

Guidelines for Independent Study for the Cognitive Science, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Psychology Concentrations

CPSY 1970 (independent reading) and CPSY 1980 (independent research) serve as elective or capstone courses for the Cognitive Science, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Psychology concentrations. Students admitted to the Honors program typically take two semesters of CPSY 1980 during their senior year. No student may apply more than 2 credits of independent work (CPSY 1970 or 1980) towards concentration credit.

Students pursuing independent reading courses (CPSY 1970) are expected to master and synthesize a body of literature, going beyond material covered in regular courses in both depth and critical evaluation. Students pursuing independent research courses (CPSY 1980) are expected to plan, design, and execute a research project. They are expected to develop a strong understanding of the relevant literature and to contribute meaningfully to data collection and analysis.

Both CPSY 1970 and 1980 require supervision by a faculty sponsor at Brown University. The faculty sponsor must have a formal affiliation (primary, secondary, research, or affiliate) with the CPSY department and hold a Professorial rank (Professor, Teaching Professor, Research Professor, Professor of the Practice) at any level (assistant, associate, full). Brown faculty at these ranks who are not affiliated with the CPSY department may sponsor CPSY 1970 or 1980 after completion of a Project Proposal form and with approval from the Departmental Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (DUCC). Clinical Professors, instructors, post-doctoral research associates, and adjunct faculty are not eligible to act as sponsors. Faculty at other institutions are not permitted to sponsor independent studies for concentration credit.

CPSY 1970 and 1980 are formal courses and so must include 180 hours of instructional time over the semester. Students should expect to spend between 10-14 hours each week on coursework. Students should keep a log of their hours.

Faculty sponsors are expected to be available to the student for mentoring and advising throughout the semester. The student and faculty sponsor should hold regular formal meetings, individually or as part of group lab meetings. Faculty sponsors are expected to make available adequate space and resources for project completion.

Students are required to submit written work as part of independent study courses. This written work can take several forms, e.g., a lab notebook, a literature review, a research proposal, a poster, a laboratory report, or a manuscript detailing results of the project. The exact form of the written work should be agreed upon with the faculty sponsor in advance of registering for the course. Students should submit their work to their faculty sponsor by the Registrar's specified due date.

Faculty sponsors should outline to the student clear expectations and criteria for assigning grades.

Students may be required to receive specific training (e.g., CITI, Animal Care & Use, Laboratory Safety) as part of their independent study. This training must be completed before the project begins.

Any issues emerging from Independent Study courses should be discussed first with the faculty sponsor, then with the concentration advisor, and finally with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS).

Finding a faculty sponsor:

Students should discuss their ideas for independent study with their concentration advisor, who can assist in identifying appropriate faculty sponsors. Students often work with faculty members with whom they have taken a formal course; reaching out to these faculty is a good way to identify a potential sponsor.

The Project Proposal Plan

Students proposing independent study courses with faculty members not affiliated with the CPSY department must submit a Project Proposal Plan (PPP) to their concentration advisor for approval. The PPP must outline the proposed project and describe how it relates intellectually to the student's concentration. The plan must be signed by both the student and the proposed sponsor, and must be submitted to the concentration advisor before the end of the drop/add period for that semester. The PPP will be reviewed by the concentration advisor and the DUS. If approved, then the DUS will arrange for the proposed sponsor to obtain a section number for CPSY 1970 or 1980 and the student can then register. It is the student's responsibility to submit the PPP and obtain permission before the Registrar's deadline to add a course (even with a late fee).