of Creativity

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Categories of Traditional Disciplines
 - Visual and Performing Arts
 - Includes Art, Art History, Dance, Music, Theatre
- Perspective
 - Shares elements with Humanities and Performing Arts
- Visual and Performing Arts and Creativity
 - Creativity and Dance
 - Creativity and Music

Interdisciplinary Studies

Inter = ““between, among, in the midst” or “derived from two or more”

- The contested space between disciplines
- The action taken on interdisciplinary insights
 - Integration
- The results of integration
 - More comprehensive understanding

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Why Disciplines are not “Studies”
 - Universally recognized core of knowledge
 - Specific courses (curriculum)
- Why “Studies” is an integral to Interdisciplinary Studies
 - Draw on disciplinary expertise relevant to the **current problem/issue**
 - Dissatisfaction with traditional knowledge structures

Interdisciplinary Studies

- Different from disciplines
- 1. Does not lay claim to recognized core of knowledge
 - Borrows disciplinary knowledge when needed
- 2. Will use disciplinary methods as well as interdisciplinary methods as needed
- 3. Produces new knowledge through integration

Characteristics of Interdisciplinary Studies

1. Means for addressing questions/solving complex problems
2. Draws on multiple disciplinary perspectives
3. Integrates multiple disciplinary insights
4. Goal is to construct a more comprehensive perspective
5. Results in correcting, complimenting and supplementing limits of discipline approaches

Interdisciplinary vs. Multidisciplinary

- Similarity
 - Go beyond a single disciplinary perspective
- Differences
 - Interdisciplinary **integrates** insights from multiple disciplines
 - Multidisciplinary juxtaposes disciplines
 - Additive not integrative
 - Disciplinary “filter” is not questioned
 - Distinctive elements of each discipline retain their identity

Interdisciplinary vs. Transdisciplinary

- Interdisciplinary
 - Depends on disciplinary insights
 - Understanding a particular problem
- Transdisciplinary is above, between and beyond (transcends) disciplinary perspectives
 - Holistic
 - Rely on general theories, concepts, approaches
 - Understanding a class of similar problems

Interdisciplinary vs. Cross-disciplinary

- Interdisciplinary
 - Examines issue of interest to both disciplines
- Cross-disciplinarity
 - One discipline viewed from the perspective of another
 - Second discipline/subject matter becomes an object of study for the first discipline
 - Analysis involves methods and perspective of a single discipline


