

**Guidelines for Completing an Independent Study (COM 3980)  
In the School of Communication  
At  
Western Michigan University  
(Effective Fall 2006)**

**Introduction:**

The School of Communication is pleased to provide eligible students the opportunity to complete independent study credit toward their major or for general elective credit.

<b>Major/Minor</b>	<b>Com 3980 credits applied to major/minor</b>	<b>Com 3980 credits applied toward general elective credit</b>
Communication Studies Major	Up to 6	Up to 6, if not used in major
Film Video and Media Studies Major	Up to 6	Up to 6, if not used in major
Interpersonal Communication Major	Up to 6	Up to 6, if not used in major
Journalism Major	Up to 3	Up to 3, if not used in major
Organizational Communication Major	Up to 6	Up to 6, if not used in major
Public Relations Major	Up to 6	Up to 6, if not used in major
Telecommunications Information Management Major	n/a	Up to 6
Communication Minor	Up to 3	Up to 3, if not used in minor
Secondary Communication Education Minor	Up to 3	Up to 3, if not used in minor
Journalism Minor	n/a	Up to 3 credits

**What is an independent study?**

An independent study provides eligible students with the opportunity to work independently on special projects of interest to them and a sponsoring faculty member. The study is conducted under the supervision of a consenting faculty member and with the approval of the Director of the School of Communication.

Independent Study is an opportunity to explore concerns not normally covered in a regular course. It is not a convenient way to schedule a class around a tight work schedule.

**Determining Readiness for an Independent Study:**

Students interested in completing an independent study are encouraged to review this information carefully before pursuing an independent study. The undergraduate advisor can answer questions.

### **Eligibility:**

A student must meet the following requirements in order to complete an independent study:

- A declared Communication major (not a pre-communication student) or minor
- At least a junior (56+ credit hours)
- A **minimum overall** COM GPA of 3.0
- Complete appropriate preparatory coursework to support the independent study (determined by the faculty member supervising the study)

### **Developing Your Project as an Independent Study:**

Students are encouraged to incorporate the [following guidelines](#) into their plan for setting up an independent study.

- A.** Review the School of Communication requirements to confirm you are qualified to complete an independent study.
- B.** Review your personal schedule necessary to work for an independent study (about 10 hours a week).
- C.** Select a topic to research.
- D.** Find a full time faculty member in the School of Communication to direct your independent study.
- E.** Prepare a written description of the proposed study in conjunction with your faculty sponsor. The study should include objectives, process/procedure to complete independent study, timeline and method of evaluation. (See attached sample)
  1. Complete the Com 3980 application form, available at 301 Sprau Tower or on the School of Communication website ([www.wmich.edu/communication](http://www.wmich.edu/communication)).
  2. Have your faculty sponsor sign your Com 3980 application
  3. Personally sign your Com 3980 application.
- F.** Submit the signed application form, the written proposal plus a copy of your unofficial transcript to the Director of the School of Communication for approval.
- G.** Once approved, the School of Communication will register you for Com 3980, just like any other class. You will be responsible for any accompanying tuition bill.
  - \* Make sure your university account is free of holds (parking tickets, health center fees, and past tuition bills) so your independent study can be added to your class schedule.
  - \* Complete a minimum of 40 hours of work for each academic credit hour earned over one or more semesters, as agreed upon in your proposal timeline.

**H.** The final paper/project is due to your faculty sponsor prior to the end of the semester that you are registered for your independent study or as agreed upon in your timeline. Your grade will appear on your transcript.

\* If you are unable to complete the minimum number of required hours before the end of the semester, you may request an incomplete from your faculty sponsor and finish your requirements during the following semester. Your faculty sponsor reserves the right to grant an incomplete.

### Calendar information

It may take several weeks to finalize your independent study. The School of Communication will require your patience in processing your independent study application and getting you registered. If you would like to have your independent study appear on your class schedule by the first day of classes, please follow this suggested calendar:

Semester	Submit Com 3980 application by
Fall	August 25 annually
Spring	December 15, annually
Summer I	April 20, annually
Summer II	June 15, annually

**Note:** Due to unforeseen difficulties, it is not always possible to finalize an independent study by the dates listed above. If that happens, please contact the advisor (in the School of Communication) who will help you navigate the registration process.

### Late adding an independent study

If you wish to “late add” an independent study, please have your faculty sponsor provide you a completed and signed permission to “late add” form. You will need to take the “late add” form to the Office of the Registrar and have the class added to your schedule. Please double check to make sure the correct number of credits have been added to your schedule and that your independent study will receive a letter grade.

### Reminder

- Independent studies can be completed in any part of the United States or another country. Talk with your faculty sponsor about this possibility.
- Declare at the time of application, how many credit hours you will earn during your independent study.
- You can receive a maximum of three credit hours for an independent study during a semester. For each hour of independent study credit, you should plan to log at least 40 clock hours of work. You may earn up to three hours of additional credit for an independent study providing you have not had, or plan to take COM 4990. You may not request more than a total of six hours of COM 3980/COM 4990.
- For more information, contact the School of Communication Advising Office at (269) 387-3197 or send an email to [marilyn.kritzman@wmich.edu](mailto:marilyn.kritzman@wmich.edu)
- **Good learning!**