

Purpose:

This course is designed to provide the student with an opportunity to gain or enhance public health knowledge and to explore an area of interest related to public health research or the delivery and/or administration of health services.

Objectives

One or more of the following substantive and process-related objectives must be met depending on the project:

- Students expand current knowledge in a specific area of interest related to public health;
- Students remediate deficient areas of knowledge, behavior, or skills;
- Students develop or enhance skills in analyzing, synthesizing, and integrating public health- related information or experiences;
- Students develop or enhance skills in project identification, development, management, implementation, evaluation, communication, and/or dissemination;

Course Design:

This is a variable 1-3 credit course that may not be repeated. It is expected that for **each credit** registered the course will require approximately 45-60 hours of work for the 15-week semester.

Registration:

The student will not be able to register for this course until the independent study project plan and the graduate petition form have been completed and approved by the student, the faculty instructor (supervisor), the student's academic Program Director, the faculty instructor's Department Chair, and Dean of Student Affairs.

Independent studies must be approved prior to registration for the course. Students should submit completed forms and a Registration Transaction Form to Student Records (gwsphrecords@gwu.edu) when registration is open for the semester that the independent study is taking place.

Course Requirements:

Students discuss their general topic with a faculty member with whom they would like to complete the independent study project and solicit the faculty member's commitment to being the project supervisor.

Once the faculty supervisor is identified, the student and faculty supervisor determine the specific project in which the student will be involved. After this discussion, the student presents a typed outline of the independent study project to the faculty supervisor, who must approve the outline. The outline must consist of the following elements:

- Purpose and objectives of the independent study;
- A short description of the project, including a project title;
- A list or description of the components of the project to be completed by the student;
- A timeline for completion of the project within one semester;
- A list of the number and approximate dates for meetings between the faculty and student for evaluation and discussion of the project;
- A description of how the student project will be graded, including any intermediate evaluation/grades that are required.

The faculty supervisor may choose to include additional elements to the independent study outline.

This outline and accompanying form serve as the formal contract for the independent study project. The contract and form must be signed by all parties before the project is initiated.

Once the outline is completed and the independent study form signed by the faculty supervisor and the student, the outline and form should be sent to the student's academic Program Director, the faculty supervisor's department chair, and then to the Dean of Student Affairs for approval.

Independent study projects may not be used as a substitute for an available required or elective course and may not cover substantially the same subject matter that is available in a required or elective course.

Assignment of Credit Hour Policy

What are the minimum time requirements for a one-semester credit hour?¹

A minimum of 37.5 hours of work per semester is required for one credit hour. These hours will consist of 50 minutes of direct or guided interaction plus 100 minutes of independent learning per week during the course of a normal 15-week semester, which includes one week for exams. Other combinations of time are possible, where appropriate (such as a higher proportion of instructional/interactional time for a laboratory or a lower proportion of instructional/interactional time for independent research). Classes may exceed these minimums to ensure students meet course learning goals.

What constitutes direct instruction?

Direct instruction or guided interaction is the amount of time a student is expected to be engaged in direct or guided interaction with an instructor. Examples include, but are not limited to, in person or online lectures, seminars, discussions, art and design studios, supervised group work, and examinations.

What constitutes independent learning?

Independent, out of class, learning is the amount of time students spend outside of scheduled or direct instruction or contact hours with instructor to fulfill course objectives. Examples include, but are not limited to, reading assignments, working out problems, preparing for exams, online and face-to-face group work, writing papers, and working on a project.

How do faculty communicate that their courses meets the requisite number of hours for the credits assigned to their classes?

The amount of work required for an independent study is communicated by the faculty member. A sample description for an independent study is below:

3-credit independent study or independent research course:

Over 15 weeks, the student will meet with the instructor for 7.5 hours (375 minutes) and will be expected to spend an average of 7 hours (350 minutes) per week or 105 hours per semester researching and producing a substantial paper or project, or engaged in an internship and writing a paper about their experience.

Grading:

Methods of grading will be specified in the contract with the student and will be determined by the faculty member based on the requirements of the independent study. Letter grades must be used; independent studies may not receive a grade of Pass/Fail. The student must successfully complete all project components agreed in the contract in the timeframe required by the contract. Students and faculty may agree to a project timeline that extends beyond a single semester if appropriate. Failure to meet any of the terms of the outline can result in a failing grade. Incomplete grading and an In-Progress grade will only be allowed under extenuating circumstance such as personal medical issues or a change that is out of the control of the student that makes the project extremely difficult or impossible to complete in a timely manner.

Academic Integrity:

Please review the University's policy on academic integrity, located at www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html. All

graded work must be completed in accordance with The George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.

Common examples of academically dishonest behavior include, but are not limited to, the following: Cheating; Fabrication; Plagiarism; Falsification and forgery of University academic documents; Facilitating academic dishonesty.

Students with Disabilities:

If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Disability Support Services Office at 202.994.8250, Rome Hall 801 22nd St. N.W. Suite 102, <http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

¹ The U.S. Department of Education defines “credit hour” as: “an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

- (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out-of-class student work for approximately 15 weeks for one semester, or . . . the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or,
- (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.” Federal regulations assume that a credit hour equals 50 minutes of real time. A committee representing associate deans in all schools met over the summer and agreed to the credit hour policy and implementation process below.

