

Guidelines for Undergraduate Independent Study in the Department of the History of Art

(Guidelines adapted from recommendations provided by the Committee on Undergraduate Education)

(last updated June 2020)

The Department of the History of Art provides students in the College and other undergraduate programs at Penn the opportunity to conduct independent, supervised research with individual faculty members (both standing and non-standing) in the History of Art. Interested students should contact the faculty member with whom they wish to conduct independent research and discuss the particular parameters of the envisioned project in advance (including topic, as well as potential research outcomes such as papers, object analyses and reports, and/or other forms of presentation of research). Art historical research can be undertaken in any period, region, or medium, provided an appropriate advisor can be identified. An independent study lasts typically for one full semester and shall receive 1 CU. For registration purposes, the course number is ARTH 399.

1. Which students are eligible to be offered the opportunity for independent study in ARTH?

Typically, independent study is available for History of Art majors and minors, interested in pursuing independent research not covered in current course offerings, but students from other departments and schools on campus are welcome to propose an independent study, if an appropriate advisor can be identified. If specific prerequisite course work needs to be completed before an independent study can be undertaken in any given field, remains at the discretion of the faculty supervisor. Independent study can be conducted at any level in ARTH, but the department will give priority to juniors and seniors.

2. Who should normally supervise an independent study?

Typically, standing faculty members in History of Art will supervise independent study, but non-standing faculty members can do so as well (in which case approval from the Undergraduate Chair needs to be requested). For reasons of legal liability, persons without a University appointment are ineligible to supervise independent studies.

Proposals for an independent study should be discussed (in written or oral form) with the potential supervisor, and final approval rests with the Undergraduate Chair.

3. What is expected of the student engaged in an independent study?

Students should approach a potential faculty advisor ideally by the end of the semester *before* the intended independent study, in order to discuss feasibility of topic and advisor availability.

Independent study in History of Art can take many forms, and determining the final outcomes rests with the supervisor, in consultation with the student. Most frequently, an independent study results in a written research paper (of standard seminar paper length, ca. 10-20 pages), but other forms of written and/or oral assessment are acceptable as well. The normal amount of work expected during a semester of independent study should equal that of one regular course unit in ARTH. Both student and adviser are strongly encouraged to co-write a brief statement of expectations in terms of work to be produced and mentorship to be provided at the start of an independent study.

Students will not be awarded credit for an independent study for work undertaken during internships, though internships may lay the groundwork for additional research undertaken with a member of the university community, which might meet minimal expectations for an independent study. Students should also not be paid for hours put into independent study work. Points to consider could include:

Potential faculty supervisors will make every effort to support the student in formulating a suitable proposal/project in advance of committing to supervision, to provide guidance whether through scheduled meetings or on an as-needed basis during the term of the project, and to evaluate the final project and provide substantial commentary on the quality of the student's work.

4. How is an independent study counted in fulfillment of major/minor requirements?

In the Department of the History of Art, an ARTH independent study may count towards the electives of the major/minor. A maximum of two such credits shall count towards the major/minor.