



INDEPENDENT STUDY

ABOUT INDEPENDENT STUDY

The independent study option in Gallatin provides students the opportunity to work individually with a professor on a particular topic or creative project. The student designs the work—in effect, the syllabus—in collaboration with the instructor: they identify the core questions or problems, construct a strategy for investigating them, and lay out a series of readings, writings, discussions or other activities aimed at achieving the student's goals. The idea for the independent study may arise out of a classroom experience; for example, a student in a course on 20th-century American history may develop a particular interest in the Depression and ask the instructor to supervise an independent study on that topic during the next semester. Students may also develop creative projects in such areas as music composition, filmmaking or fiction writing.

DESIGNING AN INDEPENDENT STUDY

In the first step toward creating an independent study, the student generates a basic idea: a problem or question, a time period, a literary genre, a natural phenomenon, a philosophical theme, or a creative skill. Next, the student identifies an appropriate instructor: her adviser; another faculty member in Gallatin or the rest of NYU; a professional outside the University. (The primary academic adviser or a member of Gallatin Office of Advising may suggest someone if the student cannot think of one.) She contacts the prospective instructor and proposes the study, and they discuss the plans for the work.

The general contours of the study or project should be worked out before this proposal is submitted: the basic theme or problem; a broad plan for the sequence of the work; a number of appropriate readings and other activities; the expectations for the students' work production (reading responses, research papers, art works, etc.). The amount of work put into the independent study should be roughly equivalent to a classroom course bearing the same number of credits, but it is up to the student and the instructor to determine the specific format and content of the work to be evaluated. The work for the study should be submitted according to the schedule of due dates agreed upon at the outset and, as with a classroom course, late work may be penalized. The details of the enterprise may emerge and shift as the semester progresses, but the fundamental plan should be in place at the time of registration.

THE ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTOR

The first function of the instructor is to help the student design the study or project. Once the semester starts, she meets regularly with the student to discuss the readings, to provide feedback on assignments or creative products, and consult on revisions to the original plan. At the end of the term, the instructor reviews and evaluates the student's accumulated work and submits an anecdotal report and final grade to the School.

MEETING HOURS

The student and the instructor determine the specific days and times of their meetings, but they are expected to meet for no less than a certain number of hours according to the credits being awarded for the study: for a 4-credit independent study, the minimum number of contact hours is seven (7). That expectation may be met in a variety of ways: a half-hour meeting every week, a one-hour meeting every other week, and so on—but the meetings must total no less than seven hours. For studies with fewer or more than 4 credits, the contact hours are pro-rated accordingly (e.g., 3.5 hours for a 2-credit independent study).

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Approval Process

Every independent study proposal must be approved first by the instructor, then by the student's primary academic adviser, and finally by the Dean's Office at Gallatin. The student fills out the attached form and writes the accompanying description, gets the instructor's and the adviser's signatures, and turns the materials in at Gallatin's Office of Student Services (715 Broadway, 6th floor); the Student Services office will review the proposal to make sure it has all the required information, and then give it to the Dean's Office. When the final approval has been given, Student Services will give the student the 4-digit access code required for registration. The student may then register for the independent study on Albert, or in person if Albert is not available. Please note: the student is responsible for the registration process.

Deadline for Submitting the Proposal

Students must adhere to the following deadlines for submitting an independent study proposal to Gallatin:

- Fall and Spring semesters:** the last day of the second week of classes
- Summer Sessions:** the first day of classes of the session



GUIDELINES FOR THE PROPOSAL

Please use the guidelines below to plan your independent study and to complete the attached proposal form.

Number of Credits

Generally, independent studies are two, three or four credits. Credit amounts outside this range require explicit justification and special approval. The number of credits is determined by the amount of work to be completed and should be comparable to that of a Gallatin classroom course. Credits also determine meeting hours: a four-credit independent study requires at least 7 contact hours per term (for more details, please see the “Meeting Hours” section on the other side of this page).

Title of Independent Study

If a student chooses, the title of an independent study will appear on her official transcript. It should be a useful, descriptive title that reflects the unifying theme and content of the study. It should not duplicate an existing NYU course. The words “Independent Study” will appear before the title on the transcript: for example, “Independent Study (The Plays of Arthur Miller).” The title should include no more than 26 characters, including spaces and punctuation.

Description of Study

Like the course description in a college catalog, this part of the proposal essay should describe the general theme and scope of the independent study. The theme may be stated as a problem to be investigated, an issue to be explored, or an argument to be defended. The essay might indicate where the student is starting out and where she would like to get in terms of answering a question, exploring a phenomenon, understanding a theory, building a skill or other goal. It should articulate the theme and strategy of the study as clearly as possible within about 250 words.

Work to be Evaluated by the Instructor

The proposal should indicate the kinds of work (response papers, research essays, creative works, etc.) which will be evaluated by the instructor. Assignments should be comparable in extent to a similar classroom course (e.g., interdisciplinary seminars typically assign about 25 pages of writing over the course of the semester). Provide details about this work, including the number, length and type of work to be submitted (e.g., two research papers, one 10 pages and the other 15; a portfolio of 20 exhibition-quality photographs plus four reading-response papers of 2 pages each).

Readings

The student must provide a reading list with authors and titles, even if tentative, along with the proposal. The list should be comparable to a similar classroom course (e.g., interdisciplinary seminars often assign 6-10 books, depending on length and complexity). Readings may change during the semester as the study evolves, but the preliminary list should be appropriate for the number of credits, and should indicate the kind of works to be read. Proposals for creative projects should include readings, as well.

Approval Signatures

Both the instructor's and the adviser's signatures are required on the attached proposal form. While the instructor may agree to supervise the student's work, the student's adviser determines whether it is appropriate for the student to undertake an independent study. Proposal forms submitted without these signatures will not be approved by the Gallatin Office.

Instructor Information

The instructor should complete this section of the form. This information is needed by Gallatin in order to compensate the instructor for supervising the student's work, as well as to mail grading materials to the instructor. If the instructor is not an NYU faculty member, the instructor's curriculum vitae should be submitted with the proposal form.

A NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS

Limitations and Other Policies

Faculty (full-time and part-time) are limited to supervising no more than five (5) Independent Study courses per term (Fall, Spring, or Summer). As with a classroom course, independent studies have a minimum number of contact hours (for more details, please see the “Meeting Hours” section on the other side of this page). This form should only be used to arrange one-on-one independent studies; faculty who would like to work with a small group of students should complete the tutorial form.

