About Independent Study Courses

The design and completion of an independent study course provides students the opportunity to investigate and to explore interests and topics that are not covered by regular class offerings and to do so in close consultation with a faculty member knowledgeable in the area to be studied. Independent study courses are completed through a sustained and intensive inquiry process that generally includes the following: 1) one-on-one consultations with a supervising faculty member; 2) independent research and study; 3) completion of assignments and/or projects that demonstrate mastery of the identified objectives of the study; and 4) evaluation of the student’s work by the faculty member supervising the course. The student who desires to undertake an independent study should possess the ability to engage in sustained and intensive independent work and research and to complete assignments and projects in a timely, self-directed manner. The specific focus, format, and outline of the independent study course are determined by the student in consultation with the faculty member who will serve as the student’s independent study supervisor. The student must complete the Independent Study Course Form and prepare an Independent Study Course Proposal (see “Guidelines for Writing…” below for details about how to write a proposal) and submit both documents for approval to the supervising faculty member and to the Program Coordinator of the Integrative Arts Program. The student must obtain signed approval of the Independent Study Course Form before he or she may register for independent study credits.

Deadlines for Submitting the Independent Study Course Form and Proposal

Students must adhere to the following deadlines for submitting the necessary documentation for applying for an independent study course. Only in very rare cases will late submissions be considered for approval.

Students must adhere to the following deadlines for submitting the completed Independent Study Course Form and Proposal to the Integrative Arts Office for review and approval:

- Fall Semester: Last day of first full week of classes
- Spring Semester: Last day of first full week of classes
- Summer Semester: Last day of first full week of classes for the summer session in which the Independent Study will be completed.

When received, the Integrative Arts Program office will review the Independent Study Course Form and Proposal; this final review process will be completed by the final day of the semester’s “Regular Add Period.” The Integrative Arts office will notify the student by PSU email when the process is complete.

Student Guidelines for Submitting a Request for Independent Study

Students should follow the following steps for the completion and submission of the Independent Study Course Form and Independent Study Course Proposal:

1. Identify a core idea, problem, or question that you wish to investigate that is of particular interest and which is not available for study through already established course offerings.
2. Identify a faculty member who is knowledgeable in the area you will investigate and meet with the professor to discuss your proposed study. Obtain his/her approval for the topic/idea you propose to investigate and confirm the professor’s willingness to serve as your supervising faculty member for the independent study.
3. Working with the comments you received from your professor, prepare the Independent Study Course Proposal (see “Guidelines for Writing” section below for details about how to write the proposal).
4. Meet with your supervising professor to discuss the contents of your Independent Study Proposal.
5. Revise the proposal as necessary.
6. Complete the Independent Study Course Form and attach it to the front of the Independent Study Proposal. Secure the signatures of the professor who will supervise the independent study course you will be taking.
7. Submit the completed documents (Independent Study Course Form and Proposal) to the Program Coordinator of Integrative Arts.
8. A copy of your Independent Study Course Form and Proposal must be given to the supervising professor. Make sure to keep a copy for yourself.

Review and Approval Process

Upon receiving the completed Independent Study Course Form and Proposal the Integrative Arts Program office will review the documents for completion. If the proposal is complete, it will be submitted to the Program Coordinator for final review and approval. Incomplete proposals will be returned to student. When received, the Integrative Arts Program office will review the Independent Study Course Form and Proposal; this final review process will be completed by the final day of the semester’s “Regular Add Period.” The Integrative Arts office will notify the student by PSU email when the process is complete. Students should not begin working on the independent study until the proposal has been approved.
**Guidelines for Writing the Independent Study Proposal**

It is important to the success of your study that you develop a well thought out and rational plan for what you will study, how you will accomplish the study, how you will document the results of your work, and how that work will be evaluated. The *Independent Study Course Proposal* provides an opportunity for you to organize your thoughts and goals so that you have a clear understanding of the scope of the study you propose to do and the work that will be required to complete it. Working with the comments you receive from your professor, prepare a detailed *Independent Study Proposal* that includes the following sections:

- **a. Description of the Study:** Identify the rationale for the independent study course by explaining your interest in the particular subject or issue and why it is of concern to you. How does this project relate to your overall degree objectives as an Integrative Arts student? Describe the content of the course. The description may identify a question that will be investigated, a specific issue that will be examined, or a skill that will be developed. The theme and plan of the study should be articulated as clearly as possible and should be about 250 words.

- **b. Learning Objectives:** What are your specific objectives for the course? What specific knowledge and/or skills do you expect to gain? Provide a numbered listing of the objectives you expect to accomplish in the course of the independent study. Learning objectives differ from learning activities in that learning objectives are concise statements that clearly describe what you want to learn; learning activities describe what you will do to achieve your learning.

- **c. Learning Activities:** Explain how you will meet your objectives for the independent study. For example, you might discuss how you will engage in a sustained study of the topic via an identified selection of research materials and periodic conversations with the supervising faculty member. Or, perhaps, your objectives will include mastering a special technique or skill that is necessary to a particular creative activity you wish to take part in. If so, describe the procedures you will use to accomplish that objective.

- **d. Learning Resources:** Identify the books, readings, activities (e.g., lectures or conferences), media (e.g., films or websites), and external experts that you will use during the independent study.

- **e. Documentation of Learning:** What will be the tangible results of your study? What types of projects, assignments, demonstrations, exhibits, etc. will you complete to demonstrate your accomplishments? Will you conduct a formal presentation of the results of your independent study? If so, to whom?

- **f. Evaluation Process:** How will the supervising professor (and you) evaluate the work you produce to determine if you have achieved your goals and objectives?

- **g. Rationale for Credits Requested:** Independent Study credits are generally earned on a basis of 1 credit for every 40 hours that a student spends actively engaged in activities associated with the independent study. Present an explanation that identifies the number of credits requested for the Independent Student and which provides justification for that number.

**General Rules and Restrictions in the Use of Independent Study Courses**

1. Independent study courses may not be taken instead of or to modify a regular course offered by a department within Penn State University.
2. All work submitted for the independent study course must be work completed solely for the independent study and not work completed for any past course already completed by the student or any course in which the student is currently enrolled.
3. Partial or incomplete *Independent Study Course Form and Proposals* will not be processed or approved.
4. Independent study forms may be obtained in the Integrative Arts Program office in 104 Borland Building, University Park, PA 16802.
# INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSE FORM

### Integrative Arts

**College of Arts and Architecture**  
**Penn State University**  
(Please type or print all information clearly)

| Enrollment Information (to be completed by the Integrative Arts Program office) |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Semester: | Year: | Check One: | Credits: |
| Schedule Number: | Section Number: | Supervising Instructor: |

Study approved (please circle one):  
- YES  
- NO  
**Program Coordinator of Integrative Arts**

Reason for disapproval (if applicable):
________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  

---

## To be completed by student:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>PSU I.D. Number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mail Address:</td>
<td>Local Phone Number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phone Number:</td>
<td>Student's Major:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature of Student: ___________________________  
Date: ________________

---

## To be completed by instructor:

I am willing to supervise the independent study outlined in the attached proposal.

______________________________  
Professor in Charge of Instruction (Signature)  
______________________________  
Professor in Charge of Instruction (Printed)  
Date  

Are there additional requirements not identified in the attached proposal? If so, please list:

________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  

Additional comments:

________________________________________________________________________  
________________________________________________________________________  

---

Attach the completed **Independent Study Course Proposal** to this document and submit to:  
**Integrative Arts Program, 104 Borland Building, University Park, PA 16802**
Sample Independent Study Proposal

Independent Study Course Proposal for INART 496 (4 credits)

[student name]

Section A: Description of the Study

This independent study is intended to provide me with an opportunity to study and explore 1) how public gardens can be used as a means to help neighborhoods cultivate a sense of community among residents; 2) how these spaces can be used to create aesthetic, calming spaces in neighborhoods; and 3) how community garden projects help people acquire a greater sense of engagement with and understanding of the physical and social environments in which they live. I became interested in this subject last summer when I worked for Portland (Oregon) Parks and Recreations as an intern. During my internship, I assisted in organizing, designing, and overseeing activities related to managing several hundred small garden plots that were made available for Portland families to grow vegetables and flowers. As the summer progressed, I noticed how the activities associated with cultivating and maintaining the gardens seemed to draw people together to talk, share advice and tips, and to help each other better understand how to garden. People formed bonds of friendship and respect that seemed to transcend differences in culture and background. The gardens provided a source of pride and accomplishment for the people who worked them as well as being physically beautiful places for everyone to gather and to spend time in. My observations taught me that community-based projects such as the Portland gardens can serve as an effective means to create and enhance social and cultural understandings in neighborhoods and communities as well as providing a way to teach individuals how to gain access to nutritious and locally grown food sources.

Section B: Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this study, I will:

1. Understand the history of community garden projects in select locations including large urban areas as well as smaller communities.
2. Recognize and comprehend the issues and problems relating to establishing community gardens including economic, political, and cultural factors and be able to evaluate their impact on the design of contemporary community garden projects.
3. Be prepared to plan a small-scale community garden project.

Section C: Learning Activities

To accomplish the Learning Objectives identified above, I plan to:

1. Conduct on-site research into three successful contemporary garden projects by making brief visits to each site and interviewing the project directors or a designated assistant.
2. Research the history of community gardens to study how the history of community gardening has evolved in the United States since its beginnings in the 19th century.
3. Research the contemporary issues that impact the establishment and sustenance of community garden projects including such factors as economic costs, land development issues, civic policies, and the cultural traditions and practices of the communities affected by such projects.
4. Have weekly discussion sessions with Professor [supervising faculty] to discuss my research and the different questions and thoughts that arise from my research.

Section D: Learning Resources

I will utilize the following resources during my study:

1. On-site visits to three contemporary garden projects (locations to be determined).
2. Selected books, including:
   c. Community Gardening by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 2010, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
3. Selected websites, including:
   a. American Community Garden Association (http://www.communitygarden.org)
   b. Centre Region Parks and Recreation Garden Plots (http://www.crpr.org/parks/gardenplots/garden-plot-index.html)
   c. Garden Starters (CleanWater Conservancy) (http://www.cleanwaterconservancy.org/GardenStarters.htm)
   d. Urban Agriculture–Community Gardening (based in Seattle, Washington but an excellent general source of information about community gardening/agriculture) (http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/parks/comgarden.aspx)
4. Selected films, including:
   b. “MOBY – An Inner City Community Garden Project.” Available online at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJypF8A333U
Section E: Documentation of Learning

The outcomes of my learning will be documented in the following manner:

1. I will write a brief essay (approximately 5 pages) in which I discuss the contemporary community garden movement as it compares to the general history of community gardens in the United States.
2. I will write a research paper (approximately 10–15 pages) that compares and analyzes the purpose, structure, organization, and success of three different exemplar garden projects.
3. I will develop a proposal for a small-scale, temporary community garden project for the town of Millheim (located approximately 20 miles east of State College) that includes identifying the purpose and rationale of the project, the target audience/participants, site location, the organizational structure of the project, a projected timeline for enacting the project, and considerations that might impact the project’s success.

Section F: Evaluation Process

The methods of evaluating my work for the independent study will revolve around completion of research, discussing my research in weekly meetings with [supervising faculty], and the completion of the documents and projects identified in Section E. All requirements must be met to pass the course.

1. 20% Attendance at weekly meetings
2. 15% Essay about the history of the community garden movement
3. 25% Research paper analyzing exemplar garden projects
4. 40% Community garden proposal

Section G: Rationale for Credits Requested

I am requesting that this proposal be accepted for 4 credits in Independent Study. The hours I will spend in activities related to the Independent study include the following:

1. 20 hours in attendance at weekly meetings with my supervising professor
2. 30 hours researching and writing the essay about the history of the community garden movement
3. 45 hours researching and writing the paper about exemplar garden projects
4. 65 hours creating the community garden proposal