

Independent Study Credit in Political Science PSC 399

An independent study project is meant to be a learning experience that enables a student to venture beyond the boundaries of a particular course. This option can provide a motivated and organized student the opportunity to delve deeper into a question or extend prior work in new directions. The project should involve some research (broadly defined to include field experience or other forms of gathering information and ideas). The project should be "original" in the sense of bringing ideas together in a way that is the student's own. An independent study should not be undertaken simply for convenience, as a way to get credit when course offerings do not fit a student's schedule. It is recommended that students avoid an independent study project on a topic that he or she has never studied at all.

Students interested in an independent study project should start thinking about a project that interests and excites them, identify a faculty members with whom they would like to work, and begin discussing the project *before the quarter in which they plan to work on the project.*

Specific expectations for the independent study project will be worked out between the student and the project advisor. The student should develop a proposal that outlines the specific goals of the project, and is approved by the faculty member advising the project.

Who is eligible for an independent study in political science?

- Independent study projects are open to juniors or seniors, with a GPA of at least a 3.0 in their major.
- Students may count only one course (4 credits) of PSC 399 as one of the four 300-level PSC requirements. In addition, students may count one course (4 credits) of PSC 399 as one of their three PSC electives. Students may enroll in additional independent study projects, counted toward their general (non-major) electives.
- This course must be arranged with an individual faculty member who must approve the enrollment form.

Completing an independent project requires a great deal of self-direction, initiative and discipline. It is recommended that only students who have good organizational skills consider undertaking an independent study project.

Who should direct an independent study project?

A student should approach a political science faculty member who specializes in the subject matter the student wishes to study, and with whom they work well. If a student wishes to work on a specific topic, but does not know a faculty member in that area of specialization, the student should consult with their advisor, the advising coordinator or the departmental chair. It may be preferable that students work with someone they know rather than choosing a topic and working with a faculty member with whom they have not worked.

It is important that students choose a faculty advisor who is willing and able to take an active role in guiding students, especially in encouraging their completion of the project. Students should be aware that directing an independent study may involve considerable time on the part of the faculty advisor. Both the student and the faculty advisor should have time available and a schedule that allows for regular meetings to discuss the progress of the project. The frequency and nature of these meetings should be discussed and agreed on by the student and the faculty

member advising the project. Students should be aware that faculty members are free to decline to work on a particular topic since faculty members are uncompensated for this work.

The student has primary responsibility for the project, and should budget their time and energy so that the project is completed in a timely fashion. The faculty member advising the project should be a resource--offering guidance, suggesting readings, and offering critical responses to the student's work; but it is ultimately up to the student to produce the written work.

How long should an independent study project be?

There are no preset page limits for a political science independent study project. The length and nature of a project is to be determined by the student in cooperation with the faculty member advising the project.

Grades for an independent study project

A student should complete the project within one quarter. *Planning and preparatory work* should be accomplished prior to registering for the course. Reading, researching and writing for the project should be completed during the quarter in which the student is registered for the course. Faculty members will grade the project at the end of the quarter in which a student is registered. Incomplete grades should be given only if there are extenuating circumstances that hinder the completion of the project, *not* for a project that is unfinished as a result of poor planning and organization.

Adopted: April 23, 2004