

Independent studies with Barbara Meier

To do an independent study with me you must write a detailed proposal. Writing a proposal does not guarantee that I will advise your independent study. It is best to talk to me first before you spend a lot of time on a proposal. There are several criteria that must be met:

1. I know you as a student and you have done well.
2. I have time.
3. Your project is of interest to me and within my area of expertise.
4. Your proposal is sound and is in final approved form by the first Friday of the first week of the semester's classes.

Typically, we will iterate on the proposal several times. Over the course of the semester, depending on how things are going, you may have the opportunity to revise and update the proposal, but it must be solid from the beginning in order for you to begin the independent study. In addition to doing your proposed work, you will meet with me for 15-30 minutes each week to go over your questions and progress. Remember that this is an independent study, so while I'll try to answer your questions, you are ultimately responsible for figuring out both what to do and how to do it. If you don't show progress for more than a couple weeks in a row, I may terminate the project.

The proposal must include the following:

A. Overall goal of the work. There must be an animation-related end; "learning more Maya" or "learning zbrush" are not appropriate ends. You must include why you are interested in the project, i.e. the "greater good" of the work as in "I want to learn x and x is valuable because..." It doesn't have to be because it solves world hunger, but it should be personal and there should be thought behind it. Will you build on your work later? Is it answering your burning questions? Will it let you express something in a way you don't know how to yet? Again, I am not interested in projects that are purely technical explorations of software.

B. Deliverables - what you will create in as specific terms as you can describe including, if appropriate, length, complexity, quality.

C. A week-by-week schedule that includes the major steps, the target dates for getting them done, the method(s) you will use to achieve the steps (e.g. do tutorials, read books, research other animations, etc.) Think about this carefully by remembering how much work it is possible to do each week. Part of the independent study is to make a careful estimation of how much work is possible. I will give you a due date for your final work based on when my other students will be finished. You must be nearly finished TWO WEEKS before this so that you can polish up your work and presentation. Your schedule must indicate this "almost final" date.

D. Resources you will use: books, tutorials, animations, for example

E. Evaluation criteria. If we agree on your proposal and you do all the work and it is of high quality then evaluation is easy. But we all know that working in this medium is an exploration and I'm willing to give you some leeway in changing your scope or direction as you go. However, it is easy to get sidetracked and lost, so some of your effort must be to either stay on track or find a different productive track early enough that you can still reach your goals. "Working hard" but going no where is not okay. The evaluation criteria must be related to your goals. You may want to refer back to cs125 or cs128 assignments in which goals and evaluation

criteria were stated for each project. Your proposal will not be accepted if you have not given careful and specific consideration to this.

The proposal doesn't have to be formal, but the more thought you put into it up front, the more success you are likely to have. It is your roadmap for your project. If you think you might want to make a finished film for your project, you must demonstrate in your proposal how this will be feasible because usually it is not. Instead of an entire film, I suggest in-depth study in one or two areas with the creation of an animated scene, which can still be several shots, or a series of stills as the goal.

Independent studies are taken as CSCI 1970 Individual Independent Study. Grad students may take CSCI2980, Reading and Research for 2000-level credit. Projects for 2000-level credit should be more challenging in scope and will be evaluated to a higher standard. Each professor has a section number; mine is 28. You do not have to go through the Brown approval process for independent studies.