Honors Independent Study

Honors Independent Studies come in two styles:

- a 1-2 credit "add-on" component to enrich a 3 or more credit non-honors course
- 3-6 credits of "stand-alone" research

If a standard University course you wish to take does not offer an affiliated honors colloquium, you may contact the course instructor to discuss adding a 1-2 credit ISH. Or if you would like to pursue research not addressed in a standard UMass course, you may contact an instructor to negotiate a 3-6 credit ISH on a topic of your choice, or related to the faculty member's personal research.

- The 1-2 credit ISH must be guided by the affiliated non-honors course instructor and involve at least eight hours of student/faculty contact time over the course of the semester.*
- The 3-6 credit ISH requires that you provide a syllabus-like proposal, documentation of the work load, and have at least one-half hour of contact with the sponsor per credit per week, with approximately three to four hours of work per credit per week.

* NOTE: A maximum of three Honors Independent Studies (ISH) may be applied to CHC honors course requirements. Each 1-2 credit ISH used to enrich a non-honors course must be affiliated with a different course each time in order to qualify as a CHC requirement.

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Honors Independent Study (ISH) Registration

ISH registration is online via CHC PATHS and will include your responses to the Proposal questions noted below. You are encouraged to draft your responses in MS Word prior to initiating the online contract. Steps for submitting an independent study contract.

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Proposal Guidelines

The ISH proposal will serve as the official UMASS course description of the honors work you completed. Your proposal should address the following questions:

1. What will you study?

- Clearly define your topic and the nature of your study, e.g., do you wish to investigate the "big picture" (e.g., The Effects of Excessive TV Viewing on the General Public) or a specific aspect of something (e.g., Violence on TV and the Rising Crime Rate among Teenage Males)?
• What do you hope to discover/accomplish from your study?

2. How will you conduct your research?  
Surveys, observations, lab experiments, library searches, readings, and consultations are examples of research methods. Please provide details for each method you list, including bibliographies as applicable.

3. What is your timeline and proposed method for benchmark evaluations of your ISH progress/achievements throughout the semester?  
Create a timeline of assignments and a regular meeting schedule to help keep you on track and to provide opportunities for evaluation and feedback from your ISH sponsor.

4. How will you present your I.S.H. for grading?  

  • A written document (formal paper with a bibliography, journal, or composition) is the standard method for wrapping up an Independent Study Honors. Discuss the proposed length with your sponsor and note that in your proposal.
  • Occasionally an oral presentation of your findings to either a committee or class may be scheduled as well.
  • Other options might include a project with documentation: collection of original poetry, an exhibit of original artwork, a performance or contribution of a product to a community or for a client.

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