

# Integrated Liberal Studies Newsletter



**Integrated Liberal Studies**  
University of Wisconsin - Madison

  
**Spring 2022**



# THE MEIKLEJOHN EXPERIMENT

Spring 2022

The Meiklejohn Experiment is the Student, Faculty, & Alumni newsletter of the Integrated Liberal Studies (ILS) Certificate Program at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Written by the student ambassadors, with help from the ILS Faculty members and Associate Professor of Classics, Grant Nelsestuen.

**Meiklejohn House**  
228 N. Charter Street  
Madison, WI 53715

**ILS Department Chair**  
Grant Nelsestuen  
nelsestuen@wisc.edu

**Academic Department Manager**  
Beth Shipman  
eshipman@wisc.edu

**Student Ambassadors**  
Christian Collin  
ccollin@wisc.edu  
Emma Malian  
malian@wisc.edu

**Contact Us!**  
<http://ils.wisc.edu/about-us/ils@ils.wisc.edu>



# Message From The Chair

Dear ILS alums and friends,

Of the two semesters, the Spring one is my favorite. To be sure, the promise of warmer weather plays no small part. But it's also the semester in which most students will conclude the course of their studies and start down a new path on their life's journey. I always love hearing about what students are planning next. For some, that may mean a position at a marketing firm in Chicago or a job at a leading software company. For others, it could mean more education or training—be it in the form of medical or law school or enlistment as an officer candidate in the military. Still others have less defined plans: perhaps job interviews are ongoing, geographical or travel interests are being worked out, or time for reflection and more planning in the form of a gap year is in order. All are answers I've heard over the past couple of weeks—and all a reminder to me of the immense privilege my ILS colleagues and I enjoy in playing some small role in helping these students to realize their graduation from UW-Madison en route to finding and pursuing their life's purpose.



For me, this particular Spring semester had the added bonus of being the first time that I had the opportunity to teach the ILS Capstone seminar—which our fabulous ILS Student Ambassadors, Emma Malian and Christian Collin, took (and which they kindly and charitably wrote about on pp. 6-7!). My disciplinary home is Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, in which I teach (as you might expect) courses primarily on Latin literature and ancient Greek and Roman culture and history. While I love teaching these courses and try to bring the ILS spirit to them, there are also some intrinsic limitations to the latter—after all, students do have a right to expect that a “Classics” course be largely about, you know, “Classics”! But one of the many beautiful things about “Integrated Liberal Studies” is that its approach to the liberal arts is not hemmed in by the disciplinary constraints of academic specialization. All ILS courses seek, in different ways, to make connections between different areas of human enterprise and experience, but it is the senior seminar that serves as the consummation of this endeavor. To frame it in personal terms, where else could I engage with students from all different majors and backgrounds, as we examine the “timeless” question of “friendship” in its multiplicity of often contradictory forms, throughout time and space, and from a variety of perspectives and media? Where else could we ask e.g. what evolutionary psychology and anthropology might tell us about Aristotle's conception of friendship, and vice versa? Or bring Christian theologians into dialogue with radical feminist writers? Or Orestes and Pylades with Thelma and Louise? Or Montaigne with Toni Morrison? If it isn't clear by now, the seminar has been the most personally rewarding course I've ever taught—and thus yet another privilege I've been able to enjoy thanks to my participation in the rich tradition of ILS.

But to return to a student-centered perspective befitting of ILS: of our current Student Ambassadors, Emma is a junior and thus returning to UW-Madison and ILS next year. We'll make sure you find out more about her then! But Christian, as you can read about on pp. 8-9, is graduating after quite the journey at UW-Madison—including a relatively “late” discovery of ILS. On behalf of my colleagues, we

thank him for taking our classes, enriching the conversations that we've sought to cultivate in them, and doing excellent work on the ILS newsletter and website. And we wish him all the best as he opens the next chapter of his life.

On pg. 5, you can read about the visit of Dr. Roosevelt Montás, whom ILS gratefully hosted this past March. Let me put a plug in for his book here—it's an excellent read, by turns moving and inspiring as it issues its clarion call for academic institutions (like UW-Madison) to re-forge a shared curricular foundation for students of diverse backgrounds and experiences as they make their way through college and serve their communities as engaged citizens and leaders. There you'll also find a publisher's discount code, which Princeton University Press has kindly provided for ILS and its alums and friends.

Finally, I'm happy to report that some of you have taken us up on our offer to let ILS know what you're up to (for me personally: nelsestuen@wisc.edu). Alumna Judith Reinitz Lazarus recalls some of her experiences as an ILS "pioneer" in the inaugural class of ILS students in 1948 on p. 4—an account that got me re-reading ILS Prof. Walter Agard's 1963 exit interview (with Prof. Pooley's next up on the docket). I'll end with a teaser of something I hope to share more about in the future: regarding some Zoom events put on by the indefatigable Ford Scholars. Let's just say that the stories about their various efforts against the chilling effects of McCarthyism and Cold War politics on academic and student free speech in the mid-1950s only confirmed to me the need for programs like ILS to serve as an intellectual foundation for citizen-students in the ongoing struggle against authoritarianism, be it in the past, present, and future.

Here's to a healthy and restorative summer,

Grant

Grant A. Nelsestuen  
Chair, Integrated Liberal Studies  
Associate Professor of Classics  
UW-Madison



# ILS Recommends: Podcasts



Do you ever hear about a Supreme Court case or national trial and want to know what is going on? Or do you just want to learn something while having a fun conversation? This podcast is for you. Advisory Opinions is hosted by two Harvard lawyers, Sarah Isgur and David French, and touches on current legal news, culture, and society. The podcast feels like two friends explaining the law and current legal issues to you in an easily understandable and entertaining way. Listening to Advisory Opinions will make you laugh, think, and you will end the podcast feeling smarter and having learned something new.

David Earleywine  
ILS Teaching Assistant

The Dropout details the rise and fall of Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos. Holmes grew up thinking she would change the world, in the way Steve Jobs did. Her idea was a blood test that could identify numerous diseases with only one drop of blood. She raised billions in funding for the company, only for it to come crashing down when she was exposed for fraud. The thrilling retelling of her story riddled with corruption and fraud, is presented in the form of a compelling narrative. From interviews, past media interviews, and depositions, Rebecca Jarvis lays out the story of Elizabeth Holmes from her start to the finish of Theranos. The podcast is based on the book, *Bad Blood*.

Emma Malian  
ILS Student Ambassador



# Hearing From Our Alumni

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Alexander Meiklejohn is regarded as the father of Integrated Liberal Studies. He was the founder of an all male experimental college that resided in what is now Adam's Hall. The students and professors all lived at the experimental college together and spent their days reading Greek philosophical texts. The college was eventually shut down in 1932. However in 1948 the ILS program was born and it was now open to all students!

Judith Reinitz Lazarus, a freshman at the University of Wisconsin in 1948, recalls her time spent in the ILS program as quite experimental. She was one of the first students to take on this new program. She says “it was an experiment, and a very special one. I think many of us thought of it as a noble experiment, and we were right there on the front line!”

Lazarus recalls her favorite course in ILS being “Greek and Roman Culture,” which at the time was taught by two professors who “brought those cultures to life.” Walter Agard was definitely one of the professors; Herb Howe was most likely the other. As Lazarus further relates, “the topics were interesting and the professor who taught each part really was interested in what he was teaching. It was often like a discussion group session. I always enjoyed history and these professors really showed me two worlds which I had not entered before. Our Roman Culture professor often held our sessions outside in the spring weather which added to our enjoyment.” The goal of ILS has always been to immerse students in liberal topics to widen their knowledge on these topics. Classes tend to be led by discussion so that students can engage and build off of each other's ideas, thereby developing their own understanding. Lazarus shows us that the roots of ILS continue to persist since the beginning of the program in 1948.

Emma Malian  
ILS Student Ambassador



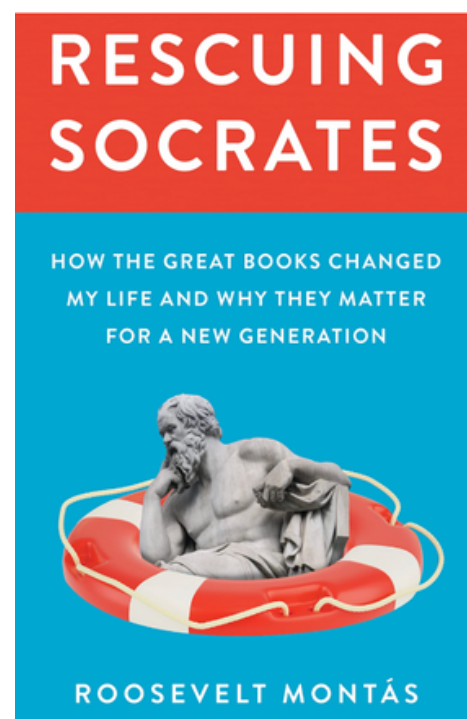
# Roosevelt Montás: Rescuing Socrates



Throughout the years and across the United States, the centrality of a strong liberal education to the mission of higher education has generally been eroded, with common and shared curricular experiences often eschewed in favor of scattered distribution requirements and increasingly narrow and specialized majors. From within the academy come attacks on the idea of studying the great themes of human inquiry and expression while the general public increasingly doubts the value and outcomes of the humanities. Dr. Roosevelt Montás, Senior Lecturer in American Studies and English at Columbia University, disagrees with both sets of critics. In his book *Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation*, Montás delivers a

compelling argument in favor of a liberal arts education. In a world dominated by STEM majors, he attempts to answer this question: what is the value of a liberal education?

Drawing from his own personal experiences, Montás challenges the critics and skeptics, demonstrating how a liberal education has transformed his life. Emigrating from the Dominican Republic to Queens at the age of 12, he first experienced his love for the great books through a chance encounter with a discarded copy of Plato outside his apartment. Little did he know that this small discovery would lead him on a journey to discover how meaningful a liberal arts education is. His passion for the humanities would continue into his collegiate career. Attending Columbia University as an undergraduate and graduate student, Montás would pursue the study of the classics in Columbia's renowned Core Curriculum—one of the U.S.'s last remaining Great Books programs. From 2008 to 2018, he served as the Director of the Center for the Core Curriculum at Columbia College, where he continues to teach.



ILS was pleased to host Dr. Montás when he came to campus this past March to share his inspiring message of the power of liberal arts to help flourish throughout our entire lives. You can obtain a copy of his book [here](#). Use the discount code 'MON30' for 30% the original price. Code expires May 31st, 2022.

Christian Collin  
ILS Student Ambassador

# ILS Capstone: Friendship & Community

The Integrated Liberal Studies Capstone class is a requirement for all students pursuing an ILS certificate. The goal of the seminar-style class is to encapsulate the entirety of the ILS mission. This means that the course must take an interdisciplinary and integrated approach to a topic of study; it must reflect the diversity and richness of liberal arts, all while creating a learning environment based on discussion and dialogue. This Spring, professor Grant Nelsestuen chose "Friendship and Community" to be the focus of this year's capstone class.



Friendship has proven to be a very interesting, as well as complex topic of study. We began the class reading Plato's *Lysis* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, giving students a foundational glimpse into how ancient minds viewed friendship. From there, we moved chronologically through different topics and ideas surrounding friendship. Professor Nelsestuen assigned a variety of thought-provoking content ranging from scholarly articles to short stories to classic movies. It's interesting to see how friendship plays a role in almost every aspect of our lives; friendship can be found everywhere we look. Throughout our time spent in seminar, we discussed friendships centered on politics, psychology, race, and gender, just to name a few. Students were tasked weekly with writing a discussion post geared towards their opinions and thoughts on the week's content. We would bring our ideas and opinions to seminar where we could compare and contrast with other students. As an added bonus, we read chapters from Dr. Roosevelt Montás's *Rescuing Socrates: How The Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation* and had the option of attending a dinner event with Dr. Montás! Professor Nelsestuen did an outstanding job facilitating seminar and proposing questions to get the conversation started. That's the beauty of ILS's mission: it empowers students to form their own thoughts and opinions on class content rather than teaching them what they should think about a given assigned reading.

Emma Malian  
ILS Student Ambassador



We wanted to share with you some of the highlights of the capstone material:

**Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Chapters 8 and 9**

**Preston King's "Friendship in Politics"**

**Ridley Scott's *Thelma and Louise***

**C.S. Lewis's "Friendship" from *The Four Loves***

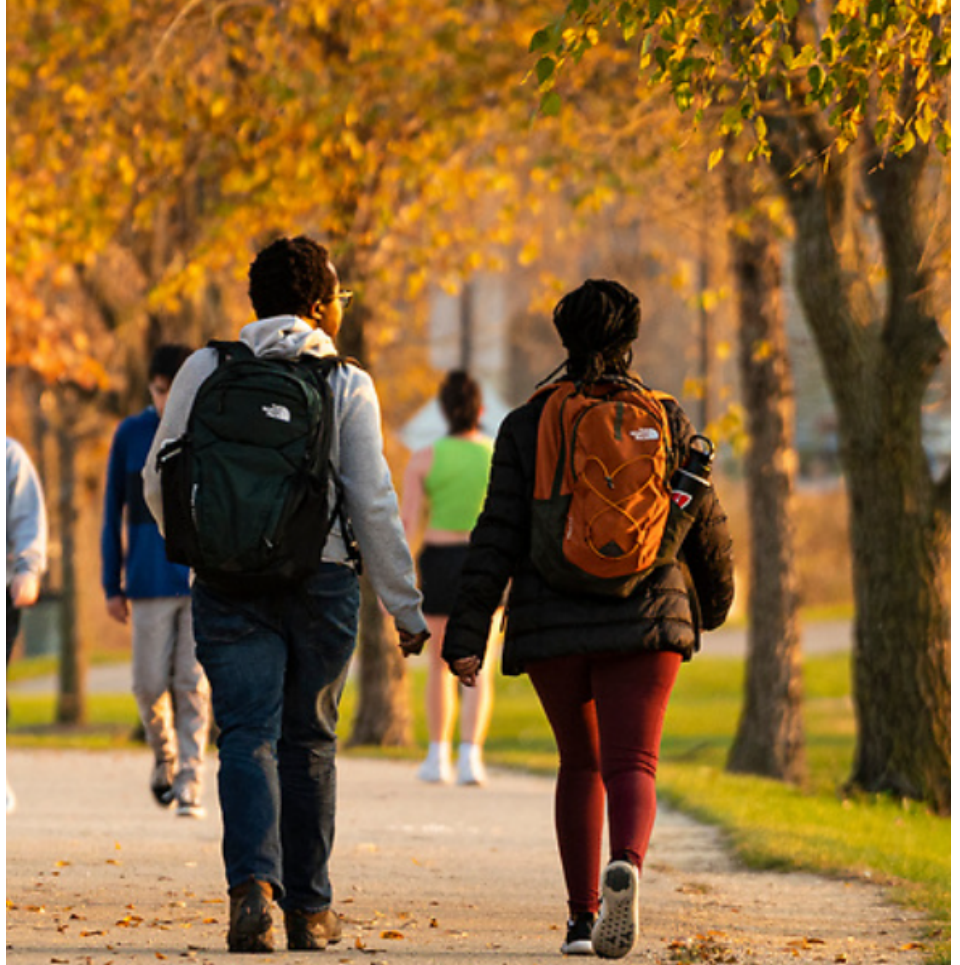
**M. Solomon's "Freud and Jung: An Incomplete Encounter"**

**R.I.M. Dunbar's "The Anatomy of Friendship"**

**Jaques Derrida's "The Politics of Friendship"**

**Toni Morrison's *Recitatif***

**Homer's *Odyssey* 9**



# Student Highlight: Christian Collin

May 2022 Graduate, interviewed by Emma Malian

**EM: What was your area of study while at UW?**

CC: So actually I have a really long answer for that question. <laughter> So when I was a freshman, I came in wanting to do computer science. I took a lot of classes in high school that related to computer science and I found the topic interesting, so I decided to pursue it in college. I took my first computer science class and ended up not doing well at all. So I switched gears and went to focus on psychology. I then changed my mind and decided to pursue a double major of computer science and psychology. After about a year or so, I completely changed tracks and decided to delve into the Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences route because of an entry level weather course I took. I then took chemistry and quickly realized that I am not cut out for the scientist route. <laughter> I switched back to psychology after this realization and finally in my junior year, I settled on the degree of communications with a certificate in Integrated Liberal Studies.

**EM: Why did you choose that?**

CC: That is a good question. It was definitely a mixture of a lot of things. To start, I love people. I think observing and studying why people behave certain ways or choose to say certain things is so fascinating to me. It was somewhat similar to psychology, but less of an emphasis on the science aspect of that realm. I cannot remember the exact name of the breadth of communications I'm in, but it has to do a lot with behavior of people, rhetoric and communication and similar studies. So, I've taken a lot of classes that have been based on interpersonal communication and conflict, communication in



complex organizations, communication and persuasion, and communication and online relationships. All these aspects and theories that encompass communications as a whole really grabbed my attention and helped me settle on a major I like.

**EM: Throughout your time at UW, what ILS courses have you taken? What was your favorite?**

CC: I took my first course junior year and it was ILS 204: Western Culture: Literature & the Arts II. I've taken ILS 254: How Theatre can play with Science, ILS 400, the capstone course which I'm in right now and ILS 206. It's a very difficult to pick a favorite out of these. For example, ILS 206 is pretty much the study of modern and post-modern philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Immanuel Kant just to name a few. It's just really an interesting course because you look at these famous philosophers and the texts that they have written and you're able to apply their ideas to human kind. To see each one's perspective on why humans behave the way they do and how to manage them is truly an intriguing topic of conversation. That would be my argument for ILS 206. However, in ILS 254, we took scientific theories and studied them through the lens of a "dramaturgical" perspective. In other words, we used plays to analyze different scientific



theories. It was completely eye-opening for me because we were able to take such a liberal arts perspective on scientific issues, something that I've never seen done in a class before. Just on the basis of that, I think I would call that my favorite class because it took a unique approach to understanding scientific topics.

**EM: What did you learn from the ILS program? Was there anything you were surprised by?**

CC: I think one of the biggest surprises for me was how the program was able to create courses that could almost encompass every major on campus. They had courses in the arts, humanities, sciences, political science, philosophy, english. No matter what your major was, there was a course within the ILS program that could cater towards your interests, which is something that not all programs on campus are able to do. The way that students were able to gain such a broad education from such a small subset of courses truly amazed me. It created diversity within the classes because everyone was from a different major and could come together to discuss their thoughts and give their personal opinion. As for something I learned, I think the biggest takeaway from my experience in ILS is that you can gain a strong liberal arts education, something that is highly undervalued within our society today, without having to stick to the boundaries of a traditional liberal arts curriculum. The ILS program proved a liberal arts education can be applied to almost all disciplines on campus. It does not have to stay within the confines of just humanities or just philosophy. Students are given the opportunity to pursue their interests while also gaining a strong liberal arts background.

**EM: How has ILS changed your college experience?**

CC: I've always had a passion for the arts as an individual. My family would attend Broadway plays constantly, so I learned to have an eye for theatrical representations as well as the physical

arts. When I started my journey by taking ILS 204, I was like 'wow this is a class really like. I love to go to the Chazen Museum and analyze artifacts. I love to read plays and determine why it was staged or written this way.' It was always a little difficult for me to find classes that I enjoyed, so finding this was amazing to me...it gave me something to pursue or look forward to. Like, I finally found a program that caters to my interests. And I don't take these classes because I need to fulfill a requirement for graduation, but because I enjoy the content and genuinely take an interest in these topics. Also, the professors that I've engaged in ILS have been my favorite on campus. They're always open to speak with you about whatever you like. They want you to take the ideas of the course outside the classroom and apply them to your daily life. You can approach them after class with a question about the course content and it would lead to a 20 minute discussion after class while you walk out of the building. You may have an idea about something that should be changed or added—they're happy to listen! The faculty has really emphasized my positive experience in the ILS program.

**EM: Do you think the ILS program changed your outlook on life?**

CC: Absolutely! I think coming into Madison, there was always a stigma (I would say) associated with a liberal arts education. I think that people view it as something as not so much an education, but rather you learn because you need the requirement or it's 'just for fun'. Like, when comparing it to a STEM major, it seems useless and not applicable to our daily life. I would argue that it is completely applicable. Roosevelt Montás (the fantastic guest speaker the ILS program hosted) argued that a liberal arts education gives us the skills to think critically, to make solid arguments for our beliefs and values, and helps us understand the broad scope of the world around us. The program has shown that a liberal arts education can be seen in virtually every discipline and should not be taken for granted in the modern world.

# ILS Certificate Graduates 2022

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Christian Collin

Communications

Kezia Douglas

Marketing & International Business

Caroline Fraser

Political Science

Jonah Levy

Psychology

Nathan Loayza

Political Science

Myra Mohammad

Neurobiology

Greta Schoenberg

Neurobiology & Spanish

Joseph Tuffnell

Computer Science

Ethan Vegotsky

Economics & Political Science





# THANK YOU!

## YOUR DONATIONS MATTER

Help support current ILS Certificate students by donating to one of our general funds. To help foster a community between student and faculty, ask for your donation to be sent to the **ILS fund**, which is used to fund student activities.

