

**Integrated Liberal Studies Program  
2008 Assessment Report**

**“Understanding is Integration”\***

\* Alexander Meiklejohn, *The Experimental College*

## ILS Assessment Report June, 2008

*“I should like to see every freshman at once plunged into the problems of philosophy, into the difficulties and perplexities about our institutions, into the scientific accounts of the world especially as they bear on human life, into the portrayals of human experience which are given by the masters of literature.”*

~Alexander Meiklejohn, “What the Liberal College Is.”

### Program Overview and Learning Objectives

The aim of ILS is to provide an integrated understanding of the great themes of human inquiry and expression in scientific, political, economic, and social thought, as well as literature and the arts. The primary academic goals of the Integrated Liberal Studies Program (discussed in our approved Assessment Plan) include:

1. Ability to integrate different types of knowledge and disciplinary approaches
2. Knowledge of the past and its relevance to the present
3. Ability to handle complex ideas
4. Intellectual curiosity
5. Ability to relate academic learning to the experience of citizenship

### Methods of Measuring Students’ Performance on Learning Objectives

The six approved questions asked in the student assessment of their ILS experience pertain to the five academic goals of the program itemized above and provide room for additional comments. They are:

- Q1:** How have your ILS classes helped you integrate knowledge from different disciplines?
- Q2:** How has your ILS experience contributed to your overall understanding of the past?
- Q3:** To what extent has ILS given you a higher degree of comfort with complex and abstract ideas?
- Q4:** To what degree has ILS given you a greater interest in the topics studied?
- Q5:** How has ILS made you more aware of the relation of academic learning to citizenship and contemporary issues?
- Q6:** Additional comments.

As noted in our approved ILS Assessment Plan (Appendix A), our Senior Capstone Seminar (ILS 400) provides the ideal venue for assessing the extent to which our students have met the above academic goals. The capstone seminar is a required final course for

the ILS certificate, and is designed to be an integrating experience for one's ILS and overall undergraduate experience. It also includes an option for service learning. We administer the approved six-question assessment instrument to capstone seniors. It is administered without a faculty member in the room, is confidential, and is delivered to the ILS office, where a student worker tabulates (and, where lengthy, condenses) the responses. Those summaries, one for 2006-07 and one for 2007-08, are attached as Appendix B, Sections I & II, with a response *n* of approximately 20 seniors each year.

### Overview of Findings (Detail in Appendix B)

These assessment results have been discussed in our faculty meetings and faculty retreats for each of these years, and this report (in draft form) was discussed extensively in the May, 2008 Faculty Retreat. The assessment results pleased us with the high degree of self-reported meeting of the above five goals. In both years, the numerous and careful responses are overwhelmingly positive for all five goals. Since our students are not known for timidity in expressing critiques, this is especially gratifying. In part, we believe this positive assessment is due to the strong role they themselves play in their learning with us, in the Meiklejohn tradition. Our students clearly relish the program's inter-disciplinary, discussion-intensive learning opportunities. They speak of this, in their responses to the assessment questions, in several ways, as shown in this small selection of their responses to both years' assessment questionnaires (below and in Appendix B, comments in quotation marks are direct quotations and others are summaries of remarks to codify more extensive remarks or multiple comments of the same nature):

**Q1:** How have your ILS classes helped you integrate knowledge from different disciplines?

- √ ILS enhances knowledge of history, highlighting how beliefs, worldviews, politics and innovations shape each other throughout
- √ The knowledge from ILS courses remains ingrained in the minds of students and comes to bear on their experience as they navigate the information of other courses
- √ ILS courses teach rational methods that can be used to connect disciplines
- √ ILS provides historical and philosophical background for a wide array of disciplines

**Q2:** How has your ILS experience contributed to your overall understanding of the past?

- √ ILS highlights how an array of causes have diverse effects on reality
- √ ILS provides the tools to understand history through multiple lenses
- √ ILS draws out the connections between historical events and the philosophies that influenced them
- √ ILS provides a comprehensive introduction to the classical works

**Q3:** To what extent has ILS given you a higher degree of comfort with complex and abstract ideas?

- √ “Through the forum for open discussion that ILS provides, students have a continual opportunity to solidify a confidence in their ability to critically examine past and current works through the presentation of their own interpretations.”
- √ The intimate discussion format of ILS courses makes grappling with complex ideas much more accessible and comfortable
- √ ILS constantly challenges the thinking of an individual and forces him to be accountable for his ideas
- √ ILS allows students to feel comfortable not just examining an idea of a topic but also evaluating the lens through which such ideas and topics are viewed

**Q4:** To what degree has ILS given you a greater interest in the topics studied?

- √ “ILS courses light a fire under students, encouraging them to go beyond the limits of the course to further investigate the topics they have studied”
- √ “ILS ignited my love of reading.”
- √ “ILS classes force students to think and work hard, which naturally piques interest.”
- √ “ILS uncovers the unknown and makes it something worth investigating.”

**Q5:** How has ILS made you more aware of the relation of academic learning to citizenship and contemporary issues?

- √ ILS emphasizes the importance of informing one’s self in order to successfully participate as a citizen in a democratic society
- √ ILS forces students to confront the relationship between academic learning and the outside world
- √ ILS fosters an understanding of the value of constant questioning and thereby encourages students to make sense of their own unique place in society
- √ “Learning about the past has taught me the importance of remaining active in the present.”

**Q6: Additional Comments**

- √ Turn ILS into a Major
- √ ILS evolves the passion for learning and an appreciation of community
- √ Expand the variety of ILS topics to encompass a broader knowledge base
- √ “I have loved ILS courses because they have not only been interesting on a day to day basis, but they have also provided a framework for how I want to analyze and approach future learning.”

The tabulated comments are included in Appendix B, Sections I & II). The major points which emerge from the comments concern:

1. the positive effect of the “multiple lenses” of our inter-disciplinary courses,
2. the chance to move from theory to application and to move in the opposite direction as well, that of placing “a wide variety of individual ideas into their proper theoretical context,” and
3. the importance to them of understanding the classics and applying them to contemporary affairs so we “have a framework to understand the past” and “in order to keep from repeating history’s mistakes,” and
4. the ways in which “ILS partners the privilege of a strong education with a sense of responsibility” and “endows students with the necessary tools to effectively challenge social norms.” In this regard, we continue to call on ourselves as a program to further cultivate civic engagement. Some (but not a majority) of the students in the capstone seminar avail themselves of the service learning option each semester, and those who do always report back that it changed them in unexpected and positive ways. Professor Daniel Kleinman’s “consensus conference” course enables an entire class to learn about a current issue in depth and engage with experts and key players. We are pleased with the in-class feedback on these opportunities and continue to ask ourselves how to further integrate practical civic engagement experience into our curriculum.

You will find that each of our six questions in the survey address one of the five ILS academic goals, along with a final question soliciting further comments. Rather than seeking to summarize these responses further, we will let them speak for themselves in the appendix.

### Response and Next Steps

Overall, the students are very positive about ILS and what they have learned, expressing a sense of analytical and civic competence. Students speak of developing a passion for learning in our program. They have extended their enthusiasm to one concrete suggestion in both years’ surveys: that ILS should become a major. We will not be seeking that change; as we noted in our program review a few years ago, when this idea was also raised by one of the external reviewers, we are pleased with our focus on providing an inter-disciplinary option for meeting general education and breadth requirements. Rather, the students’ responses are leading us to a re-doubling of our efforts to recruit more full professors with strong love of undergraduate teaching, and to consider offering for students in their junior year a gateway seminar for the certificate, to provide an early understanding of the Meiklejohn and ILS values, and perhaps also to encourage civic engagement.

In addition, we plan to move to address the students’ constructive suggestion that ILS should “expand the variety of ILS topics to encompass a broader knowledge base.” We have often heard comments that we should include the study of non-Western thought in our courses. Wherever appropriate, we do bring in other systems of thought (for

instance, when studying ancient Greece in the Axial Age, we might bring in Confucian and Buddhist thought). However, the program does focus on Western thought and does not have the resources or mission to duplicate material covered in other programs that focus on Eastern thought or global cultures. In addition, the ILS faculty continues to discuss and the ILS Chair continues to seek faculty who can cover music and the arts and other fields where we have not been able to offer special topics courses.

There was only one negative comment, in 2007, noting without specification: “Although ILS produces some of the best courses on Campus, certain courses are not very interesting or are poorly run.” The ILS faculty is conscious of the need to review our courses and has been discussing at 2007-08 faculty meetings and the May retreat the need to more consciously review our courses once again for integration not only within the course but with other courses, and for coverage of all of the areas where there is student demand and need.

In addition to the senior assessment surveys, our assessment plan also calls for two other approaches, which we will describe along with their status:

1. Compile a sample of senior capstone final projects to assess every four years.

We have sample projects for the current and past year; we will continue to collect them for the next assessment report due in three years. We do ask that our assessment plan be amended to make this a three year cycle contemporaneous with the revised three-year reporting schedule.

2. Administer (with the help of the Wisconsin Alumni Association) an e-mail survey of recent graduates to assess the impact that the ILS experience has had on their post-graduation lives.

We hope to work on this survey with the WAA this summer and administer it next fall. Our assessment plan calls for doing this biennially; after doing the first survey this fall, we would like the Dean’s permission to move that assessment also to a three-year cycle, to match the revised College Assessment Guidelines that now call for submitting assessment reports every three years. This will also enable the number of graduates surveyed to be larger, because we will survey three classes at a time rather than two. In addition, it would save time and money while probably yielding better (as in more robust) results.

In summary, for our next steps:

- √ We are not interested in becoming a major despite repeated student suggestions.
- √ Instead, we are re-doubling our efforts to recruit more full professors with strong love of undergraduate teaching, as more of our professors reach retirement age, **and**
- √ We continue to consider offering for students in their junior year a gateway seminar for the certificate, to provide an early understanding of the Meiklejohn and ILS values, and perhaps also to encourage civic engagement. This has some logistical and staffing dilemmas for us, however, so we will continue our discussion of this option.
- √ We are actively developing a plan as faculty to discuss our course syllabi together and review our overall approaches to integration, even though the comments from our student assessments on integration are very positive.
- √ Finally, we seek the Dean's permission to modify our assessment plan to move the young alumni survey and the sampling of senior projects to a three-year cycle to match the College's revised triennial assessment reporting timelines.

# **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A.**  
**ILS Assessment Plan**

(As revised and approved by the College of Letters & Science, Fall, 2005)

December 2, 2005

*Report on assessment Activities in the Integrated Liberal Studies Program*

The Integrated Liberal Studies Program does not currently have an assessment plan on file. In response to Dean Sandefur's request for such a document from all departments and programs, ILS convened a committee on assessment in October, 2005. The committee consisted of four faculty members representing three academic disciplines—humanities, social science, and physical science. The members were Laura McClure (Chair of ILS, Classics), Craig Werner (ILS, AAS), Kathi Sell (ILS) and Cathy Middlecamp (Chemistry).

The committee observed first that ILS already has one important form of assessment in place: ILS 400, a capstone seminar open only to graduating seniors. It seemed logical, and respectful of our limited human resources, to link our major program assessment to that course. Such a structure would allow the capstone teachers—currently Kathi Sell and Craig Werner—to oversee the assessment process and report back on an annual basis to the executive committee during a regularly scheduled departmental meeting.

Assessment tools in the capstone, such as an interdisciplinary student project and a paper assessment or oral interview survey at the end of the semester, will help us gauge the success of our program. Last but not least, we plan to survey recent alumni about their experience in the ILS program and its importance for their lives beyond the University of Wisconsin on a bi-annual basis.

### *Assessment Plan for the Integrated Liberal Studies Program*

The primary academic goals of the Integrated Liberal Studies Program include:

- Ability to integrate different types of knowledge and disciplinary approaches;
- Knowledge of the past and its relevance to the present;
- Ability to handle complex ideas;
- Intellectual curiosity;
- Ability to relate academic learning to the experience of citizenship.

ILS 400: Capstone Seminar provides the ideal venue for assessing the extent to which our students have met these academic goals. The course is required of all of our certificate students before they graduate. Because of the high number of certificate earners in recent years, students can normally only take this course in their senior year.

Two main aspects of student participation in the capstone provide excellent opportunities for assessment:

- Performance on a final interdisciplinary paper or project;
- Participation in an exit interview or assessment survey.

Since in-class discussion is where much of ILS learning takes place, it is the best venue for tracking the intellectual development of our students. The interdisciplinary paper or project provides another perspective on this progress, allowing us to gauge written as well as oral output skills. It also affords an opportunity to measure the comfort level of our students with crossing disciplinary boundaries, a major emphasis in all of our courses. Finally, all capstone students are required to complete an in-class exit survey or interview, consisting of a set of questions targeted at assessing whether they have acquired the types of skills or breadth of knowledge emphasized in ILS, along the lines of the attached document.<sup>1</sup>

One final means to assess our effectiveness as a program is to solicit input from recent alumni. To that end, the ILS program proposes to distribute electronically, and with the help of WAA, a bi-annual questionnaire to young alumni about the impact their ILS experience has had on their post-graduate lives.

Data gleaned from these assessments will be reported annually to all ILS faculty at our final departmental meeting of the year. It is also desired that the assessment process itself undergo periodic review by ILS faculty to determine its usefulness.

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<sup>1</sup> Questionnaire on next page. The 2007 and 2008 assessments covered in this report used these questions in the assessment survey.

*Schedule for Implementation*

A four-year rotation schedule is envisioned. A representative collection of capstone projects will be put together each year, to be reviewed every fourth year. In alternating years, we will survey or interview graduating seniors and conduct outreach surveys of recent alumni, followed by a year of consolidation and review.

*Possible Questions for Student Assessment in the Integrated Liberal Studies Program*

**Q1:** How have your ILS classes helped you integrate knowledge from different disciplines?

**Q2:** How has your ILS experience contributed to your overall understanding of the past?

**Q3:** To what extent has ILS given you a higher degree of comfort with complex and abstract ideas?

**Q4:** To what degree has ILS given you a greater interest in the topics studied?

**Q5:** How has ILS made you more aware of the relation of academic learning to citizenship and contemporary issues?

**Q6:** Add comments below.

## **Appendix B. I.**

### **ILS ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESPONSES 2006-07**

This is a compilation of the results of student assessment questionnaires completed in the sections of the ILS Capstone Seminar for 2006-2007. The format of this assessment tool was created by the ILS Curriculum Committee and approved by the Office of the Letters & Science Dean as part of the program's assessment plan.

The responses were assembled and codified by one of our program's student workers, and reviewed for technical accuracy, not substance, by Dr. Kathleen Sell, then forwarded to the Chair. Where basically the same answer is repeated multiple times, it only shows up once in these lists. After the list of responses, some specific further statements were provided for illustrative purposes. This assessment tool is completed by the capstone seminar students anonymously and without a faculty member in the room, and is then turned in to the ILS office staff for compilation.

#### **Q1: How have your ILS classes helped you integrate knowledge from different disciplines?**

- ILS enhances knowledge of history, highlighting how beliefs, worldviews, politics and innovations shape each other throughout
- ILS courses display how specific political or ethical debates seep into the literature of a particular time period
- ILS highlights the complex relationship between science and society
- ILS courses often focus on one main topic but then incorporate multiple disciplines to bring a more profound understanding to that idea
- ILS is a great introduction to fundamental concepts of political thought
- ILS is a great link to the humanities
- ILS places a wide variety of individual ideas into their proper theoretical context
- ILS utilizes perspectives often neglected in other disciplines
- ILS provides a beneficial historical and integrated approach to complicated science and its evolution
- ILS teaches the importance of communication with people from every discipline
- ILS helps with the understanding that all the various, seemingly unrelated disciplines are totally related and vital to each other
- ILS strengthens critical thinking skills, thereby making the integration process more meaningful
- ILS bridges the gap between all disciplines

“Each ILS course employs a very different ‘language.’ This may be the language of theology, history or literature, but in each case, students can be sure that they are learning ‘outside the box’ of their major.”

**Q2: How has your ILS experience contributed to your overall understanding of the past?**

- ILS proves the importance of dispelling ignorance in order to keep from repeating history's mistakes
- ILS helps to develop an in depth understanding of the past
- ILS provides the tools to understand history through multiple lenses
- ILS helps with the appreciation of the efforts of great historical thinkers
- ILS provides a comprehensive introduction to the classical works
- ILS offers insight into past political and social beliefs that help with a better understanding of the present
- ILS courses provide for a thorough understanding of movements in history

“Things never stop happening, so history will always be significant, especially to the ILS student.”

**Q3: To what extent has ILS given you a higher degree of comfort with complex and abstract ideas?**

- ILS provides the tools to approach, examine and question complex issues
- ILS provides an encouraging atmosphere to ask for help when tackling such complexity
- ILS teaches that it is okay to disagree with classical thinkers or to agree with unpopular theories
- Through the forum for open discussion that ILS provides, students have a continual opportunity to solidify a confidence in their ability to critically examine past and current works through the presentation of their own interpretations
- The best way to learn is to teach; the open discussions in ILS courses let everyone teach and therefore learn a great deal
- ILS enables students to be comfortable with ideas beyond the scope of their strong topics
- ILS proves that it is okay to talk, listen and take more than a few seconds to come to a final decision about anything
- ILS students come from diverse backgrounds, coming together to create meaningful and complex discussions to which each has the opportunity to bring something unique and valuable

“ILS classes show you how to take an abstract idea, figure out what it means, apply it to a real life situation and – most importantly – analyze it and embrace or reject it.”

**Q4: To what degree has ILS given you a greater interest in the topics studied?**

- The unique design of each ILS course successfully engenders specific interest
- After investigating the merits of public service, students often choose to pursue public service careers after they graduate
- ILS allows for better understanding of the topics, which then creates more interest in them
- ILS courses light a fire under students, encouraging them to go beyond the limits of the course to further investigate the topics they have studied
- ILS topics help to shape the identity of students
- ILS helps students relate to contemporary rhetoric and politics with a greater cultural consciousness
- ILS invites students to challenge the status quo
- ILS courses connect students to the topics by enabling them to interpret the materials in their own way.

“ILS has made me realize how incomplete my understanding really is and inspired me to try to correct that deficiency as much as I can.”

**Q5: How has ILS made you more aware of the relation of academic learning to citizenship and contemporary issues?**

- ILS highlights the deep interconnectedness of academia and citizenship
- ILS partners the privilege of a strong education with a sense of responsibility
- ILS shows that education is the foundation for understanding contemporary issues
- Informed citizens can contribute more to society and ILS enables that informing process
- ILS emphasizes that awareness produced by education allows for greater success in the public sphere
- ILS developed and strengthened individual points of view about contemporary issues
- ILS encourages and enables interest and involvement
- ILS proves that citizenship is a skill that must be cultivated
- ILS fosters an understanding of the value of constant questioning and thereby encourages students to make sense of their own unique place in society
- ILS endows students with the necessary tools to effectively challenge social norms

“Learning about the past has taught me the importance of remaining active in the present.”

**Q6: Additional Comments**

- Generally grateful for the overall ILS experience
- Develop ILS public relations so that more students have the opportunity to benefit from the program
- Turn ILS into a Major
- ILS Professors are the best and brightest on campus
- ILS evolves the passion for learning and an appreciation of community
- ILS is one of the University's most valuable resources
- Expand the variety of ILS topics to encompass a broader knowledge base

“My participation in ILS has been the saving grace of my education at UW-Madison.”

“My favorite courses at the University of Wisconsin in Madison have all been ILS.”

“Viva la Meiklejohn!”

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(According to an outlying comment)

- Although ILS produces some of the best courses on Campus, certain courses are not very interesting or are poorly run

## **Appendix B. II.**

### **ILS ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESPONSES 2007-08**

This is a compilation of the results of student assessment questionnaires completed in the sections of the ILS Capstone Seminar for 2007-2008. The format of this assessment tool was created by the ILS Curriculum Committee and approved by the Office of the Letters & Science Dean as part of the program's assessment plan.

The responses were assembled and codified by one of our program's student workers, and reviewed for technical accuracy, not substance, by Dr. Kathleen Sell, then forwarded to the Chair. Where basically the same answer is repeated multiple times, it only shows up once in these lists. After the list of responses, some specific further statements were provided for illustrative purposes. This assessment tool is completed by the capstone seminar students anonymously and without a faculty member in the room, and is then turned in to the ILS office staff for compilation.

#### **Q1: How have your ILS classes helped you integrate knowledge from different disciplines?**

- Through courses that combine perspectives on relevant and contemporary topics, ILS encourages students to creatively draw connections
- ILS classes bring a humanistic and philosophical perspective to a diverse array of subjects
- The knowledge from ILS courses remains ingrained in the minds of students and comes to bear on their experience as they navigate the information of other courses
- ILS courses teach rational methods that can be used to connect disciplines
- ILS provides historical and philosophical background for a wide array of disciplines
- The themes of ILS courses find their foundation in many different disciplines so the their knowledge integrates seamlessly
- ILS courses add a cultural and intellectual perspective to other disciplines
- ILS encourages the skills to develop unique ideas about a multiplicity of topics
- ILS directly addresses the notion of integration by displaying the impacts of the interactions between diverse disciplines
- ILS brings together students from a wide variety of disciplines to discuss and share the wisdom of their background
- ILS fosters a holistic approach to education

“By planting the seed of perspective, ILS classes invited me to take a different approach when learning about any topic.”

“Because I am very interested in continuing with a career in psychological research, I feel that my ILS classes in particular have ‘opened my mind’ to thinking about research in a different way from tradition.”

“If not for ILS, I would have never been introduced to philosophy throughout college.”

**Q2: How has your ILS experience contributed to your overall understanding of the past?**

- ILS courses highlight multiple aspects of the same era in history
- ILS trades in a strictly chronological understanding of the past for a more holistic approach
- ILS illuminated the thoughts of great philosophers like Plato, Rousseau, Locke and Machiavelli
- ILS provides a framework to understand the past
- ILS gave shape to the side of history not written by the winners by providing the tools to investigate multiple perspectives
- ILS uncovers aspects of the past not always studied
- ILS ties together different time periods to aid in the understanding of them
- ILS draws out the connections between historical events and the philosophies that influenced them
- ILS provides opportunities to explore and grapple with classic literature of the past
- ILS courses enrich the historical basis of a topic by bringing relevant philosophical, political and cultural contexts to the forefront
- ILS clarifies the non-linear nature of the past
- ILS highlights how an array of causes have diverse effects on reality
- ILS provides a concise and valuable overview of the past

“ILS treats people of the past as people, not just as talking points.”

“ILS has demonstrated that ‘the past’ and history in general is a subject of study that is much more dynamic than high school textbooks would suggest.”

“This broad, interconnected understanding of the past will prove invaluable as I move onto the ‘real’ world where so much of the past informs the future.”

“I have learned how history pushes through revolutions and cultural trends, and how despite our categories and labels, history is actually as chaotic as the present day.”

“Even with one of my earliest classes, the combination of literature, philosophy, history and art history of the same time period shows wonderfully how they evolve from one another and reference similar modes of thought, and abstract concepts that are often lost if they are not all shown to one simultaneously.”

“My ILS courses have demonstrated for me what it truly means to stand on the shoulders of giants.”

**Q3: To what extent has ILS given you a higher degree of comfort with complex and abstract ideas?**

- ILS provides an opportunity to experiment with new ways of conveying an individual's own abstract ideas
- ILS breaks down complexity in a very lucid manner
- ILS teaches students to welcome complexity especially when such ideas contradict current conceptions
- The intimate discussion format of ILS courses makes grappling with complex ideas much more accessible and comfortable
- ILS constantly challenges the thinking of an individual and forces him to be accountable for his ideas
- ILS encourages contemplation instead of memorization
- ILS courses elevate thought and uncover pathways to understanding that would have otherwise been hidden
- ILS courses force students to think complex thoughts, making understanding them more accessible
- ILS allows students to feel comfortable not just examining an idea of a topic but also evaluating the lens through which such ideas and topics are viewed
- ILS fosters an open mindedness that requires critical thought

“While I would not claim to be a scholar of philosophy, I would say that now I have a general understanding of its basics. I can relate one philosopher's idea to another's and come away with my own personal one.”

“It has given me at least a ten-fold increase in the comfort that I have with complex and abstract ideas.”

**Q4: To what degree has ILS given you a greater interest in the topics studied?**

- ILS makes it clear that topics studied continue to affect the world today
- ILS reinforces preexisting interests
- ILS fosters interests in new topics
- The structure of ILS courses engender strong interest in the topics studied
- ILS TAs and Professors always provide a unique perspective and show how personal interest can take shape
- ILS classes force individuals to think and work hard, which naturally piques interest
- ILS ignited my love of reading
- What is learned in ILS courses can be easily incorporated into future career paths
- ILS uncovers the unknown and makes it something worth investigating
- ILS courses are intriguing
- ILS cultivates a love of philosophy
- ILS courses are founded on an openness and creative freedom that makes their topics more approachable and interesting
- ILS provides students with an opportunity to explore multiple areas of interest without forcing them to commit to a major
- ILS remedies the confusion between lack of interest and lack of understanding

- The multifaceted nature of the ILS curriculum allows for the interpretation or investigation of any particular topic from the perspective that is most intriguing for the student

“ILS basically gets me interested in whatever topic is being discussed. I’m not sure how the professors and TAs do that since my other classes rarely have that effect.”

“I love to read, but fiction can only go so far, and philosophy has definitely filled another niche in my reading habits.”

“I’ve been very interested in all of my ILS classes because of the way they were taught.”

“Plain and simply, ILS instructors teach courses that are already enticing and interesting from the get go.”

**Q5: How has ILS made you more aware of the relation of academic learning to citizenship and contemporary issues?**

- ILS teaches that a person’s sense of responsibility to their society greatly influences their responses to and interpretations of his world
- ILS displays how knowledge aids in the advancement of society
- The discussions that take place in the ILS context illuminate the nature of this relationship
- ILS makes clear how the past events of history come to bear on the realities of the present
- ILS reminds students not to stop or give up
- ILS makes clear what the issues are
- ILS forces students to confront the relationship between academic learning and the outside world
- What ILS teaches helps individuals to improve themselves, how they think and how they act
- ILS emphasizes the importance of informing one’s self in order to successfully participate as a citizen in a democratic society
- ILS displays how a liberal education can produce well rounded individuals ready to engage in the world
- ILS professors model this relationship in their fields and share their findings with students

“Learning about the past can help one to do something about it in the present, and what the goal of ILS seems to be is to create graduates who are of able body and mind and who understand their place in the world enough to want to know more and do more to contribute to it.”

“ILS was born out of tying these three values together. Academia too often focuses solely on the past and already known, but to truly make an impact in the world we must take that knowledge and apply it to the contemporary issues. That activity or activism is what citizenship is...in other words, Participating in Society.”

“By forcing students to focus on critical thinking ILS is quite literally producing more informed citizens that will be more able to understand and evaluate complicated contemporary issues.”

“Both citizenship and contemporary issues rely upon a public which is constantly learning.”

**Q6: Additional Comments:**

- ILS is like no other program, its uniqueness is essential for a campus like Madison
- ILS makes accessible the topics that there wouldn't be time to investigate otherwise in the limited time frame of an undergraduate career
- More ILS classes should be created and offered
- The assignments are interesting, the professors are engaging and the material is fascinating
- MAKE ILS A MAJOR FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

“I have loved ILS courses because they have not only been interesting on a day to day basis, but they have also provided a framework for how I want to analyze and approach future learning.”

“I am happy to be one of the last ILS grads to have been able to spend four years in the Meiklejohn House. That building and its layout seemed to just ooze out the ILS spirit. I will sadly miss the little brown house when it is torn down.”

“I would strongly recommend anyone to take on the ILS curriculum and don't think it is at all absurd to suggest that ILS topics ought to be a mandatory part of all undergraduates' degree requirements.”