

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Honors College

Independent Study/Honors Tutorial Proposal Guidelines

Independent Study, *Dept-699* or equivalent (3H cr)
Honors Tutorial 685 (3H cr)*

Completing an independent study or Honors tutorial can be a rewarding academic experience. Before you can register for one of these courses, however, you must define the course's aims and content in a formal proposal. Therefore, you must begin preparing several months before you enroll in the course. **The final course proposal must be completed by May 15 for fall semester and December 15 for spring semester.** Here is what you must do **before** you register:

- 1. Choose your topic.** Choose something that will sustain your interest for a whole semester. Remember that your topic must be focused and flexible. Do not be too ambitious. Try to address broad issues through specific questions and a workable number of texts.
- 2. Select a faculty supervisor.** Faculty members supervise independent student work on a voluntary basis, but many will be pleased to assist a serious student with a course topic pertaining to their field of study or interest. A faculty member is most likely to participate if 1) s/he is familiar with the student's work and 2) the student wants to study a subject of expertise or interest for the faculty member.

The faculty supervisor's role. The faculty supervisor advises and guides you, monitors your progress, evaluates your performance, and assigns your grade. Therefore, when you have settled on a topic, meet with potential faculty supervisors to discuss your project. Once you have selected a supervisor, set up a meeting to discuss the reading list, focus the study, and agree on the course requirements. The faculty member will help you determine a sufficient amount of work for the credits to be earned. Clarify the mutual responsibilities. You both must agree on the scope, length, and format of your work, the frequency of advising sessions, and a timetable for completion.

- 3. Prepare a proposal.** Next, prepare a one- to two-page proposal that outlines your study's purpose and scope as well as the course requirements. (Consider course descriptions in the *Honors Course Book* as reasonable models.) The proposal will help your supervisor understand the nature of your project and provide criteria for her/his evaluation of your work. In short, your proposal is a mutually-agreed-upon contract for the semester's work. **Do not treat this stage of preparation lightly.** Your study's success ultimately depends on the quality of your proposal.

- A. Describe the purpose of your study.** What am I investigating or testing? How will exploring this question contribute to my educational growth and goals? Is the topic sufficiently narrow that it can be completed in the time proposed? Why am I doing this as independent study? (The last is especially important because independent study topics should not include topics offered in regular classes.)
- B. Create a list of reading or reference works.** Include full bibliographical data on books, films, journals. Your supervisor will suggest primary and secondary sources and advise you on the acceptable format (MLA, Chicago Style, APA, etc.).

- C. **Determine the schedule for your independent study.** Set up a schedule with your supervisor, similar to a class syllabus, to determine reading due dates, the length and frequency of meetings, deadlines for the course assignments, and criteria for determining your grade.
- D. **Fourth, describe the products you will generate.** Clearly indicate the length and nature of the assignments (journals, formal papers, experiments, etc.).
4. **Give the Honors College Associate Director a copy of your draft proposal for review.** Be sure to build enough time into the proposal writing process for revision.
5. **Fill out the relevant course application/signature form and attach it to your final proposal.** Once the associate director has approved the proposal for submission, you will receive a signature form to complete and attach to your proposal. **The signature form must be signed by you, your research director, the department chair (if credits are to be applied to your major), and the Honors College director by May 15 for fall semester and December 15 for spring semester.**
6. **Register for the course.** After the final proposal is approved, the Honors College will register you for Honors 685 if relevant. However, if you are completing a departmental independent study you should follow that department's registration procedures.
7. **Check your schedule in PAWS.** A few days after the registration is completed, check your schedule in PAWS to confirm that the course has been added to your schedule.
8. **At the end of the semester, please provide the Honors College office a copy of your final product.**

- * How does an Honors Tutorial differ from a departmental Independent Study? These two courses are identical in format; they differ, however, either in the affiliation of the supervising professor(s) or the nature of the study.

Affiliation: If you are working with a professor outside of the College of Letters and Science or one not affiliated with an L & S department (an Honors College Instructor, for example), the simplest way to get Honors credit is to do an Honors Tutorial.

Nature of the Study: If you are doing an interdisciplinary independent study working with professors from two different L & S departments or UWM schools, then you need to register for Honors Tutorial, using one professor as your primary supervisor.