

## An Integrated Model of the Interdisciplinary Research Process

### **A: Drawing on disciplinary insights:**

- Define the problem or state the focus question
- Justify using an interdisciplinary approach
- Identify relevant disciplines
- Conduct a literature search
- Develop adequacy in each relevant discipline
- Analyze the problem and evaluate each insight into it

### **B: Integrating insights and producing an interdisciplinary understanding:**

- Identify conflicts between insights and their sources
  - Create or discover common ground
  - Integrate insights
  - Produce an interdisciplinary understanding of the problem and test it
- **What cautions should one be mindful of when using these steps:** *First*, dividing what is essentially a fluid process into discrete steps gives the misleading but unavoidable impression that these steps do not overlap. They often do. *Second*, numbering the steps implies a unidirectional sequence, but this is not the true nature of the interdisciplinary research process. It is much more like a **feedback loop** than a ladder. **Feedback loop** is corrective information about a decision, operation, event, or problem that compels the researcher to revisit an earlier phase of the project. This corrective information typically comes from previously overlooked scholarship or other knowledge formations. *Third*, there is the temptation to avoid difficult steps and leap ahead to later steps. *Fourth*, describing the process in terms of steps may give the impression that each relevant discipline is mined separately for nuggets of insights before any integration takes place, and that when integration occurs, it happens all at once. Partial integration does occur throughout the process.