

ECL 798: Graduate Students – The Independent Study or Special Study

What is 798: Independent Study? What it should be?:

An independent study is a one-on-one course between a faculty member and graduate student. They should be conducted in the student's second-year (i.e., after completing a year of seminar coursework) for the purposes of specialization and/or filling gaps in graduate education.

For the student, an independent study serves as an opportunity to study with a mentor, to dive deeply into a field or research question with a faculty member who can guide the exploration. The independent study can also serve to provide the substantive foundation for writing a thesis or portfolio essay; for this reason, fall of the second year of the MA is a good time for an independent study, so that the student can produce the cumulative writing assignment (e.g. thesis or portfolio) in the Spring (and final semester).

The actual requirements of the independent study are a minimum of at least 10 texts. It is a Credit/No Credit class, the student and chosen faculty member derive the syllabus, meeting schedule, expectations, and assignments. However, the independent study should be a heavy and intense reading schedule, a real and serious learning experience.

How it works:

- 1) A student should contact an instructor a semester before the anticipated start date of the independent study (Spring before a Fall start) to request the faculty member's participation. The student should have a plan: at least a research question or topic as well as a clearly articulated reason for asking the faculty member to serve in this role. If the student cannot clearly articulate the foundation for a rationale, you might consider not pursuing an *independent* study.
- 2) Once the student has contacted the faculty member and the faculty member agrees to mentor the student, preparation for the independent study can begin. The student can contact **Mary Garcia (mmgarcia@sdsu.edu)** for the relevant paperwork. The form requires the following: a title, a description of the research project/question/thesis, a description of the work to be accomplished during the semester (short blog reflections, short essay, longer essay, etc.), and both the student and faculty member signature is required.
- 3) Once the paperwork is filed with Mary, approved by the Graduate Advisor, as well as the department Chair, you will then be able to register for the class and develop your reading/assignment schedule with the faculty member!