

Providence College

Department of Psychology

Independent Study Guide for Students

Introduction

The Department of Psychology at Providence College offers a 4-credit Independent Study (IS) course (PSY 490) that allows students the opportunity to explore a psychology topic in depth with a psychology professor. The IS activity may include conducting independent research under the faculty member's supervision but it needn't necessarily be limited to that option. All faculty members have their own criteria and interests for IS projects that they are willing to provide to students. The attached guide provides students with information about professors' interests and the kind of projects that they allow to satisfy IS credit. All IS courses require the permission of the professor.

Advantages of participating in an IS project

1. Explore an area of psychology that goes well beyond what you would typically get in an ordinary class. This is an opportunity for you to pursue in depth a topic that really interests and excites you.
2. Get to know a faculty member well. You're at PC because you like a small school with access to your professors. There is no better way to find out more about a faculty member's professional interests and expertise than to do an IS with him or her. If it works out well, this could lead to a letter of recommendation from a professor who has really gotten to know you.
3. It's fun and exciting! You'll be working more independently and on your own than you have in other classes, and learning important skills in the process.
4. Completing an IS project is great preparation for graduate school or the job market. Graduate schools like to see prospective students take IS courses because it shows them that the student has initiative, can work independently, and is driven to learn more about

psychology. Within the job market, employers want students who can understand topics in depth and work on their own. The skills you learn in an IS course can be directly applicable to a career or profession.

5. An IS course fulfills the “Studying Psychology in Depth” area for the major.

How to sign up for Independent Study (PSY 490)

1. Decide on an area of psychology that you’d love to know more about.
2. Look through the attached guide and find a professor who shares your interests (or you may already know who that might be). Use the guide to see what kinds of projects the faculty member usually supervises and approves.
3. Give serious thought to the kind of project you might want to do. Read more about the area from your textbooks and from online sources such as PsycINFO or PubMed.
4. Develop a preliminary outline or plan for your project and go talk with the faculty member about it. This informal discussion will be an opportunity for you and the professor to talk about your ideas, to modify them if necessary, and to determine if this is the kind of project that you really want to do and that the faculty member can approve. You and the faculty member will also need to decide how you will be graded and to outline the timeframe for your project for the next semester.
5. Once you have the professor’s permission, then you may register for IS.

Independent Study Summary

Professor: Christopher Bloom, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: FEAR; AVOIDANCE CONDITIONING; SUPERSTITIOUS CONDITIONING; AFFECTIVE NEUROSCIENCE

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? YES, BUT WOULD LIKELY INCLUDE A PAPER OR OTHER REQUIREMENT.
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? GENERALLY NOT, BUT WOULD NOT BE OPPOSED TO THE POSSIBILITY.
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES, BUT WOULD LIKELY REQUIRE A QUITE LENGTHY PAPER AT THE CONCLUSION.

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: WEEKLY

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES

Examples of past independent study projects:

Professor: Eliane Boucher, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION; CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS; UNCERTAINTY & UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION PROCESSES; SOCIAL ANXIETY; DEPRESSION/DYSPHORIA

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES

Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? YES; HOWEVER, STUDENT MUST BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING THE STUDY, COLLECTING AND ANALYZING THE DATA, AND WOULD BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT A FULL APA-STYLE MANUSCRIPT ON THE PROJECT.

- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? GENERALLY NOT, BUT NOT OPPOSED GIVEN THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? NO.

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: ONCE PER WEEK, MORE IF NECESSARY

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES

Examples of past independent study projects:

- Personality and Positive Illusions in Romantic Relationships
- Social Anxiety and the Selection of Social Surrogates
- Exploring the Effects of Parent-Partner Similarity on Relationship Quality.

Professor: Fr. Joseph Guido, O.P.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: PSYCHOPATHOLOGY; PSYCHOTHERAPY; PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? NO
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? YES AND ALSO REQUIRES AN INTERNSHIP AND LEARNING AGREEMENT; RELEVANT READINGS; CLINICAL JOURNAL; MID-TERM AND FINAL SITE SUPERVISOR EVALUATIONS; FINAL SITE EVALUATION BY THE STUDENT; 25+ PAGE PAPER INTEGRATING CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AND READING.
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES
- Other acceptable activities/projects: GROUP INDEPENDENT STUDY WITH TWO OR MORE STUDENTS PURSUING COMMON INTERESTS

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: ONCE A WEEK OR EVERY OTHER WEEK

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? VARIES

Examples of past independent study projects:

- Empathy in Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology (based on an internship)
- Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and Schizophrenia (based on an internship)
- Narratives of grief and recovery among college students and their parents (student designed study)
- The Differential Effects of Music Therapy for Individuals with Autism and Dementia (literature review)

Professor: Thomas J. Guilmette, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: NEUROPSYCHOLOGY (ASSESSMENT AND DISORDERS); CLINICAL ASSESSMENT OF COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING; FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY/NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? YES, ALTHOUGH IT DEPENDS ON WHAT SPECIFIC INVOLVEMENT THE STUDENT HAS IN THE PROJECT. FOR EXAMPLE, ONLY ENTERING DATA INTO A DATABASE WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE ADEQUATE INVOLVEMENT. IN ADDITION, THE STUDENT MUST WRITE A COMPREHENSIVE PAPER REGARDING THE RESEARCH AREA, MUCH LIKE A LITERATURE REVIEW.
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? POSSIBLY, ALTHOUGH THE SETTING WOULD NEED TO OFFER THE STUDENT DIRECT EXPOSURE TO PERSONS WITH NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL OR NEUROBEHAVIORAL DISORDERS. THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF THE STUDENT IN THE CLINICAL SETTING WOULD NEED TO BE CONSIDERED. THE STUDENT WOULD BE GIVEN JOURNAL ARTICLES TO READ, WOULD HAVE TO CONDUCT HIS/HER OWN LITERATURE REVIEW, AND WOULD ALSO NEED TO WRITE A COMPREHENSIVE PAPER INTEGRATING THE READINGS WITH HIS/HER CLINICAL EXPERIENCES.
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: WEEKLY

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES

Examples of past independent study projects:

- Effects of Frequent and Prolonged Binge Drinking on Cognitive Functions Among Female College Students
- A Survey of Concussion Knowledge and Management among New England High School Football Coaches (presented at a national conference and published in *Brain Injury*)
- The Relationship Between Early Life Stress and Microstructural Integrity of the Corpus Callosum in a Non-Clinical Population (based on an off-campus RA internship and published in *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*)
- The Public's Misconceptions About Traumatic Brain Injury: A Follow Up Survey (presented at a national conference and published in *Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology*)

Professor: Mary Harmon-Vukic, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: ATTENTION; MEMORY

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? YES
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester:

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC?

Examples of past independent study projects:

Professor: Saaid Mendoza, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: INTERGROUP (RACE OR GENDER) BIAS, STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION, IMPLICIT ATTITUDES, SOCIAL COGNITION, GROUP NORMS, GOAL PURSUIT

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? YES, BUT WOULD LIKELY INCLUDE A PAPER OR OTHER REQUIREMENT
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? GENERALLY NOT, BUT WOULD CONSIDER IT.
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? NO

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: WEEKLY

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES

Professor: Mary O’Keeffe, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? SOMETIMES, BUT ONLY IF THE ACTIVITY ALLOWS THE STUDENT TO CONDUCT INDEPENDENT RESEARCH WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ACTIVITY. STUDENTS NEED ACCESS TO DATA THAT THEY CAN ANALYZE. STUDENTS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE ALL THE SAME STEPS AS THOSE CONDUCTING INDEPENDENT RESEARCH.
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? NOT USUALLY. STUDENTS WOULD ONLY BE PERMITTED THIS OPTION IF THERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH.
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? ONLY AS PART OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND PROJECT.

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: WEEKLY

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES UNLESS THE STUDY IS ONGOING AND PUBLIC PRESENTATION WOULD COMPROMISE THE STUDY

Examples of past independent study projects:

- Comparing and contrasting regular and e-cigarette smoking topography
- Establishing consent in personal relationships
- Effects of message framing and emotional priming on binge drinking behavior

Professor: Michael Spiegler, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY, PERSONALITY, BEHAVIOR THERAPY, ACTIVE LEARNING, INTERTEACHING

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? YES, BUT MUST WRITE A PAPER RELATING THE EXPERIENCE TO THE STUDENT'S COURSEWORK.
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? YES, BUT MUST WRITE A PAPER RELATING THE EXPERIENCE TO THE STUDENT'S COURSEWORK.
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: DEPENDS ON THE PROJECT. SOMETIMES WEEKLY, SOMETIMES BIWEEKLY. ALWAYS ON AN AS NEEDED BASIS.

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? DEPENDS ON WHETHER THE PROJECT LENDS ITSELF TO REPORTING IN A POSTER FORMAT.

Examples of past independent study projects:

- Survey of the practices of behavior therapists
- Apprenticeship in textbook writing
- Experiment evaluating various interventions to influence driving behavior
- Personality correlates of acceptability of and performance in interteaching
- Independent reading, discussions, and paper writing to learn about a specific content area when the student cannot take a course in that area either because we do not offer the course or because the course will not be offered before the student graduates
- Serve as an Interteaching Coach in one of my courses in which interteaching is the main pedagogical method

Professor: Victoria Templer, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: EPISODIC MEMORY; WORKING MEMORY, METACOGNITION/METAMEMORY, SPATIAL COGNITION, SOCIAL COGNITION IN ANIMAL MODELS, ANIMAL BEHAVIOR TOPICS (AT ROGER WILLIAMS ZOO) SUCH AS TOOL USE, THEORY OF MIND, AND TOPICS THOSE LISTED ABOVE

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? YES, BUT WOULD LIKELY INCLUDE A PAPER OR OTHER REQUIREMENT.
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? GENERALLY NOT, BUT NOT OPPOSED GIVEN THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES.

Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: WEEKLY

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES

Professor: Jennifer Van Reet, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: PRETEND PLAY OR IMAGINATION; COUNTERFACTUAL REASONING; HOW PEOPLE THINK ABOUT FALSE/FANTASTICAL INFORMATION; CHILDREN'S EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES. STUDENTS HAVE TO MEET ONE OF THREE QUALIFICATIONS: 1) BEEN A VOLUNTEER RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN A PREVIOUS SEMESTER, 2) BEEN A STUDENT IN EXPERIMENTAL CHILD PSYCHOLOGY (PSY 406), OR 3) DEMONSTRATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND/OR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH CHILDREN.
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? NO
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? NO

Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: WEEKLY
Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES

Other: I strongly prefer students to take IS pass/fail.

Examples of past independent study projects:

- Role of attention in preschoolers' drawing ability
- Effect of inhibitory control on preschoolers' prosocial ability
- Measuring children's superstitious tendencies
- Effect of fantasy on children's ability to learn novel prosocial behavior
- Children's understanding of ownership
- Children's ability to learn words in pretend play

Professor: Kelly Warmuth, Ph.D.

General areas of interest for supervising independent study projects: PARENT–CHILD ATTACHMENT, MARITAL CONFLICT, CHILD INTERNALIZING/EXTERNALIZING DISORDERS, DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, PARENTING

Independent study projects typically approved:

- Conduct independent research (e.g., design a study, collect and analyze data, write a report)? YES. STUDENTS HAVE TO MEET ONE OF THREE QUALIFICATIONS: 1) BEEN A VOLUNTEER RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN A PREVIOUS SEMESTER, 2) BEEN A STUDENT IN EXPERIMENTAL CHILD PSYCHOLOGY (PSY 406), OR 3) DEMONSTRATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND/OR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH CHILDREN.
- Participate in an off-campus research activity (e.g., serve as an RA for a research project at Brown or at some other institution)? NO
- Participate in an off-campus clinical activity (e.g., serve as a volunteer in a clinical setting)? NO
- Conduct a literature review of a specific topic? YES

Usual frequency of meeting with independent study student during the semester: WEEKLY

Requires the independent study student to participate in PCPC? YES

Other: I strongly prefer students to take IS pass/fail.

Independent Study Summary

	Bloom	Boucher	Guido	Guilmette	Harmon-Vukic	Mendoza
<i>Interest areas</i>	Fear; Avoidance and superstitious conditioning; Affective neuroscience	Interpersonal Communication; Close Relationships; Uncertainty & Uncertainty Reduction Processes; Social Anxiety; Depression	Psychopathology; Psychotherapy; Psychology and religion	Neuropsychology (assessment & disorders); Clinical assessment of cognitive functioning; Forensic psychology & neuro-psychology	Attention; Memory	Intergroup (race or gender) bias, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, implicit attitudes, social cognition, group norms, goal pursuit
<i>Allows independent research projects</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>Allows off-campus research projects</i>	YES	POSSIBLY	NO	YES	YES	YES
<i>Allows off-campus clinical projects</i>	NOT USUALLY	NOT USUALLY	YES	YES	YES	NOT USUALLY
<i>Allows literature review on specific topics</i>	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO

Independent Study Summary

	O’Keeffe	Spiegler	Templer	Van Reet	Warmuth
<i>Interest areas</i>	Health psychology	Clinical areas: personality, abnormal, behavior therapy	Episodic Memory; Working Memory, Metacognition/Metam emory, Spatial Cognition, Social Cognition In Animal Models, Animal Behavior Topics	Pretend play & imagination across the lifespan; Counterfactual reasoning; Children’s executive functioning	Parent–child attachment, marital conflict, child internalizing/ externalizing disorders, developmental psychopathology, parenting
<i>Allows independent research projects</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>Allows off-campus research projects</i>	NOT USUALLY	YES	YES	NO	NO
<i>Allows off-campus clinical projects</i>	NOT USUALLY	YES	NOT USUALLY	NO	NO
<i>Allows literature review on specific topics</i>	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES