

**School of the Environment**  
**ENV491Y1**  
**INDEPENDENT STUDIES PROJECT COURSE**

A research project or selected topic in an area of environment not otherwise available in the Faculty of Arts & Science, meant to develop skills in independent study of interdisciplinary topics. Intended for students **who have a particular interest in doing primary research** in such a topic in depth, and which requires more work than can be completed in a half course. Available only to students enrolled in a School of the Environment Specialist or Major program.

A written application co-signed by the student and supervisor must be submitted for approval by the Academic Associate Director of the School of the Environment (Jessica D'eon at [ug.director.env@utoronto.ca](mailto:ug.director.env@utoronto.ca)) normally by August 15<sup>th</sup> of the previous academic year, or by April 15<sup>th</sup> prior to the summer session, or one month prior to commencing the course. ENV491Y1 is not eligible for the CR/NCR option.

*Prerequisite:* A CGPA of 3.0, ENV221H1, ENV222H1, completion of at least 14 FCE, and enrolment in a School of the Environment major or specialist program.

*If you have questions about this course, please contact the School of the Environment Academic Associate Director, Jessica D'eon at [ug.director.env@utoronto.ca](mailto:ug.director.env@utoronto.ca) or Undergraduate Student Advisor, David Powell at [ug.office.env@utoronto.ca](mailto:ug.office.env@utoronto.ca)*

### **1. Generic Course Requirements:**

#### **A) Course Work Effort:**

This independent studies project course requires significant and concerted effort throughout the term(s) in which they are taken, as well as **independent, self-directed work** and study. ENV491Y1 will involve on average one day per week during the two terms of the academic session (approximately 220 hours in total) for research and writing, with an additional 10-20 hours for course planning, which would include arranging a supervisor and developing and submitting an initial and a final course proposal).

#### **B) Course Supervisor & Advisor:**

A student must have a **supervisor** who is a member of the core, cross-appointed or graduate faculty of the School of the Environment, who has expertise in some aspect of the environment. The role of the course supervisor, when there is no additional outside supervisor, is to provide ongoing guidance on the research project to the student, beginning with the development of the course proposal (the course supervisor must have expertise in the area that the student is researching). The course supervisor is solely responsible for marking all assignments and providing feedback throughout the term. Sessional instructors may not supervise the ENV491Y1 Independent Study course.

A student may also have an **advisor(s)** inside or outside the University (this may include a sessional instructor). The role of an advisor(s) is to provide ongoing guidance on the research project to the student, beginning with the development of the course proposal (the advisor must have expertise in the area that the student is researching), and to provide some feedback to the course supervisor on the quality and comprehensiveness of the various assignments in the course. If an advisor is involved in the course, **the course supervisor remains solely responsible for actually marking all assignments.**

### **C) Initial Course Proposal:**

For each course, students are required to provide an initial course proposal to the course supervisor: outlining the purpose and goals of the project; describing suggested required research (primary and/or secondary) to be completed, including methodology; providing sources of information (including some initial specific references); listing the supervisor(s) and his/her (their) role(s); listing a schedule of meeting times with the supervisor(s) (the expectation is that most of these meetings will be with the supervisor(s) who is providing ongoing guidance on the research project); and listing the suggested outputs/assignments for the course, with marks and deadlines for each. The initial proposal should be accompanied by an example(s) of the student's written work. The initial proposal should be submitted to the course supervisor at least two months before the beginning of the term in which the student begins the course. **See Section 4 below for an example of an initial course proposal.** Once the student and supervisor have met, the initial course proposal may be modified as needed in a final course proposal, and submitted to the Academic Associate Director along with an Application.

### **D). Application:**

The **Application for the Independent Studies Project** should be approved by the supervisor, signed by both the supervisor and the student, and submitted to the Academic Associate Director of the School of the Environment for approval before the beginning of the term in which the student begins the course. **See the Application in Appendix A below.** Once the course proposal is approved by the Academic Associate Director, it then becomes the official course outline.

### **E) Assignments:**

An initial assignment, worth at least 20% of the overall mark, needs to be handed in and marked before the drop date for the course. The initial assignment could be an annotated bibliography, a detailed outline of the research paper, a draft of the final research paper, or some other appropriate assignment agreed upon and indicated in the final course proposal.

There should be **at least three separate assignments, one of which is a required final research paper worth between 40% and 60% of the overall mark (see other possible assignments below).** The final research paper should be between 30 - 40 pages for ENV 491Y1, depending on the work effort involved for the other course assignments. The student and the supervisor should agree on the length of the final research paper after discussing the work effort involved in the other assignments, and this should be indicated in the final course proposal.

**Other acceptable assignments** for the course, in addition to the final research paper, include: a detailed outline of the research paper, an annotated bibliography, literature review, data analyses, an oral presentation to an appropriate audience for the research project topic, a draft of the final research paper, a media or multi-media assignment, or another appropriate assignment(s) agreed to by the course supervisor.

### **2. Primary Research:**

Primary research is expected in ENV491Y1. **If the independent studies project course is a substitute for ENV421H1, then primary research is a requirement: see ENV421H1 syllabus at <https://www.environment.utoronto.ca/undergraduate/course-list/>.** Primary research is defined as research done to obtain data not available from academic sources such as books or journals. In the social sciences, it is usually done by such means as interviews, surveys or review of documents generated by the actors being studied. In the life or physical sciences, it involves original scientific research by the student in the field or lab.

### **3. Criteria for evaluation of assignments:**

The following are the marking criteria used by the School of the Environment for its course assignments. These may be modified somewhat to reflect the nature of the assignment. **Evaluation criteria that are significantly different than those below, must be approved by the Academic Associate Director.**

#### **GENERAL CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

The primary criteria used in evaluating written work will be:

##### **1) Mechanics:**

- Your work must be completely free of grammatical errors, spelling errors or major factual errors.
- References can be in any style but the same format must be used consistently and they must be accurate.

##### **2) Writing style:**

- Your papers should be written in a clear and unambiguous style that assists, rather than impedes, communication with the reader.
- The reader is able to understand the information presented.
- The tone used is professional and not informal.

##### **3) Organization and Structure:**

- Your written work should have a clear focus/statement of purpose, and a structure that logically flows from that focus, which can be either a research question or thesis statement, clearly stated in the introduction.
- The structure of the paper should assist the understanding of the reader by providing a readily understandable presentation of background information, research findings, analysis and conclusions.
- The structure should avoid repetition, duplication or tangential meanderings.
- The organization is logical, concise, accessible, and the ideas flow well from the statement of purpose.
- The conclusion provides an answer to your question or summarizes your argument.
- Headings provide direction but do not interrupt the flow of discussion.
- Ideas and sections are linked together.

##### **4) Information/Description:**

- You make effective use of the information and data collected throughout your discussion.
- You effectively present your research findings, which should represent diverse sources and perspectives.

##### **5) Research and Analysis:**

- You integrate evidence from diverse sources, identify themes or patterns, and draw meaningful conclusions based on your evidence.
- Your analysis should display understanding of the topic and, based on that understanding, originality of thought.
- Your conclusion displays originality of thought.

##### **6) Overall effectiveness:**

- The paper, as a whole, meets the assignment goals.  
This paper demonstrates creativity and originality!

ENV491Y1 also adhere to the Grading Policies outlined by the Faculty of Arts and Science:  
<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/newstudents/transition/academic/grading>

## **GENERAL CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

The primary criteria used in evaluating your presentations will be:

### **Presentation style:**

- the listener is able to understand the information presented
- presenters have clear voices and gesture appropriately (a practice presentation is highly recommended!)
- you make eye contact with the entire audience
- you demonstrate the ability to respond to questions and contribute to and stimulate unstructured communication
- there is a smooth transition between speakers for group presentations
- unusual terms are defined adequately
- you engage your audience with your presentation

### **Visual aids and Handouts**

- overheads and handouts are free of grammatical and spelling errors
- material used is appropriately referenced
- you appropriately balance “too much” and “not enough” information on your visual aids
- If appropriate, you make effective use of handouts to provide detailed supplementary information
- visual aids are clearly visible to the entire audience
- It may be helpful to provide the audience with a handout that contains all of the sources used in the preparation and delivery of the presentation.
- All sources are presented in one of the standard academic reference formats.

### **Organization and Structure**

- you achieve success in communicating key concepts without overwhelming the audience with too much detail
- you identify the focus of your presentation and the presentation flows logically from that focus
- the presentation avoids repetition and tangential meanderings
- you finish the presentation within your time limit and leave time for questions
- you made good use of your time without rushing at the end
- the pace of the presentation is neither too fast nor too slow

### **Analysis**

- Your analysis displays understanding of the topic
- You integrate evidence from diverse sources, identify themes or patterns, and draw meaningful conclusions based on your evidence.

### **Overall effectiveness:**

- The presentation, as a whole, meets the assignment goals.
- this presentation demonstrates creativity and originality!

#### **4. Sample Initial Course Proposal:** (adapted from an actual research project course proposal)

Date: August 7

Memo: to Academic Associate Director

From: *student name*

Re: Independent Research Proposal for ENV491Y1.

Project title / Topic:

Purpose and Goals of the Research Project

- these are briefly described

Primary and Secondary Research To Be Carried Out

- these are briefly described

Research Methods to be Used

- these are briefly described

Sources of Information

- some specific references (primary and secondary)

Supervisor(s)

- listed with his/her (their) role(s)

Course Assignment Breakdown (could include additional assignments such as an annotated bibliography or oral presentation):

1. Outline of research paper 20%
2. Primary research findings and analysis 20%
3. Final research paper 60%

#### **Assignment Descriptions:**

1. Outline of Research Paper

- will include description of the paper (subject/research question)
- will describe what theoretical literature will be reviewed
- will describe approaches to primary research
- will describe research methods

length: 5 pages

worth: 20%      due: mid-October

2. Primary Research

- will consist of primary research findings and analysis
- will be presented in memo format to supervisor

length: 5 - 10 pages

worth: 20%      due: mid-February

3. Final Research Paper

- will be in report format

length: ~30 - 50 pages

worth: 60%      due: end of winter term

**APPENDIX A: APPLICATION**

Please fill out and submit both pages of the application, along with the research project summary

**School of the Environment  
Application for ENV491Y1 Independent Studies Project Course**

Course: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Year and Session (e.g. Fall/Winter 2020-21): \_\_\_\_\_

Student Information	
Name:	Student Number:
Email:	Phone:
Reason for Course:	
Program(s) of Study:	

Supervisor Information (1)	
Name:	Dept/Association:
Email:	Phone:

Supervisor Information (2)	
Name:	Dept/Association:
Email:	Phone:

**Research Project Description:** please provide a short summary **on a separate page** (i.e. purpose and goals; primary and/or secondary research to be done; research methods used; sources of information; brief assignment descriptions) – **refer to the example in Section 4 above for completing this section!**

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
School of the Environment Approval:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Assigned: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Independent Studies Project Course Application, Page 2**

**Instructions to supervisors and evaluation criteria**

The purpose of this document is to clarify the responsibilities of a supervisor for a student undertaking an independent studies project course with the School of the Environment.

Upon agreeing to supervise this students' independent research topic, the supervisor is expected to meet with the student on a regular basis to provide guidance as required. Students must receive all grades and feedback in a timely manner, regularly throughout the term, as outlined below. Note that an initial assignment, worth at least 20% of the overall mark, needs to be handed in, marked and returned to the student, before the drop date for the course. A grade for the student must be submitted to our office by the end of the exam period in the term for which the student is registered.

You are also required to file with the School of the Environment the marking scheme below which details the methods you plan to use to evaluate the student's performance. This marking scheme should be discussed and signed by yourself and the student and filed with our office before the student will be officially registered in the course. After this point, any changes to the marking scheme must be agreed upon by both parties, and a revised copy filed with our office.

Possible methods of evaluations include: proposals, drafts, activity logs/reports, analyses of data, final paper, poster/presentation, participation/effort/initiative, etc. In a senior independent project, the final paper traditionally constitutes the majority of the final mark (40-60%). The general marking criteria to be used are listed in the ENV491Y1 course outline.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Academic Associate Director (Jessica D'eon [ug.director.env@utoronto.ca](mailto:ug.director.env@utoronto.ca) ) or the Undergraduate Student Adviser for the School of the Environment (David Powell 946-8100 or [ug.office.env@utoronto.ca](mailto:ug.office.env@utoronto.ca))

**Assignments:**

- |    |      |   |
|----|------|---|
| 1. | due: | % |
| 2. | due: | % |
| 3. | due: | % |
| 4. | due: | % |

**Student's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

**Supervisor's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

*Please note that all course marks are tentative until approved by the School of the Environment's Academic Associate Director*