

Independent Study Programs

By Mary Martin

Independent study is a means to individualize education to meet the growing needs of a learning community. Canisius College has expanded its programs over the past few years to meet those needs. This study program is available throughout the school in almost every area.

The procedure behind getting involved in the program is quite simple. The student who has become interested in a particular topic not covered by his course of study, may approach a faculty member who has an expertise in the field he is interested in. Upon agreement, the professor and student work out an individual work course and requirement which is then submitted to the department head to be approved. When given the go-ahead, the student and professor work out minor details such as when and where they will meet to discuss the research being done by the student.

Completion of the course entitles the student to credit dependent upon the work involved. Most independent study programs offer three credits per course, though. Also, prerequisites for taking Independent Study are almost non-existent. Most departments, however, require that the student be at least a junior or senior because it is felt that usually it's not until the student takes upper level courses that he is able to launch out on his own particular project.

The faculty advisor of a particular course offered to the student under independent study is not paid generally because it is up to the student to do the research. The advisor merely guides the student along the way and has research done which is interesting and beneficial to him.

A taste of the variety of independent study programs offered throughout the school can be seen through a look at different departments.

In the English Department, for example, which has run the independent study program 1½ years, the student can participate in the program on a one to one basis with a professor, or he may group

with several students, as several students intend to do next semester for a Black Poetry course, which is being advised by Professors Zimmermann and Butler.

In the School of Business, Dean Kotz stated that the "Business School at Canisius has developed a tradition of very close liaison with the business community over the years." This allows the Business School to offer not only the traditional independent study course, but also gives the student the opportunity to work on real projects in the competitive business world.

Research projects under Management 400 are so diverse that as many as 30 separate independent study field projects have been run this semester outside of the annual Pinto project and the internship program which is now in its infancy. Also, if the business student wants to continue his private research for knowledge, there are follow-ups to Management 400 under the labels of Management 499, Economics 499 and Marketing 499.

For the Biology major, there are a limited number of courses that can be offered through the formal teaching curriculum. Students again, who are interested in a particular area not covered by the class, may approach a faculty member and request a private course.

Seminars, a requirement for all junior and senior biology majors, allow the student to prepare and present a topic he has chosen to the group. In this way, he carries out an independent line of research, even though it is not usually considered as the typical independent study course. For example, next semester Dr. Treanor of the Biology Department is offering a seminar consisting of a discussion centering around the works of Konrad Z. Lorenz. This is just an instance

of the wide range of seminars which are available. Also, there are research problem studies offered in botany and zoology for upper level students that follow an independent line of research. These, too, are not considered independent study because they are non-credit projects.

The Chemistry Department offers Chemistry 237 for bio-chemistry majors. This stresses the independent approach to learning via individual research and group session.

Chemistry 499, the standard independent study program, is also offered. A course suggested by Dr. Dinan, chairman of the Chemistry Department, in Organic Chemistry, will consist of directed readings assigned to a group with an emphasis on the importance of personal student involvement, an informal atmosphere and a self-assessment grading system.

The Sociology Department has devised a new twist in their Independent Study programs. Aside from Sociology 499, the standard the direction of a faculty member, there is the Field-Work Program where the "idea is really to extend the walls of the classroom into the city," according to Dr. Jarrett, department chairman. This is a work-credit program offered to sociology majors whereby the student gets credit for work done in such institutions as the Perry Housing Project and the alcoholic unit at Buffalo State Hospital.

The idea is to place the student in a tough, yet very real, situation and thereby allow him to gain a first-hand experience of the problems facing our society.

The internship program is also available within the Sociology Department; however, it, too, is a separate program.

This is just a mere sampling of the independent study and independent oriented programs available throughout the college. Independent study, as another means of learning, is an expanding factor in colleges and universities throughout the country, as it can likewise be seen throughout the various departments at Canisius.