General Guidelines for Undergraduate Directed Studies
Brian Lamb School of Communication

A Directed Study Experience provides students with the opportunity to work with a faculty member on a topic of special interest. Directed Studies allow students to meet individually with professors and to create their own optimal educational environments. Students must seek approval for any requested directed study credit by completing the form and submitting it and the statement described below to the Undergraduate Committee for the School of Communication. A directed studies experience cannot substitute for a required course or a course already offered on the schedule. The Undergraduate Committee recommends that students be in residence for directed studies (so they can meet regularly with their faculty advisors), but will consider situations where students will not be on campus.

To apply for Directed Studies credit at the undergraduate level (COM 49100), please complete the application form and attach a statement of purpose that has been approved by the faculty member with whom you wish to study. The faculty member should sign the attached application indicating approval of your proposal. The statement should include the following information:

1. Identify the topic that you will be investigating. Explain your interest in this topic and, if appropriate, the research questions that you will pursue. Please note why you are pursuing a directed studies experience; for example, is the course on this topic unavailable or would you like to build upon the knowledge gained in a particular course (an advanced version of a course you’ve already taken)?

2. List your learning objectives: at the end of this Directed Study, what will you understand or be able to do?

3. Provide a bibliography of those readings for which you will read as assigned by your faculty mentor. These might be the readings over which you will be tested or that you will utilize for a project. A typical reading load for undergraduates should be approximately 1-2 articles or book chapters per week.

4. Discuss your major project (which most Directed Studies include). This may be a project on which you work together with your faculty mentor, or it may be a project which you will generate as a result of your studies (e.g., a paper, a proposal, a manual, a website). Describe the goals, methods, and guiding intellectual questions for your project.

5. Explain how your faculty mentor will evaluate your work in this Directed Study: How will mastery of the subject matter be demonstrated? In what ways will you exhibit the knowledge that you have gained? Please be specific about how many assignments, how many points or what percentage of your semester grade they will be worth, etc.

6. Discuss how often you will meet with your faculty mentor: will you meet every week on a regular basis, or will meetings be arranged throughout the semester?

7. This proposal must be approved by your faculty mentor. Clearly, you will need to work with him or her to write and approve this statement before submitting it.

8. Please keep in mind that credit hours requested should be comparable to the time, effort, and educational experience required for the standard classroom. For example, the work load in a normal three-credit class is expected to be about 9 hours per week.