

GUIDELINES FOR:

COMM 492 Independent Study and COMM 497 Independent Research

Department of Communications

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

What are COMM 492 and COMM 497?	3
What are the differences between COMM 492 and COMM 497?	4
COMM 492 and COMM 497 Eligibility Checklist	5
What Types of Papers Might I Write?	6
Sample Instructions for a Summary and Critique of Directed Readings	7
Sample Instructions for a Scholarly Paper	9
Sample Syllabus for	

What are COMM 492 Independent Study and CMAT 497 Independent Research?

These courses are designed to give you the opportunity to work one-on-one with a Communications faculty member on a subject you choose in consultation with the professor.

You can study an area in which we do not offer a course, such as *Freedom of Speech* or *Gender*

What are the differences between COMM

Independent Study and Independent Research Eligibility Checklist

____1. For COMM 497, I have a grade of C or better in COMM 297:

What Types of Papers Might I Write?

As stated earlier, COMM 492 and COMM 497 offer the opportunity for different forms of inquiry. In COMM 492, the student investigates a topic area of interest to learn more about. On the other hand, in COMM 497, the student actually engages in performing original research. As a result, the types of papers associated with each option differ.

For COMM 492, the student might produce a traditional research paper or a critical analysis of a text or group of texts. In contrast, for COMM 497, the student would produce a more formal, scholarly work complete with a literature review, and descriptions of methodology, results, and conclusions. Supporting data might be presented in tables and charts, and exhibits containing data collection instruments such as coding sheets and surveys may be included as well.

Descriptions of sample assignments for COMM 492 and COMM 497 are presented in the next sections.

Sample Instructions for a Summary and Critique of Directed Readings

The following paper might be written for COMM 492. It is designed for students who compile a reading list to learn about a particular topic area and then wish to summarize and critique the works they have encountered.

Give your paper a title. Start your paper with a paragraph that introduces the reader to your topic. The paragraph should define your issue and give the reader a sense of why knowledge and understanding about it is relevant for them. Provide a few specific examples of your issue to illustrate it for the reader. You only need to briefly mention them. Don't describe them in great detail because you can assume that the reader already knows about them. You are just establishing some common ground. Then, say that your issue has been documented in several important works, and list the titles and the authors of each one. Finally, tell that you are going to summarize and critique the works.

In the body of your paper, address each of the works separately. You don't necessarily need subheadings; however, it will be much easier for you and the reader if you deal with each work

Provide a page at the end entitled "References" wherein you provide bibliographical entries for each of your books. Keep direct quotes to a minimum. Instead, summarize the authors' points and put them in your own words. Then, provide your own analyses and critiques of the authors' thoughts. In your introduction and conclusion, rely on your own words. Use a quote only if absolutely necessary. Include no more than one quote each in the introduction and the conclusion.

Sample Instructions for a Scholarly Paper

Introduction

Familiarize the reader with the subject you will address in your paper. Lay out the particular aspect of your topic you are researching and explain why research is needed in this area. You might refer to the subject of your study as a research problem. Also, you need to show what your research will add to the canon of knowledge on this topic and who specifically will benefit from your research.

Review of the Literature

In this section, you need to describe the research that has already been accomplished in this area and then prove how your study is original and does not simply duplicate the work that has already been done. To achieve this, you need to cite the relevant studies and briefly summarize their findings. You might also indicate if you are expanding on a previous study (or group of studies), or are embarking on a completely original approach.

Methodology

Here, you describe how you accomplished your study. You will identify the specific method you used and explain how you employed it in performing your research. Carefully go through each step you performed and describe what was involved. Be sure to describe the coding instrument you used to collect your data from the sample.

Results

In this section, you will report what you found. This section can be approached in several ways and is generally tailored to the particular project you are working on. In more quantitative studies, the data collected (frequency counts, percentages, statistics, etc.) are reported here, usually without any interpretation or discussion. Then, in another section, usually labeled "Discussion," the implications of the findings are discussed.

For qualitative or critical textual projects, you might combine the results and discussion sections into one section called "Analysis." (Actually, you can label these headings with your own

Also explain what ramifications your findings potentially have for interested and affected parties.

If, in performing your study, you have become aware of any limitations in your methodology (it might have ignored some data), you need to inform the reader and suggest what this means about your conclusions.

Finally, you need to suggest how subsequent research might build on your study. What other research is needed in your area? What other questions about your topic need to be answered?

Coding Sheet

You need to include a clean copy of the coding instrument you used to collect your data as an appendix in the back of your paper.

Tables

Sample Syllabus for COMM 497

Week 1	Proposal for Research Project
Week 2	Ten Sources with Summaries
Week 3	Draft of Introductions; All Sources Collected
Week 4	Draft of Literature Review

Communications Faculty Supervisors

You must meet with a faculty member in the area of your proposed study, discuss your planned project, have the professor agree to supervise you, complete the COMM 492/497 Project Proposal Form, and give the completed form to the Department Chair. Available faculty members and their specialties are listed below:

Vinita Agarwal

Strategic Communication
Research Methods
Public Health Communication

G. Doug Barrett

Audio Production
Sound Art
Digital Media
Music, Media and Contemporary Art

David Burns

Electronic Journalism
New Media Production
International Reporting

James Burton

Media Industries
New Media and Convergence
Media and Cinema Studies
Cultural Memory

Jennifer Cox

New Media/Online Journalism
Newsroom Culture
Community Journalism

Lori Dewitt

Small Group Communication
Religious/Ideological Communication
Intercultural Communication
Interpersonal Communication

Chrys Egan

Freedom of Speech and Media Effects
Interpersonal Communication
Research Methods and Academic Publishing
Alternative Magazine Writing and Music
Promotion

Aaron Gurlly

Video Production
Critical Identity Studies

**COMM 492/CMAT 497 INDEPENDENT STUDY/INDEPENDENT RESEARCH
PROPOSAL OUTLINE**

In order to be considered for COMM 492/497, you must write a proposal of 2-4 pages organized as follows:

1. Topic/Purpose: What is the research project about? What question(s) will the project address? Why is the project worthwhile?
2. Existing Knowledge: what do you already know about this topic? For COMM 496, this will require the specification of existing theory or concepts that are relevant. For COMM 492, the same may apply or it might be that there is relevant practical knowledge that the student has acquired through experience.
3. Method: What is the process for the project? In other words, how will you attempt to answer the questions articulated for number one above? NOTE: If the project requires the approval of the Salisbury University Committee on Human Research, be sure to acknowledge that in this section.

NAME _____ PHONE _____
EMAIL _____

COMM 492 INDEPENDENT STUDY _____ COMM 497 INDEPENDENT RESEARCH _____

SEMESTER _____ YEAR _____ CREDITS (1-4) _____

TITLE OF PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECT ADVISOR SIGNATURE _____ APPROVED _____
NOT APPROVED _____

DEPARTMENT CHAIR SIGNATURE _____ APPROVED _____
NOT APPROVED _____