

**Department of Geography and Planning Special Studies/Research and Thesis Courses**  
**GPHY 501/3.0; GPHY 502/3.0; GPHY 503/6.0**  
**General Information**

These courses are intended for students who want to do an intensive study of a specific topic or research question in a self-directed study context. For admission to all 500-level courses, students must have the stated prerequisite, consent of a supervising member of the Department and permission of the Undergraduate Committee based on the submission of a proposal and consent/approval form. Students in GPHY 502/3.0 and GPHY 503/6.0 are required to file a soft-cover, bound copy of their thesis with the Department upon completion of the course. Students in GPHY 503/6.0 are normally required to present their results orally to the Department as a requirement for successful completion of the course. Students in GPHY 502/3.0 are encouraged, but not required, to do so.

Students are reminded that these courses are honours level credits. The accepted learning hours in an undergraduate course is 110 to 130 hours per 3.0 unit course. The learning hours for courses with a weight of 6.0 units would be double.

**Some of the advantages of independent study courses are:**

- provide flexibility in topic selection to match an area of interest;
- allow in-depth study of a topic when an advanced course does not exist;
- provide flexibility with respect to timetabling (i.e. no lecture schedule and there are fall, winter and fall/winter registration options);
- provide opportunity to work closely with a faculty member;
- provide possibility to work with a faculty member in established area of research;
- demonstrate ability to work independently, manage time, meet deadlines, etc.;
- provide students with a thesis or thesis-like experience in preparation for graduate studies.

**What are the Steps needed to register in a 500 level course?**

**Step 1: *Find a Supervisor***

Identify a continuing faculty member in the Department of Geography and Planning with whom to complete the independent study or thesis.

Faculty members who teach particular courses in a given area of study (e.g. physical geography, human geography, urban planning, geographic information systems) are the individuals who are most likely to supervise independent study/thesis projects in that area.

A few other relevant notes when seeing a supervisor:

- Not all faculty members are interested in supervising independent studies or theses. It is their right to make that choice.
- Most faculty members will not supervise more than two students in a given academic year.
- Faculty members can be on sabbatical for some or all of the academic year. This will

**Step 2: *Registration Process***

- Consult with your supervisor, and identify and define a topic to pursue;
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