

**“Developing Students’ Integrative Abilities While Developing Our Own: Adventures in Diversity/Global Interdisciplinary Studies”**

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**Models of Integrative Learning at the University of Wisconsin Colleges**

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| Stand-Alone Interdisciplinary Courses      | Instructors from other disciplines must be present 20% of the time  |
| Learning Community of Two Courses          | Instructors from two disciplines bring together two separate courses scheduled in a block<br>Both instructors are present all the time that both classes meet             |
| Learning Community of Two Courses Combined | Instructors from two disciplines blend two separate courses and teach them as cross-listed courses under their unique titles<br>Both instructors are present all the time |
| Learning Community Triad                   | Instructors from three disciplines bring together three separate courses scheduled in a block<br>All instructors are present all the time that the three classes meet     |
| Linking Seminar Cluster                    | Instructors from two (or more) disciplines bring together the content of two (or more) courses in a linking seminar, often offered for one credit                         |
| Co-Curricular Integrative Learning         | Instructors from one or more courses work to include thematically linked co-curricular activities   |

## Challenges We've Experienced with These Models of Integrative Learning

### Preparation

- Instructor (vision, goals, communication, insecurity)
- Students (previous learning experiences transformed, insecurity)
- Institution (creating a culture of integrative learning; battling resistance, pushback, fears)

### Disciplinarity

- Instructor (developing an understanding of our own and another discipline: how they evolve in conversation & as we teach)
- Students (past learning experiences → initial lack of understanding)
- Institution (need for interactions among faculty from different disciplines, support from administration, compensation issues)

### Assignments: Designing and Grading

For the ideas below, we are indebted to the article "Assessing Integrative Learning: Insights from Washington Center's National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities" by Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich, Co-Directors of the Washington Center for Improving Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College (The article is available at <http://www.evergreen.edu/>.)

- Distinguishing integrative from interdisciplinary learning (e.g. students could integrate two learning domains like personal experience and course material but not specifically integrate two disciplines).
- Recognizing the importance of disciplinary grounding in order to explain why an assignment is interdisciplinary and to recognize when integration has occurred.
- Clarifying the specific disciplinary objectives of each member of the faculty team to see the overlaps and complementary aspects; then clarifying what these are to students: What exactly do we want students to integrate and why?
- Making the assignment clear and purposeful to students (not confusing, frustrating, overly complicated).
- Striving to solve a specific problem or address a specific interdisciplinary issue rather than making the assignment a mere exercise in linking disciplines.
- Avoiding the "scrapbook approach," e.g. here's a snippet of how this discipline would deal with X; then here's how the other discipline would deal with X.
- Understanding when it is appropriate to emphasize one discipline over another.

### Sample assignments

- Creative approaches to understanding the human impact of contemporary issues
- Student discussion leaders: historic/literary analysis and historic/personal perception

## Successful Outcomes We've Experienced Due to Integrative Learning

Successes in terms of what we learned about teaching (instructors)

- Other ways of engaging students in the material (e.g. various ways to organize and direct small group student learning)
- Enhanced depth of understanding of one's own field by looking at it through the lenses of another field
- Academic enrichment that finds its way into stand-alone courses (e.g. bringing aspects of history into a course on multicultural lit)

Success in terms of directions for scholarly and/or creative work (instructors)

- Collaborations for scholarly presentations on works which cross disciplinary boundaries
- Creative publications

Successes in the class (students)

- Connections across the curriculum (e.g. seeing how material in a geography class ties to studies in a sociology/literature link)
- Heightened receptivity to the liberal arts mission
- Recognition that "authorities" sometimes disagree and do so in a calm, reasoned way
- Increased integration of disciplinary/interdisciplinary concepts to issues beyond the classroom

Successes beyond the class (students)

- Overcoming misconceptions/fears of another discipline which may have hindered their progress through the university
- Presentations at undergraduate research symposia and conferences
- Openness to diverse perspectives
- Increased participation in community events

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| 10:45-10:50 | Jane  | (Before session starts—abbreviated prompts up on flipchart)<br><br>Introductions<br><br>Poll audience as to some of the following: region; administrators/instructors; learning communities offered at your institution/offered by you<br><br>Overview of our session structure, promise about last 25 minutes for Q&A, suggestion about questions/comments/additional examples for that Q&A time<br><br>Overview of the models (on handout) |
| 10:50-11:05 | Peggy, Jennifer, Jane   | 5-minute synopses of our three learning communities under discussion (syllabi on handouts) with emphasis on the three bullet points in our session abstract  |
| 11:05-11:25 | Jennifer—Preparation<br>Jane—Disciplinarity<br>Peggy--Assignments | Challenges discussed   |
| 11:25-11:40 | Each presenter gives one idea for each major category             | Successful Outcomes  |
| 11:40-12:15 | All facilitate  | Q&A: invite participants to use prompts on flipchart as jumping off point to share ideas, experiences, questions, and concerns (depending on size and dynamic of group, use small or full group discussion)  |

We have ten minutes of “wiggle room”; in other words, we can fall up to 10 minutes behind this schedule and STILL have 25 minutes for final discussion.