**New York City College of Technology  
Interdisciplinary Committee**

**Criteria for an Interdisciplinary Course**

1. **Interdisciplinary Studies Definition**

Interdisciplinary studies involve two or more academic disciplines or fields of study organized around synthesizing distinct perspectives, knowledge, and skills. Interdisciplinary study focuses on questions, problems, and topics too complex or too broad for a single discipline or field to encompass adequately; such studies thrive on drawing connections between seemingly exclusive domains. Usually theme-based, interdisciplinary courses intentionally address issues that require meaningful engagement of multiple academic disciplines. Pedagogical strategies focus on, but are not limited to, inquiry or problem-based learning.

Although many academic disciplines, such as African American Studies and Engineering, are inherently interdisciplinary, to be considered an interdisciplinary course at City Tech the course must be team-taught[[1]](#footnote-1) by more than one faculty member from two or more departments[[2]](#footnote-2) in the College. An interdisciplinary course, by definition, has an interdisciplinary theme as its nucleus. In its essence, such a course brings the analytic methods of two or more academic disciplines to bear on a specific problem or question. Thus, a course in Music History is not likely to be considered interdisciplinary, but a course in Music History from an economist’s perspective might very well lead to such a course. The application of different methods and concepts is the key to assessing whether a course is or is not interdisciplinary. The term interdisciplinary is occasionally used to identify individual projects or assignments, but these, though possibly commendable, fall short in the necessary scope for learning experiences that demand in-depth exposure to the methodologies of distinct intellectual disciplines, and the creative application of these methodologies to specific problems.

Studies show that interdisciplinary courses improve student learning (Elrod & Roth, 2012; Klein, 2010; Lattuca, 2001; Lattuca, Voigt, & Fath, 2004; Project Kaleidoscope, 2011). To foster interdisciplinary learning, the Interdisciplinary Committee has identified goals and outcomes that students taking interdisciplinary courses should be able to achieve.

**Learning Outcomes of Interdisciplinary Courses**

Students will be able to:

* Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems
* Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries
* Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems
* Apply integrative thinking to problem-solving in ethically and socially responsible ways
* Recognize varied perspectives
* Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty
* Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively
* Become flexible thinkers

**New York City College of Technology**

**Interdisciplinary Committee**

**Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation**

**Date 8/25/2016**

**Submitted by** Amanda Almond

**Department(s) Social Science**

1. **Proposal to Offer an Interdisciplinary Course**

1. Identify the course type and title:  
     
   X An existing course Independent Study: IS904  
     
   🞎 A new course \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

🞎 A course under development \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Provide a course description: To explore the psychological, behavioral, and legal aspects of the treatment of dogs by the U.S. legal system. Both legal and psychological arguments that identify the unreliability of court rulings related to the death of canines will be documented. Investigations via interview as well as the review of legal cases and psychological literature will ensue.
2. How many credits will the course comprise? 3 How many hours? 3
3. What prerequisite(s) would students need to complete before registering for the course? Co-requisite(s)?

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| PSY1101 and LAW1201 |

1. Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course.
2. Both Professors Almond from Social Sciences and Mennella from Law/Legal Studies will be working together on this study. The argument made in the Independent Study paper/manuscript is refined when looking at the topic from an interdisciplinary lens. Fair treatment of dogs from the legal system included theories and methodologies from psychology, law, and behavioral science.
3. What is the proposed theme of the course? What complex central problem or question will it address? What disciplinary methods will be evoked and applied?

The theme of the course is to review ways in which our legal system has inconsistently ruled on cases in which a dog was killed, and viewed as properties. The unreliability of such rulings was thoroughly discussed, in addition to psychological education materials that might work to achieve more reliability in who the legal system views pets. The paper is titled: The Legal and Psychological Conflicts between Dogs as Both Property and Privileged Members of Society.

1. Which general learning outcomes of an interdisciplinary course does this course address?   
   Please explain how the course will fulfill the bolded mandatory learning outcome below. In addition, select and explain at least three additional outcomes.

X **Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems**

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| Being able to evaluate the inconsistencies from both a legal (case law) and psychological (theory/research) standpoint. |

X **Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries**

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| Apply both legal and psychological conclusions to provide appropriate rationale for the argument that rulings with respect to canines has been inconsistent/unreliable by definition and historical evidence. |

X **Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems**

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| The problems inherent in legal rulings were the inconsistencies in how dogs have been defined. Drawing from both human and animal cases, how the legal systems deals with various acts is complex. |

🞎 Apply integrative thinking to problem solving in ethically and socially responsible ways

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X **Recognize varied perspectives**

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| Perspectives of those is psychological sciences, the legal system, as well as those who manage pet adoption centers and pet owners contribute to the conversation. |

X **Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty**

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| The varied perspectives combined make it difficult to have clear rulings across multiple cases, and Alexandra’s paper is purposed to navigate this complexities. |

🞎 Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

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🞎 Become flexible thinkers

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🞎 Other

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**General Education Learning Goals for City Tech Students**

* **Knowledge:** Develop knowledge from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and hone the ability to deepen and continue learning.
* **Skills:** Acquire and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, creativity, analysis, and productive work.
* **Integration**: Work productively within and across disciplines.
* **Values, Ethics, and Relationships**: Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse   
  perspectives in personal, professional, civic, and cultural/global domains.

1. **How does this course address the general education learning goals for City Tech students?**

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| Through the assessment of a research paper included sources ethically accessed, proper citations, skills of inquiry and communication, and learning new psychological theories and concepts. |

1. **Which department would house this course**[[3]](#footnote-3)? Social Science

**Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary?** X No 🞎 Yes

* 1. **Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments?** X No 🞎 Yes   
     Explain.

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* 1. How will the course be team-taught[[4]](#footnote-4)? **X** Co-taught 🞎 Guest lecturers 🞎 Learning community  
       
     If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
     **X** Shared credits 🞎 Trading credits

If guest lecturers, for what approximate percentage of the course? 🞎 Minimum 20%[[5]](#footnote-5) 🞎 other: \_\_%  
  
Please attach the evaluation framework used to assess the interdisciplinarity of the course.[[6]](#footnote-6)

* 1. What strategies/resources would be implemented to facilitate students’ ability to make connections across the respective academic disciplines?

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| The role of the other professor remains unclear to me. I drafted several drafts with Alexandra and have graded the final without consultation from Prof Mennella |

1. Would the course be designated as:

🞎 a College Option requirement[[7]](#footnote-7)? **X**  an elective? 🞎 a Capstone course[[8]](#footnote-8)? 🞎other? Explain.

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| Evaluation Criteria:  **Independent Study Plan for Alexandra Kustra**  Professor Almond, Social Science Department  **Purpose:** My role as faculty is to assist in refining the arguments made for the investigatory report/paper in addition to Professor Mennella.  This includes refining statements about the paper’s rationale as well as gaining reliability via interviewed sources. Assistance in the construction of structured interviews will also be an important aspect of the project. Together, the student and I will create an interview schedule for up to 3 people who we’ll identify as willing candidates who can offer a unique perspective to the argument being made. Field assistance will include recruitment and maintaining a safe space for the interviews to take place (i.e., here at City Tech or via telephone).  **Timeline:** June, Summer Session I through August, end of Summer Session II  Week one: Initial meeting and schedule/expectations arranged  Week two: After a review of the written work done to date, student may respond verbally and/or in written work to feedback/comments/critiques  Week three: Interview schedule completed, and interviews commence  Week four: Investigatory report/paper due by end of Summer Session II  **Evaluation:** Assessment will consider the following:  1. Saturation of the data obtained via interview and scholarly literature  2. Clear statement and support of rationale, argument presented, and conclusions.  3. Paper submitted on time free of grammatical errors, with all citations and references included |
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1. See “Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation” question 9b for team-teaching options. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Exceptions are made for Departments that provide a home for multiple disciplines, such as Humanities and Social Science. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. An interdisciplinary course for the College Option requirement may be housed in a department that is not liberal arts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Attach evidence of consultation with all affected departments. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. While an interdisciplinary course must be team-taught, there is no formal percentage requirement, but this minimum is a guideline. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the case that a course is equally taught, include proposed plans for faculty classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. To qualify for the College Option, such a course must also meet the New York State definition of a liberal arts and sciences course.  
   <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/liberalarts.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A course proposed as a Capstone course must be separately approved by the Capstone Experience Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)