

## Independent Interdisciplinary Major

### Why an Independent Interdisciplinary Major at Brandeis?

An independent interdisciplinary major (IIM) offers students with interdisciplinary intellectual interests the opportunity to design a course of study not available in the regular Brandeis University curriculum. Students who pursue an IIM have a proven record of academic achievement, seriousness of purpose, and intellectual curiosity. Additionally, students develop necessary skills to work independently, to analyze and synthesize materials from various disciplines, and to work one-on-one in sustained dialogue with their subcommittee of faculty members.

### What Is an Independent Interdisciplinary Major?

An independent interdisciplinary major (IIM) is an individualized program of study that enables a student to design a curriculum around a topic, theme, issue, or set of questions that cannot be adequately addressed within the context of existing majors or minors. However, before a student can declare an IIM, he or she must work with an advisory committee consisting of three faculty members from at least two different departments and must receive approval of the IIM proposal by a subcommittee of faculty members from the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Academic Standing.

### What Does the IIM Proposal Entail?

The proposal consists of four parts: the proposed curriculum forms, a proposal statement, a letter of endorsement from the faculty advisory committee, and evidence of comparable majors offered at other colleges and universities.

#### Proposed Curriculum Forms

Forms are available in the Academic Services office. Applications should include:

- Twelve to fifteen courses from three or more departments that relate to the IIM topic
- Selection of either a senior thesis (departmental honors) or an independent study

#### Proposal Statement

The proposal must address why designing an IIM is more desirable than completing two separate majors or a combination of an existing major and minor. It should discuss the student's intellectual, academic, and career goals, in addition to describing the role each potential course plays in the student's curriculum and how the various courses relate to one another.

### **Letter of Endorsement**

Authored by the primary adviser and signed by two other faculty advisers, the letter of support includes a discussion of a variety of issues including, but not limited to:

- The topic's viability as a discrete area of intellectual inquiry
- The appropriateness, breadth, and depth of the proposed curriculum
- The candidate's qualifications to undertake the project

### **Comparable Majors**

This section of the proposal includes examples of similar majors offered at other institutions and the list of required courses.

### **Examples of Past Approved IIMs**

The following is a list of recently approved IIM titles (titles should resemble those used for similar majors at other institutions):

- Communications and Media Studies
- Education and Society
- Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Urban Planning
- Visual Culture

### **More Information**

#### **Office of Academic Services**

Usdan 130, MS 001

Waltham, MA 02454-9110

781-736-3470

781-736-2003 fax

[brandeis.edu/as/advpol/IIMmajor.html](http://brandeis.edu/as/advpol/IIMmajor.html)