Department of English
Undergraduate Bachelor’s Essay and Independent Study Proposal Procedures

Please note: Students must consult with their intended faculty mentor while preparing their proposals.

To propose a Bachelor’s Essay or Independent Study, a student must:
• have completed 60 hours and ENGL 299
• not have exceeded 9 hours of independent study (including Tutorials, Bachelor’s Essays and Independent Studies)
• submit a copy of the form below to the English Department (Prof. Thomas, thomasc@cofc.edu) by the end of week 12 of the semester prior to the semester of study.

Bachelor’s Essays with an ENGL prefix and Independent Studies count as 300+ level English electives; they do not satisfy other requirements within the major.

Because decisions about Bachelor’s Essays and Independent Studies are likely to be made after registration has begun, students should register for classes as if they will not be doing independent work.

Independent Studies and Bachelor’s Essays usually require at least one hour per week meeting with the advising professor.

All students who submit a Bachelor’s Essay or Independent Study proposal are eligible to compete for the Mary Ezell Cook Scholarship. The Cook scholarship is an award of approximately $1,000 that seeks to support students who are writing a Bachelor’s Essay or working on an Independent Study project. The scholarship is not renewable and will be awarded to the student whose project is deemed especially promising, innovative, or substantial. Students who plan to attend graduate school in the humanities or creative writing make particularly strong candidates for this award.

The proposal form itself begins on the next page.
Department of English
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Student’s Name:

Nature of the Project (check one): Independent Study ____ Bachelor’s Essay ____

Preferred advising professor (if applicable):

If you named a professor, have you consulted with her or him about your project?
Keep in mind that you must consult with a faculty member while preparing your proposal and should begin discussing your plans as early as possible. If you haven’t started such conversations, try to reach out to possible faculty mentors within a month before the proposal deadline.

Project Proposal (Keeping in mind that your project will change as you research and write)

Your IS / BE proposal should be 400-500 words long (aim for precisely one page, single-spaced), not including the bibliography. Please include a formal header and use MLA formatting.

Your proposal should include the following:

• An intriguing and informative title.

• A brief, engaging introduction that identifies your primary sources when relevant and strategically frames your project. You can do this in any number of ways, but successful strategies include establishing broader contexts for your project (historical, theoretical, generic), offering a model engagement with your text, and / or emphasizing why your topic is timely and important.

• A tentative—but pointed and specific—project goal. For critical projects, this will be a research question or, if your project is more developed, a hypothesis. For creative projects, this will be a statement of intent. The goal here is to articulate what you hope to achieve in this independent project.

• A focused account of the conversation your project is entering. This might include key critical arguments or creative practices that you hope to engage and extend. If possible, try to cite at least two sources, though there won’t be room to introduce any substantial quotations. Here, you can also return to describe relevant theoretical, methodological, or creative foundations for your project that you might have begun to sketch out in your introduction.

• A project timeline, noting completion dates for specific stages of the project (annotated bibliography or creative review, section and chapter drafts, final copy, etc.). Please also note the anticipated size of the project and related outcomes. Independent studies typically require 25 pages
of formal writing, though not necessarily in the form of one long essay, as well as an electronic poster to be submitted to the department upon completion of the independent study. Bachelor’s Essays typically require 50 pages of formal writing and a defense, as well as an electronic poster to be submitted to the department upon completion of the Bachelor’s Essay).

On a separate page, please append a bibliography that includes a suitable combination of at least 10 primary and secondary sources.

*Note that the bullet points above suggest important content that you should include in your proposal, but do not themselves represent paragraphs. Your proposal itself will unfold in strategically organized paragraphs that combine and order these points as relevant to your project. The bullet points are also not exhaustive. You might, for example, want to touch upon relevant skills, qualifications, and academic experiences that you bring to the project.*