

## Department of Communication Independent Study Guidelines

September 8, 2020

1. Students may ask to take independent study courses with Communication Department faculty members. Independent study courses include activity at 200 and 400 level; topics at 400, 600, 700 and 800 level; projects at 600 and 800 level reading. Individual faculty members are not obligated to offer such courses, but they may do so if they are confident the student can work independently on an appropriate project and the course does not result in an unreasonable workload for the faculty member. Independent study courses are variable hour (1-3 hrs) courses that require permission of the instructor. Students should discuss their academic requirements and interests with their advisor before requesting independent study courses.
2. Students wishing to take independent study course are expected to justify why they want/need to take the course. Independent study courses provide an opportunity to learn material not covered in traditional classes. They are NOT substitutes for traditional classes. Faculty members are not allowed to offer existing classes as topics classes. Existing traditional classes being offered at “inconvenient” times is NOT an acceptable reason for requesting an independent study class. In addition, students should have a general idea what they want to learn -basic goals- before proposing an independent study topic to a faculty member. Graduate students should be able to clearly articulate what they want to learn. The faculty member can then provide focus and further guidance. NOTE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS: Topics or Readings courses should be viewed as scholarship ultimately leading to completion of a thesis or research problem/project.
3. Independent study requires advanced planning. Ideally, students should meet with faculty and secure permission to take an independent study class during or before the pre-enrollment period the semester prior to the one in which the class will be offered. For example, arrangements and permission should be secured during November pre-enrollment for an independent study class to be taken during the spring semester. Faculty might accept later requests, but students should not expect faculty to approve independent study requests once classes begin.
4. Students requesting independent study are expected to become familiar with faculty members' academic specialty areas. For example, it would not be appropriate to ask a specialist in interpersonal communication, or theatre history, to offer a topics class in an area of broadcasting law. This is particularly important for graduate study, where research methodology, as well as subject area, can be an important consideration. Faculty can recommend others when a proposed topic is outside of his or her academic or methodological expertise.
5. Specific course content and requirements are established by individual faculty members and mutually agreed upon. Students might be required to write papers, summaries, annotated bibliographies, and literature reviews, or produce creative and/or technical work. The student's workload should equal or exceed that of an equivalent level traditional class. For example, 441 topics (3 hrs) workload should be equal or equivalent to a 3-hour, 400-level class. A specific number of meeting times may also be required. Students should be sure they fully understand all requirements and grading criteria before enrolling in independent study classes.

6. As with traditional courses, students enrolled in independent study course are expected to meet deadlines and complete all assigned work in a satisfactory manner. Students who do not meet minimum requirements will receive a grade of F. Incomplete grades may be given in special circumstances, but this is entirely at the discretion of the faculty member.

7. The above are general guidelines for activities, topics, projects, and 800-level graduate readings. As a matter of academic freedom, individual faculty members are free to establish course requirements and grading criteria, and accept or reject any requests for independent study courses.

8. The diversity of academic areas in the Department of Communication mandates that the specific definition of terms- activity, topics, and readings- be left to the discretion of individual faculty.

9. A standard independent study application form will be available for use by all faculty members. Forms will be available in the outer department office in the same location as internship forms.

10. All independent study hours are considered overloads with regard to faculty workload. Faculty do not receive additional compensation for offering independent study hours.

11. Before enrollment is allowed, independent study applications must be approved by the faculty member, in writing. Faculty are expected to consult with the Department Chair regarding the proposal and its impact on the faculty member's other duties.

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION APPLICATION FOR INDEPENDENT  
STUDY**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Name \_\_\_\_\_

Course Number and Name \_\_\_\_\_ Hours \_\_\_\_\_ Semester \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Topic or Activity:

The proposed independent study course adheres to Department of Communication guidelines.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_