

INDEPENDENT STUDY GUIDELINES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Independent study projects provide an opportunity for an interested student to explore a subject area of particular importance to her/him not otherwise available in the department's curriculum. They allow students to pursue in depth field or library research as apprentice scholars or as policy analysts.

A few students each year choose to turn their independent study work into Honors projects, but most students doing independent studies do not. Independent study projects are not synonymous with departmental honors; they may be undertaken by sophomores, juniors, or seniors and under special circumstances by non-majors. We generally prefer that independent study students have had substantial course work in the Department, including Sociology 201 or Anthropology 201.

The possible topics for independent studies are nearly unlimited. In recent years, for example, students have undertaken independent studies of topics such as the following: the implementation of Maine's bail reform act, the impact of television advertising on children, development of and change in self-concept among college students, the effectiveness of mainstreaming in the Brunswick public schools, bicultural education among the Penobscot Indians, and assessment of health care delivery systems in Kenya.

Independent studies require initiative, high motivation, and self-discipline on the part of the student. It is the responsibility of each student undertaking an independent study to find a faculty member who is prepared to guide the project* That student will then take the initiative with the assistance of the faculty advisor in seeking out and selecting materials for study, in providing coherence to the project, in helping limit the scope of the project so that it may reasonably be accomplished in one or two semesters, in deciding on the appropriate work-product to result from the project. Throughout the independent study the faculty advisor's major role is to serve as a sounding board for the student's ideas and analysis. The advisor also has the responsibility to evaluate the student's performance by means of a grade at the end of a semester. That grade will be based largely on the evaluation of the interim or final work product (e.g., a paper or papers, film, and/or public lectures).

It may also include, however, some evaluation of the manner in which the project was carried out by the student using criteria such as the following, which characterizes an ideal independent study course:

1. Meeting regularly with an advisor to discuss readings, fieldwork, etc.
2. Developing and keeping to the mutually agreed upon schedule of reading, fieldwork, writing.
3. Taking the initiative in seeking out resources and making use of appropriate learning resources.

*Because the extent of an advisor's participation in each independent study should be substantial, no advisor may sponsor more than three independent studies per semester.