

Independent Study Courses (POLS 197, 297)

Independent study is a course taken for credit, which is tailored to fit the interests of a specific student, and which occurs outside the traditional “classroom/laboratory setting”.

Independent study is carried out under the direct supervision of a faculty member having expertise in a particular area of investigation. Consequently the project will be done in the department primarily responsible for the field of study. Prior to enrollment in independent study, students must obtain the approval of their advisor, faculty sponsor, and the faculty sponsor’s department chair.

Independent study may be taken for variable credit. The amount of credit to be granted should be mutually agreed upon by the student and the faculty sponsor prior to registration.

Academic units offering independent study will be responsible for administering such work. Specific guidelines, which define the responsibilities of both faculty and student for administering the independent study, are noted below. Alternative guidelines that incorporate these basic points are acceptable.

Guidelines for Independent Studies

1. The success of an independent study project is often related to the amount of advance planning expended on the project. Consequently, planning for the project should, whenever possible, be initiated in the semester before the course is taken.
2. By the end of the add/drop period, students will be required to submit to their faculty sponsor a specific plan which must include, but not be limited to, the following:
 1. The project title.
 2. A statement of justification, indicating why independent study is being selected and the reason for undertaking the project, its importance, and how it relates to other work done by the student.
 3. A clear and complete statement of project objectives.
 4. A concise statement of the plans and methods to be used in order to accomplish each objective.
3. During the first full week of classes the student and the faculty sponsor will meet and prepare a document which includes the following:
 1. A schedule of dates when the student and faculty member will meet and discuss progress, including a time plan indicating when various parts of the work are projected for completion.
 2. A list of those ways in which documentation of work can be shown.
 3. A plan for evaluation, which will include the specific work to be submitted for evaluation on the project, and a statement of criteria to be used for evaluation.
4. It is the responsibility of the faculty supervisor to ensure that all the provisions outlined above have been satisfactorily accomplished. Copies of all documents and schedules mentioned must be filed with the department chair by the end of the add/drop period. Faculty sponsors should retain the completed projects, along with faculty evaluations, for review, if necessary, by appropriate college/school committees.