

*Center for*  
GLOBAL EDUCATION  
*and EXPERIENCE*

## Course: Independent Study

### Cross Listings and Credit Options

Students may choose to register for credit in any of the following departments:

- American Indian Studies
- Business
- Cross Cultural Studies
- Environmental Studies
- History
- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Marketing
- Political Science
- Religion
- Spanish
- Women's Studies

### Course Description

The independent study option allows students who are highly self-motivated and able to work independently to conduct independent research during the second half of the semester. The independent research may consist of an ethnographic study, participant observation research, other field-based research, or independent reading, combined with other more experiential methods. This course option is particularly aimed at students who want to carry out research in a cross cultural environment or who want to begin research related to a senior thesis or capstone project. **Students who register for this seminar must submit a preliminary independent study proposal that includes a reading list**, and a revised draft must be submitted before coming to Cuernavaca.

**Students must bring related books and articles with them to Mexico as it is difficult to find sources here.** Once in Cuernavaca, the student and instructor or advisor will develop a syllabus and independent study design according to the student's project needs. The student will then be responsible for carrying out the agreed upon assignments.

Before beginning their independent study research, students will participate in an orientation to fieldwork, at which time they will discuss ethical issues and methodology. Each student will then collaborate with a faculty advisor who will supervise the study and provide a few suggestions regarding experiential activities related to the topic. Students will meet regularly with their faculty advisor but should be prepared to work independently and responsibly.

### Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor

1. Meet with independent study students to discuss their proposals and provide feedback.
2. Discuss ethical guidelines for research and tips regarding research design for realistic projects within Mexico.
3. Provide a few articles on research methods, as necessary.
4. Give suggestions regarding local resources and provide names and phone numbers of contacts for students to set up their own interviews and/or service-learning projects, depending upon the project.
5. Meet with the students periodically – at least six times over the course of the semester. Near the beginning of the semester the faculty advisor will give the students a tentative schedule of dates for such meetings.

6. Read students' assignments, grade them, and provide feedback on the content of the assignments. The faculty advisor is not responsible for correcting spelling or grammatical errors in Spanish for those students who complete assignments in Spanish.

### **Responsibilities of the Student**

1. Work independently.
2. Find and read adequate books, articles, and internet resources regarding the chosen topic.
3. Make phone calls to set up interviews and/or service-learning projects or other work related to the independent study.
4. Pay for books, articles, library fees, photocopies, transportation, translations, and any other expenses related to the independent study.
5. Follow deadlines established by the faculty advisor. If the student needs to negotiate a deadline due to illness or other circumstances, s/he must contact the instructor in advance of the original deadline.
6. E-mail or call the advisor to ask questions or set up a meeting if s/he needs additional assistance.
7. Complete all assignments in Spanish, IF s/he is registered for Spanish credit.
8. Submit an extra copy of all assignments to the designated Spanish professor (if applicable). It is highly recommended that students who are registered for Spanish credit submit their assignments to the Spanish professor in time to receive feedback prior to the deadlines established by the faculty advisor so that they can make corrections before submitting work to their advisor.

### **Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

Learners will:

1. Learn about a variety of research methods and select those that are most appropriate.
2. Discuss the ethics of field-based research and follow ethical guidelines.
3. Explore in depth a topic of personal and academic interest.
4. Record observations and insights from their research in a field journal or reading log.
5. Develop skills in designing poster sessions and writing papers about their research that could be presented at academic or professional conferences.
6. Compile a professional portfolio that portrays the success of their research.

### **Sample Topics:**

- History of indigenous resistance movements in Mexico
- Comparison of revolutionary movements in Mexico and El Salvador
- Testimonial literature of Latin American women
- Latin American literature in translation
- The history of U.S. foreign policy in Mexico and Central America
- Changes in portray of gender roles in Mexican films from the 1950s to the present
- Impact of immigration to the U.S. on families and local communities in Cuernavaca, Morelos
- Women's participation in base Christian communities
- Spirituality and Land Struggles
- The impact of NAFTA on Mexican women
- The Zapatistas, past and present.
- Women in Mexican politics
- Afro-Mexican culture and history

### **Potential Research Methods:**

You may choose to do any one or combination of the following:

- Read books and articles about the topic of interest.
- Visit museums, archeological sites, or other locations where you will learn about the subject.

- Watch videos, films, or TV programs related to the topic.
- Complete volunteer/service-learning work related to your topic.
- Conduct participant/observation research in a particular organization or community related to your research topic.\*
- Conduct interviews or record oral histories of people relevant to the topic of interest.\*

**\*Please note:** If you do not have very strong Spanish language skills, you should probably consider taking a second Spanish course or conducting an independent study that will not require extensive interviews or participant observation research.

### **Course Requirements: (100 % = 100 points)**

1. **Participation: (10% = 10 points)** All students are required to actively participate in the Fieldwork/Independent Study orientation and regularly meet with faculty advisor. Active participation also includes completion of any assigned readings and submission of a completed portfolio.
2. **Independent Study Portfolio (30% = 30 points):** The portfolio is a collection of all the student's work on this independent study, including all documents that demonstrate her or his efforts, progress, and achievements in relation to the objectives that were stated in the independent study proposal. The portfolio should include a table of contents, defined sections, be presented in a professional manner, and follow all guidelines set on "Independent Study Portfolio Guidelines" handout. It should also include the original version of the independent study proposal as well as any revised versions of it, complete with an explanation of the revisions. Students are encouraged to include work samples and projects in their portfolios. Therefore, they should be saved throughout the semester. In addition, the portfolio should include the components listed below, each of which will receive a grade that is part of the overall portfolio grade. *The other five points of the portfolio grade will depend upon the organization and thoroughness of the portfolio itself.*

#### **The Independent Study Portfolio Includes:**

- Final Proposal (5% = 5 points): Students will revise and complete their final proposals after they have been in Mexico for a few weeks. Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of their thoroughness.
  - 150-Word Abstract (10% = 10 points): Students will write a 150-word abstract in the standard format used for writing proposals to present papers at academic and professional conferences.
  - Journal or Field Notes (10% = 10 points): Students will be expected to record observations, interpretations, and reactions in a journal or field notebook. These notes will be turned in to the faculty advisor on a regular basis.
3. **Paper #1 (10% = 10 points):** Students will complete a writing assignment in responses to assigned articles about research ethics and cultural awareness.

4. **Rough Draft: Introduction and Outline (10% = 10 points):** All students will be expected to submit a rough draft of their paper one week before the final paper is due. This should include a “polished” introduction and working outline of the paper. This paper should include organization of key issues or arguments that will be expanded on in the final paper.
5. **Preliminary Oral Presentation (5% = 5 points):** Approximately half-way through their independent studies, all students will be expected to give an oral presentation to the rest of faculty/students about their work in progress and questions/issues they would like feedback on. The presentation needs to demonstrate a clear argument/theme as well as structure and organization.
6. **Final Paper or Project (25% = 25 points):** Each student will write a 15-20 page paper or complete a creative project that presents her or his research findings. Students may choose to write this paper as an ethnography, if appropriate. Projects may include videos, slide presentations, art exhibits, photo essays, monologues, one-act plays, or other creative formats but must be approved by the independent study supervisor in advance. Students who choose to complete projects which require photographic supplies or other equipment must pay for such items themselves. Papers and projects must be accompanied by a bibliography and complete list of citations.
7. **Final Oral Presentation (10% = 10 points):** At the end of the semester, all students must give a 10-minute oral presentation in which they share what they have learned from the independent study with the rest of the students. Students are encouraged to prepare their oral presentations as if they were presenting a paper at an academic or professional conference, and therefore should summarize their research findings in the most interesting way possible, highlighting the key questions that emerged from the research, as well as articulating questions for further investigation. Students are encouraged to make use of audio-visual aids to enhance their presentations.

## Additional Comments

### Explanation of Grades

Augsburg’s grading system uses the following definitions:

Grade	Grade Points	Description
A	4.00	Excellent
A-	3.67	
B+	3.33	Good
B	3.00	
B-	2.67	
C+	2.33	Satisfactory
C	2.00	
C-	1.67	
D+	1.33	Poor
D	1.00	
D-	0.67	Failure
F	0.00	

A “Pass” grade is 2.0 or above.

### Grading Policy and Late Assignments

You must submit assignments on time. If you need an extension, you must talk to us **in advance** to negotiate a new deadline. If you have not been given an extension in advance and you turn in a late assignment, you will be

docked half a grade (from a 4.0 to a 3.5 or 3.5 to a 3.0, 3.0 to a 2.5, 2.5 to a 2.0, etc.) If you are more than one week late, you will be docked a full grade. No assignments will be accepted more than two weeks after the original deadline; a "0" will be given after that. Assignments due near the end of the semester will not be accepted after the last day of the semester.

### **Augsburg Honesty Policy**

You are expected to follow the Augsburg Honesty Policy which is printed in the program manual. We assume that you have read the honesty policy, understand it, and are following it. Except when the assignment expressly encourages group work, it is assumed that all course work will be your own. You may not copy other students' work. The first occurrence of plagiarism will result in the failure of the assignment. A student who commits plagiarism a second time will fail the course.

### **Students' Rights and Responsibilities**

Students with formally diagnosed learning or physical differences have legal rights to course modifications. Those who qualify should identify themselves to the instructor as soon as possible in order to obtain extra assistance.