

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

Note: Students are expected to consult with their preferred faculty advisors well in advance of preparing their proposals and to complete their proposals on time and strictly according to the guidelines stated below. Acceptance of proposals is contingent upon the approval of the faculty advisor and the English Department.

To propose a Bachelor's Essay or Independent Study, students must:

- have completed 60 hours of coursework, including ENGL 299
- not have exceeded 9 hours of independent study (including Tutorials, Bachelor's Essays, and Independent Studies)
- have submitted their proposals to the Associate Chair by week 12 of the semester prior to the semester of study
- have submitted their proposals to the [Cougar Scholarship Awarding System](#) by week 12 of the semester prior to the semester of study to apply for the Macy Ezell Cooke Scholarship (see below)

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.

Bachelor's Essays with an ENGL prefix can be applied to the Open Electives requirement of the English Core. Students can apply both semesters of their Bachelor's Essay (499A & 499B) to this 6 credit hour requirement.

Independent Studies can be applied either to the Open Electives requirement or to the Focus Electives requirement of our three concentrations, provided that the content of the Independent Study project reflects the content of the concentration. If you would like to have your Independent Study applied as a Focus Elective within your concentration, please contact the Associate Chair.

All students who submit a Bachelor's Essay or Independent Study proposal are eligible to compete for the Macy Ezell Cooke Scholarship. The Cooke 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.

Proposal Guidelines

Your proposal should be 400-500 words long—one single-spaced page—excluding the bibliography. Place your **name** at the top of the first page along with the name of your **preferred faculty advisor**, and indicate whether you are proposing an **Independent Study** or a **Bachelor's Essay**. Proposals should include the following:

- An intriguing and informative **title**.
- A brief, engaging **introduction** that identifies your primary sources 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), modeling your proposed engagement with the text(s), 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 thesis. 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 participates in. This might include key critical arguments or creative practices you hope to address and extend. If possible, try to cite at least two sources, though there probably won't be room for substantial quotations. You might also describe in greater detail the theoretical, methodological, or creative foundations indicated 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. Bachelor's Essays typically require 50 pages of formal writing and a defense.
- A **grading plan** explaining how the course will be graded. Faculty advisors may choose to adapt one of the following sample grading plans:

Grading Plan for Independent Study

The faculty advisor will assign a grade based on two factors: participation (e.g., attendance at and preparedness for weekly meetings) and written work, which will consist of _____.

Grading Plan for Bachelor's Essay

The faculty advisor will assign a grade based two factors: participation (e.g., attendance at and preparedness for weekly meetings) and the writing project. The writing project will be at least 50 pages long and show evidence of substantial primary and/or secondary research. The student will defend the writing project orally before a panel including the faculty advisor and two additional faculty members.

- A statement of the Student Learning Outcome(s) for the project. Faculty advisors may choose to adapt the following SLO:

Student Learning Outcome for Bachelor's Essay / Independent Study

Students will demonstrate the ability to plan and effectively carry out an extensive research and/or writing project independently.

- A **bibliography**, including no fewer than ten primary and secondary sources.

Please note that the bullet points above merely list several important features of the proposal. They are not meant to serve as an outline of your proposal, which should unfold in a series of strategically organized paragraphs that combine these features as best suits your project. Nor are they exhaustive. You may, for example, also want to discuss the experiences and qualifications that have led you to and prepared you for your proposed project.