

## Independent Study Student Guidelines—Literature Review

**Independent study (PSYC 311, 312, 313)** is designed to provide the student with an opportunity to conduct an extensive literature review. The work is carried out independently, with guidance from a faculty mentor. PSYC 311 and 313 are ½-credit courses to spread the work across two semesters; PSYC 312 is a one-credit course.

Independent Study is strongly recommended for students who plan to attend graduate school in any of the research areas of psychology. Admission criteria for M.A. and Ph.D. programs often include research experience, and one's likelihood of acceptance into a competitive program is enhanced by having a record of research participation.

**To participate in Independent Study**, a student must have an overall GPA and a Psychology GPA of at least 3.0, unless special permission is granted by the Psychology faculty. To enroll in an Independent Study, a student must complete a written proposal and the [Application for Research in the Department](#) by the first Wednesday of the semester. Note, that your research mentor may require an earlier proposal deadline. If approved by the Department, the Department Chair will contact the registrar's office and register you for the course.

### Expectations for students

- To work 12-15 hours per week on your literature review. This work may include assisting faculty or other students working with the faculty mentor in research, including literature searches, summaries of primary sources, data collection, data analysis, writing, attending meetings, etc.
- To follow the *Independent Study Student Guidelines (literature review)*.
- In consultation with the faculty mentor, to complete a *Research Assistant Contract* outlining duties and expectations.
- To complete work on a timely basis.
- To write a 3-5 page reflection paper at the end of the semester.
- To complete a Final Literature Review Independent Study Paper (see example). If the proposed literature review is planned to be carried out over multiple semesters (e.g., taking 311 and 313), students will be asked to submit a draft of their work at the end of the first semester.
- Your grade will be based on fulfilling these expectations and any other expectations and goals outlined in your *Research Assistant Contract*. If you are required to write a paper, your paper is expected to be at or above the quality level of the *Final Independent Study-Literature Review Paper (EXAMPLE)* available on the [Independent Study website](#).
- To seek out help with writing, study design, data entry/analysis, etc. when needed (from your research mentor, other faculty, other research assistants, the writing center, the library, etc.).

### Expectations for faculty

- To enumerate expectations for the research assistant using a *Research Assistant Contract*. This should include expectations about hours, deadlines, duties, meetings, specific outcomes (e.g., drafts, final paper, etc.), and behavior.
- To provide guidelines and a due date for his or her final reflection paper (see *Student Research Reflection Guidelines* for an example).
- To follow the *Independent Study Student Guidelines (literature review)*.
- To provide guidelines, feedback, and a due date for a Final Literature Review Independent Study Paper.
- To provide feedback and assistance with writing, study design, data entry/analysis, etc. when needed.

## **Student Qualifications**

A student must have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 and a psychology GPA of at least 3.0 at the time the independent study is proposed. Students ordinarily undertake independent study during the junior or senior year. It is not advisable to initiate independent study in the last term of the senior year, since an uncompleted project would cause a delay in the student's graduation. It is recommended that the student should have completed PSYC 202 and/or PSYC 204.

## **Procedure for Enrolling in Independent Study**

1. The student must obtain a faculty mentor.
2. The student must complete the [Application for Research in the Department](#) form.
3. The student must submit a written proposal to the psychology faculty by the first Wednesday of the semester. Note, that your research mentor may require an earlier proposal deadline.
4. The psychology faculty will discuss the student's proposal and either accept or reject the student's plan. The student may be asked to defend the proposal orally at a department meeting.
5. The student will be enrolled in independent study only after a proposal has been accepted by the psychology faculty.

**Guidelines for Literature Review Independent Study Proposal.** The student will submit a written proposal which should contain the following:

- a) A description of the topic on which the review will be conducted.
- b) A statement of the purpose of the review (e.g., questions to be answered).
- c) A list of references, extensive enough to indicate that the student has located sufficient material for the project. The student is responsible for locating adequate resources for the literature review. A project should not be proposed until sufficient peer-reviewed material has been located.

**Product.** The outcome of the literature review should be a report in APA format (unless otherwise specified by your faculty mentor). The final paper should be a minimum of 10 double-spaced pages of text (not including references and title page) and include at least 15 references.

**Evaluation.** The student will be expected to make an oral progress report to the mentor at least four times during the term. At these times the mentor may make suggestions concerning improvement of the student's project and will assess the quality of the student's efforts in research and writing. After the final paper has been submitted, the student will be interviewed by the mentor. The student will be expected to answer questions concerning the topic of the study and to summarize the knowledge gained in the project. The grade for the course will be based primarily on the mentor's evaluation of the final paper, with lessor contributions from the mentor's assessment of the student's efforts during the conduct of the study and the interview. The mentor may consult other members of the psychology faculty in evaluating the paper, but the final grade will be assigned by the mentor.

**Ethical considerations.** Students are required to maintain the integrity expected of a scientist. Plagiarism is a violation of academic integrity.