

Integrated Liberal Studies Newsletter- Fall 2022



Integrated Liberal Studies
University of Wisconsin-Madison



The Meiklejohn Experiment



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

Contact Us!

<http://ils.wisc.edu/about-us/ils@ils.wisc.edu>

ILS Academic Advisor

Laura Bradley
lsbradley@wisc.edu

Student Ambassadors

Sally Conroy
sjconroy@wisc.edu

Irene Tomasovic
tomasovic@wisc.edu

Check Us Out on Social Media!

Instagram:
@ils.uwisconsin

Facebook:
UW Integrated Liberal
Studies - ILS

A Message from the Chair



Dear ILS alums and friends,

As I write this letter, it's the "Study day" of the Fall semester—that (single!) day when classes have ended but exams have not yet started. I think I can speak on behalf of all faculty when I say that this day and the ensuing exam period are undoubtedly of a more relaxed tenor for us than they are for our students. But I am happy to report that ILS is doing its part to support students' study needs with its usual provision of a familiar space in the form of the Meiklejohn House's library and living room, now stocked with pizza, coffee, and snacks—the latter a small touch that our students greatly appreciate and only made possible by the generosity of our supporters, of course!

This semester has seen a number of exciting developments in ILS. Included among them is the recent addition of Laura Bradley as the ILS Academic Advisor. Coming from the field of medical social work, Laura is an ILS alum ('11) who also served as an advisor for the Honors program back when she was doing her Master in Social Work here at UW-Madison. The wealth of experience and expertise she brings to ILS adds a critical "student services" dimension to our historic strengths in providing premier teaching and learning experiences to undergraduates of all stripes at UW-Madison. You can read more about Laura and her personal and professional experiences in ILS on pp. 5-6.

As you may have heard, a record-setting 8,628 first-year undergraduate students made their way to Madison this past August. It remains ILS's goal of reaching as many of those students as we can, especially with one of our "Core" classes—like ILS 200, which you can read more about on pp. 7-8. In fact, that was the course that brought Sally Conroy, one of our Student Ambassadors, into the ILS fold (p. 9). And yet, ILS is happy to report that we remain committed to offering small, personalized learning experiences, such as the capstone seminar taught by a dedicated ILS professor or our new "Migration to the Americas and the Migrant Experience" course, designed and taught by Beatriz Botero. Or the ILS reading group for UW-Madison's 2022 Go Big Read book choice, Clint Smith's "How the Word is Passed," which you can read about on p. 4.

The end of the year with its festivities, celebrations, and observances is always a time for gratitude. ILS remains grateful for the opportunities it has to connect with UW-Madison undergraduates as well as for the support of our alums and our friends. Feel free to send me an email (nelsestuen@wisc.edu) if ever it strikes your fancy.

Happy holidays,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grant A. Nelsestuen". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Grant A. Nelsestuen

Chair, Integrated Liberal Studies
Professor of Classics
University of Wisconsin – Madison

Entertainment Recommendations



House of Halliwell

"The House of Halliwell is a podcast by some of the sisters in the CW series "Charmed" from the late 1990s where they rewatch every episode of the series and invite either directors, producers, or guest stars to talk about how that episode was made. It reminds me of my very early years in high school and just talking about the series with my friends and makes me feel like I'm 13 again. Nostalgia!"

- Clara Molina Blanco, Teaching Assistant, ILS 200



The Daily Poem

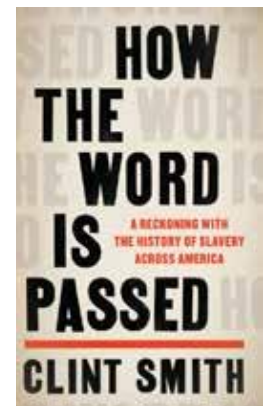
"I love the Daily Poem because I found it a few years ago around the time I changed my major to English: Creative Writing and I changed my major because I was so interested in poetry, but I didn't know how to get into it. This podcast helped explain and helped me understand how poets would make their craft and I really fell in love with hearing the poetry spoken out loud because that's how poetry is supposed to be understood. They read the poem and tell you a little bit about the poet and certain aspects of their writing and then they read it again, so you hear it twice and I just love some of the poets I've gotten into like John Keats' "Autumn" is one of my favorites and Shakespeare."

- Irene Tomasovic, Student Ambassador

Go Big Read: *How the Word is Passed*

As part of UW-Madison's annual Go Big Read event series, ILS hosted an undergraduate reading group for the 2022 text: Clint Smith's *How the Word is Passed*. This award-winning book explores the legacy of slavery in everyday American spaces, such as monuments, cemeteries, prisons, and former plantations and has been hailed by President Obama as one of his favorite books of the year.

Spearheaded by Noah Stengl and bringing together ILS undergraduates with faculty and graduate students, the event involved a thoughtful discussion of the book with light food and refreshments in early October 2022. In conjunction with UW-Madison Libraries, ILS was happy to provide all involved with a free copy of the book. Of particular interest were the introductory remarks by History Ph.D. student, Emily Tran, who related her research on the American social and cultural moments that prompt a renewed interest in reckoning with the legacy of slavery to Smith's important book. "For me," said ILS Director, Grant Nelsestuen, "what I most appreciated was our undergraduates' zeal to engage in tough, but essential, topics, which remain so central to the history of the 'liberal' arts as well as our own lives today." ILS looks forward to continuing being part of these and other conversations on campus.



An interview with an alumnus:

Laura Bradley

The ILS Program welcomes its first academic advisor! Laura Bradley (formerly Stewart), a 2011 ILS Certificate graduate, joined the program this summer. Laura earned her BA with Comprehensive Honors and Master of Social Work degrees from UW-Madison. Her professional background includes experience advising with the UW-Madison College of Letters and Science Honors Program and in social work. Laura was the 2011 recipient of the ILS Program's Ruth Knatz Memorial Prize as a graduating senior. We are glad to welcome Laura back to ILS in her new role.

What was your favorite part of the ILS certificate?

The ILS Certificate experience was one of the most memorable aspects of my time at UW-Madison. What made the certificate particularly impactful were the many instructors who were invested in the ILS student experience. My ILS instructors were excellent teachers, and they went above and beyond to create a welcoming and engaging learning environment. As a student, I loved taking small, discussion-based courses in the living room of the Meiklejohn House that felt much more personalized than the larger lecture halls I encountered in my major and other courses for my degree.



The ILS Capstone Seminar I took centered around food and sustainability, and then-ILS Chair and course instructor Professor Cathy Middlecamp hosted our class for a delicious dinner at her home. Chatting with other ILS Certificate students around the dinner table, I remember thinking that this was the type of experience you didn't find elsewhere on campus. I also had the opportunity to complete an independent study with Dr. Kristin Hunt, a wonderfully enthusiastic instructor, on art and political activism. The material was entirely new to me, and I loved meeting with Dr. Hunt to dissect it on a regular basis.

How did you hear about the ILS Certificate during college?

I honestly couldn't tell you how I learned about the ILS Certificate! I'm sure that it would have been through one of my ILS courses. However, I do recall that I first learned about the ILS Program through the printed UW-Madison course catalog that was mailed to my home prior to SOAR. I remember sitting at my kitchen table, having just graduated from high school, excitedly combing through course descriptions and highlighting all of the courses that were of interest to me. I remember thinking that courses like ILS 205 – Western Culture: Political, Economic, and Social Thought I sounded exactly like the sort of experience I had hoped to find in college. During my freshman year, I took ILS courses that were offered through my residential learning community, and I took a total of eight ILS courses throughout my undergraduate career.

Did the ILS certificate redefine what education means to you?

The short answer is yes, it absolutely did. Particularly during my senior year of college, while also working as a peer academic advisor for the College of Letters and Science Honors Program where I regularly spoke with prospective students, I really started to grapple with what it meant to complete a liberal arts degree, whether...

An interview with an alumnus:

Laura Bradley (continued)

...a liberal arts degree held value in the current age, and what my college experience personally meant to me. As I've shared with current ILS Certificate students, the ILS Capstone was the course that helped me "put it all together" – by which I mean that it helped me make sense of my degree as a collective experience and set of skills, rather than a list of fragmented courses. I also had the opportunity to complete an independent project in ILS during my final semester of college during which I wrote an essay on what I felt the liberal arts degree of the future should entail. I referenced Professor Adam Nelson's book, "Education and Democracy: The Meaning of Alexander Meiklejohn" for this project. I actually dug up that essay from my college laptop eleven years later while preparing for my ILS Academic Advisor interview! The ILS Certificate experience helped me to understand and appreciate my liberal arts degree, and to value lifelong learning.

How did ILS prepare you for your career in social work?

The ability to consider any issue in its historical context and from an integrated perspective, along with the ability to communicate and write effectively, are skills I refined in ILS courses that have served me well.

I completed the Master of Social Work program at UW-Madison (while also working as a professional academic advisor with the College of Letters and Science Honors Program). I specialized in medical social work, which is a field in which the ability to think in an integrated way is imperative – including the capacity to problem solve utilizing natural science, social science, and humanistic principles. As a medical social worker, I worked closely with medical providers to help patients address a range of health issues. If you consider the factors that impact a patient's ability to manage a chronic disease like Type II Diabetes, for example, it's much more complex than strictly biological and pharmaceutical considerations. A patient's ability to manage their Diabetes could be directly impacted by economic, geographic, psychological, and cultural factors, as well as their own experience or their community's experience of discrimination in healthcare, literacy, physical concerns (e.g. vision, dexterity), and much more. The ability to consider a medical issue within the full context of a person's life results in a much better care plan. I'll add that ILS courses like 201 and 202, focused on science, technology, and philosophy, were particularly useful to this end. Although medical social work was a meaningful profession, I'm delighted to be back on campus in an advising capacity, where I continue to employ skills developed through ILS courses.

What was your favorite ILS course?

My ILS courses were among the best I took in college. My favorite, though, was ILS 371: Literature and Political and Social Thought in Britain from the French Revolution through World War I (Fall 2009), taught by Professor Emeritus Booth Fowler. The course was a small seminar held in the Meiklejohn House living room. Professor Fowler was an outstanding instructor, who challenged us and facilitated lively discussion. As a bonus, one evening, our class had a potluck and watched and discussed the World War I film Gallipoli in the Meiklejohn House living room. Again, where else to you find that kind of experience as undergraduate at UW-Madison?!

COURSE HIGHLIGHT: ILS 200

ILS 200: Critical Thinking and Expression explores the three modes of argument and expression: verbal, visual, and numerical. In this class, students have the opportunity to practice, interpret, and engage in critical thinking about how these modes are structured.

An Interview with a Current ILS 200 Student

by Sally Conroy

Q: What is your major and what year are you?

A: I am a sophomore studying Computer Science and Data Science.

Q: What is your involvement on campus?

A: Swim Club UW, Hoofers, Data Science Club

Q: What made you decide to take ILS 200?

A: I saw that it was a comm B and I needed a comm B credit. I was also interested in the learning structure that they had on the course description. It's probably one of my favorite comm B courses.

Q: Have you found this class to be applicable to the outside world? If so, what are some things you've learned that stood out?

A: I have. Right now the two books that we're looking at have a lot to do with more writing and speech based things and I'm kind of getting more into interviews and I've been able to use that to I guess better my speech and kind of present myself in a better way than usual.



Q: Would you recommend this class to another student?

A: I honestly would. I think it's a great class and I think the learning curriculum is well put together and the teachers are great and the classmates are also great.

3

hours of class per
week
2 discussions
1 lecture

143

students

COURSE HIGHLIGHT: ILS 200

(continued)

Quotes from an ILS Teacher: Professor Phillip Pinell

“What I love about ILS 200 is that it’s an avenue for students to practice the art of discerning good ideas—to “sift and winnow” between the wheat and chaff, as ILS founder Alexander Meiklejohn put it--and learn how to consider what ideas are worth living by and living for. Students are introduced to some of the greatest political speeches in human history, from the Apology of Socrates to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and learn to model their skills in writing and public speaking after these political greats.”



“Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.”

(taken from a report from the 1894 Board of Regents
on academic freedom)



Quotes from an ILS Teacher: Professor Kirsten Birkhaug

“What I love about ILS 200 is it’s an introduction to so many potential avenues of interests for students. It incorporates politics, history, art, pop culture, race and gender studies even- so many different topics that are covered throughout the course of the class and we do it by way of studying the great political speeches of all time, so you also get a feel for how to speak in compelling and persuasive ways and to also understand when certain rhetorical and persuasive strategies are being used on you. On the whole, it’s an opportunity for students to develop their interests in a lot of different areas as well as their skills in speaking and in writing and just sort of their fluency with the world around them so that you can walk through the world with a sort of clear idea of the messages that are being sent to you and receive them appropriately.”

Get to Know Our Staff: Sally Conroy

Student Ambassador, Interviewed by ILS Director Grant Nelsestuen



Grant: Where are you from originally?

Sally: I'm from Arlington, Virginia. So right outside DC.

Grant: Interesting. Why UW Madison?

Sally: Well I got in... [laughter] and my parents really liked it. We have a strange number of friends that we know from Virginia who went here and they're all good people. [laughter] And also I always subconsciously wanted to live near a body of water, which isn't exactly what you think about when you hear about Wisconsin. It's a plus. I also visited in the summer. So that also helps. <laughter>

Grant: So do you swim in the lakes?

Sally: Not that much. But I've always been a really big swimmer. I'm on the club swim team here too. I've been swimming since I was like one or so, and I've been swimming competitively since I was five.

Grant: What's your major?

Sally: I am majoring in Political Science and Latin American Caribbean Iberian Studies (LACIS). For political science, I've just always been good at stuff like that. And then I started taking International Relations this past semester and another [political science] class called Deception in Politics. That was recommended to me by my ILS 200 professor from the spring, Kirsten Birkhaug, as she was planning to teach the class. And I really like both of those courses. So I was just like, "You know what? I'm going to do political science." For LACIS, I've been taking Spanish my whole life and I didn't want to get the major, but I do really like Spanish, so it was like, "What can I do that'll make this useful?" And there are a lot of overlapping classes between LACIS and PoliSci where you can learn about politics in South America and stuff like that. So I was like, "You know what? Maybe I'll focus on that." Just so that I can have a little specialization in a region.

Grant: That's great. So what did you like about ILS 200 ["Critical Thinking and Expression"]?

Sally: I really liked how in ILS 200 it was material that you would think you know, but you actually don't. It really changed my perception of my conversations with people through its approach to what makes thinking critical. For example, there are a lot of different threats to critical thinking, like cowardice, or tyranny of the majority or conformity, and so on.

Grant: Great! That's what we like to hear. So when you went to college, what advice were you given?

Sally: Oh, that's a good one. A lot of people would tell me to be open-minded and to try new things. I didn't think I was gonna be a PoliSci major, even though I really liked PoliSci stuff in high school. When I came in, I was just like, "You know what? I'm gonna have to be a STEM major. That's where the money is." But then I thought "Let me just take these other classes just to see if I like it." And I did. And now I really enjoy what I'm doing.

Grant: "What was the biggest anxiety, or fear, you had before coming to UW-Madison?"

Sally: Honestly, the biggest thing I worried about for coming here was winter. I was not mentally ready for winter. [laughter] The week before I came back from winter break [in my first year], I saw that it was supposed to be negative 10. I was like, "Mom, I can't go back. It's gonna be too cold." That was the low point, but then [Wisconsin] basketball brought me back. [laughter]

Grant: What advice would you give somebody who is planning on going to either UW Madison or just college in general?

Sally: Well prepare for the weather. [laughter] But also I think you don't really need to know your major right away. Just take classes that are interesting to you. I wish someone told me that because my first semester, I took Calculus, advanced Chemistry, and a couple others like that, and it was horrible. Worst grades in my life and I was not happy. My second semester, I took classes I was more interested in, but didn't necessarily pertain to any specific major, and I was a lot happier and my grades were way better. And so I'd also recommend that students just take a second to look around for a random class, because there are so many random interesting classes available at UW-Madison.

THANK YOU!

Your donations make a difference.

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.

<https://ils.wisc.edu/donate/>

