

Kutler Center for Interdisciplinary Studies & Independent Research

The Kutler Center for Interdisciplinary Studies & Independent Research was built to memorialize Brendan Kutler '10 and his numerous passions.

As the first major curricular change since the merger, the Interdisciplinary Studies and Independent Research department offers coursework that exposes students to content and approaches from multiple or nontraditional disciplines. The mission of this department is to enhance the academic experience for Harvard-Westlake students through their interaction with unique and interesting subject matter, utilization of innovative methodologies, and development of certain “capstone” capabilities, such as original research, public presentation, and ethical reasoning.

Here is a sample of course titles offered during the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years:

Business and Life: Concepts and Connections

The course goal is to “seek to enable the broad understanding that all students will need as they venture forth in the world.” In 2012-13, units like “The Business of Studenting,” “Real Businesses, Real Wisdom,” and “Negotiation for Mutual Benefit” featured alumni, parents and friends of the school visiting the class to share their real-life experiences with the students.

Criminal Law and Advocacy: Appeals

Students in this course study pending cases while addressing current issues in criminal law. One of the course’s guest lecturers, Brooke Levin '12, was part of a team of lawyers and Loyola Law School students who worked to secure the release of Obie Anthony, who was incarcerated for 17 years for a murder he did not commit. Levin’s use of high-school math demonstrated that the prosecution’s theory of the case was virtually impossible and that the defense theory was highly likely.

Ethics: Philosophical Traditions & Everyday Morality

Students examine moral issues of everyday life and ask questions about character, conduct, and social justice against the backdrop of ethical writings from the fifth century BCE to philosophers of today. Major ethical theories of the Western tradition as well as Eastern views are discussed and applied to human dilemmas and current problems. This course helps students develop a breadth of perspective, enabling them to productively employ the wisdom of the past while developing critical perspectives of their own.



*Interior view,
Kutler Center*

Statistics and Sports

This course is designed to teach students to be critical readers, thinkers, and analysts rather than to merely memorize formulas. Its objective is to challenge students to pose meaningful sports and sports medicine questions, and then devise and execute studies that answer them.

Unconventional Leadership

Students in this course develop leadership skills by applying theoretical concepts from diverse disciplines including psychology, education, sociology, and organizational dynamics. Students are exposed to the nature of leadership through in-class activities ranging from simulations and guest lecturers to improvisational comedy workshops, role playing, and public speaking exercises.

Video Game Design

The entire class works as a team to produce and market a single video game. The 2012-2013 class designed the game “Cubed,” and upon viewing it, Activision CEO Bobby Kotick P’15 ’17 hired two of the creators, Hunter Stanley ’13 and Sacha Best ’13, for summer jobs.