

Appendix IV

Guidelines for the Independent Research Project (WS 9599)

Introduction

Currently, students enrolled in the Master's program in Women's Studies can opt to do an Independent Research Project (IRP) as part of their degree. The following guidelines are offered to facilitate the successful completion of IRPs within the one-year time frame, and to articulate clear expectations for both students and supervisors. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the field of scholarship in women's studies and feminist research, these guidelines have been developed with the intention of maintaining sensitivity to interdisciplinary differences.

Description, form and scope of the IRP

The IRP replaces a full-year course and is intended to provide Master's students with an opportunity to develop their ideas and analytic thinking on a topic of their choosing. IRPs may, but are not required to, make an original contribution to knowledge.

In the IRP, students are expected to conduct an independent piece of research and develop a critical analysis of a topic in a paper that is clearly informed by feminist thinking and/or theory. Typically, students will write an essay in which they articulate and develop a particular thesis or argument. The form of the IRP is somewhat flexible, however, and should be negotiated between the student and supervisor. The scope of the IRP should be guided by the supervisor, and should be revised as necessary as the IRP develops, in order to distinguish the project from a thesis and to facilitate the timely completion of the IRP. It is possible to combine the written paper with other creative projects, such as a film.

Students who intend to do research that involves human subjects will need to go through an Ethics Review and should consult the appropriate Ethics Committee for deadlines and requirements. See <http://www.uwo.ca/research/ethics/info/which-reb.htm> for more information.

Length of the IRP

The length of the IRP should be appropriate to the field of study in which it is being written. The IRP is meant to replace a full year course, and thus its length should be comparable to that which would be expected as a final paper for a full year Master's level course. As a general guide, the completed IRP should be between 30 and 50 pages (excluding the bibliography).

Process

Students and supervisors are expected to meet on a regular basis. It is anticipated that meetings will be more frequent during the first academic term, as compared to the second and third terms, as students are still in the process of refining their ideas, defining the focus of the IRP, sketching out their research methodology, and developing their paper proposals. It is expected that supervisors will give students feedback on their writing and ideas in an ongoing fashion, and that students will provide supervisors with a complete draft of the final paper by approximately June 30 so that supervisors have sufficient time to review it and provide feedback.

Deadlines

The final paper is due August 1. To facilitate this deadline, by November 1, students should complete a Paper Proposal that includes the following sections: (i) a working title; (ii) a paragraph that introduces the reader to the topic of the IRP; (iii) a research statement or question that will guide the development of the IRP; (iv) a tentative thesis statement or hypothesis, if applicable; (v) a description of the methodology that will be used; (vi) the

significance of the topic and the paper for women's studies and/or feminist research. A preliminary bibliography should be attached. Bibliographic annotations are not necessary. The paper proposal should be 3 pages maximum, double-spaced and in 12 point font, with normal margins. It is to be submitted to the Graduate Chair for approval by the Graduate Committee.

Students will have an opportunity to do a short presentation based on their IRP at a UWO graduate student conference that will be held in May-June so that they can receive feedback from peers and Women's Studies core faculty and affiliates on their work in progress.

Paper Proposal due	November 1
Graduate Conference	May-June
IRP due	August 1
Final IRP grades submitted	August 15

Final grades for the IRPs will be submitted by August 15. The supervisor and a second reader will mark the IRP and the final grade will be the average of the two. The Graduate Chair will select the second reader in consultation with the supervisor. The grading schedule used to assign final grades to papers is located below. Second readers should provide comments on the IRP to justify their grade.

Grading Schedule:

90+	Superior/Outstanding/Original
87-89%	Excellent
83-86%	Above Average
80-82%	Average
78-79%	Satisfactory/adequate, but does not suggest potential to proceed to a PhD
70-77%	Pass
< 70%	Fail

Format for the final IRP

The final IRP should be double spaced with normal margins, and should include a title page that includes the student's name, the supervisor's name, the name of the Department, and the title of the IRP. The bibliographic style used should be suitable for the scholarly approach used and should be consistent throughout the paper.