

## Questions regarding Undergraduate Research in IRIS

### 1. What courses/majors in IRIS include/emphasize research?

The Integrative, Religious, and Intercultural Studies Department (IRIS) is home to six different academic programs. Those include: Integrative Studies (BA, BS), Religious Studies (minor), Global Communications Certificate, Leadership Certificate, Intercultural Competence Badge, and a Professional Master of Arts in Social Innovation (graduate program).

Students earning a major in Integrative Studies (BA or BS) pursue research as an integrated part of their core studies through classes like INT 301: Interdisciplinary Research Methods and INT 495: Senior Seminar/Capstone. INT 301 also meets a major requirement for students in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENS).

Undergraduate students who wish to pursue independent research projects may also do so under the supervision of a IRIS faculty member through independent research classes like INT or REL 499: Independent Research. Majors and minors can also apply credits earned through 499 courses directly toward electives within their degree programs. IRIS faculty have a strong track record of mentoring undergraduate student research through special funding opportunities like GV's Student Summer Scholars Program and kindred opportunities. We also have funding to support students pursuing degrees or certification through IRIS to travel to conferences or other venues to share out their research.

### 2. Would I receive credit for conducting research?

It depends. Some research studies are course related or could be undertaken as part of a 499 (Independent Research) course through the IRIS Department. Other opportunities such as those pursued through the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship's Student Summer Scholars Program do not earn academic credit but are supported with a stipend.

### 3. Would I receive compensation for conducting research?

Grand Valley provides a number of opportunities that provide financial support for undergraduate student research. The best source for information about funding to support undergraduate student research at GVSU is the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship: [www.gvsu.edu/ours](http://www.gvsu.edu/ours).

4. Where is the research taking place?

Undergraduate research takes place under faculty supervision at a wide variety of locations, including work conducted on multiple Grand Valley campuses (Allendale, Grand Rapids, Holland, Traverse City, and Detroit) as well as at field and archival sites located across the United States and Internationally. Depending on the type of research, projects are also often carried out using online or textual resources that students access from offsite locations or from their homes. It really depends on the type of project.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, no university sponsored travel is taking place. Through the 2020-2021 academic year, then, all undergraduate student research will be carried out remotely or with social distancing on campus. We hope to be able to resume “normal” fieldwork and research studies with community partners and at national and international field sites in Spring/Summer 2021.

5. Which professors are involved with undergraduate research?

All tenure-track faculty members in IRIS conduct research in addition to teaching and service to the university and profession. In addition, several of our affiliate faculty members also have active research projects in a variety of fields. As a broadly interdisciplinary department, this also means that IRIS faculty do many different types of research and engage undergraduate students in different ways across their work. Examples range from research with archival records, interviews and oral histories, survey and/or focus groups, and work with physical artifacts, to name just a few.

For a detailed listing of IRIS faculty members and their work, please visit the department’s website at [www.gvsu.edu/iris](http://www.gvsu.edu/iris) or consult the list of current research projects distributed at the Undergraduate Research Fair.

6. What research topics might be covered by IRIS professors?

As a broadly interdisciplinary department, IRIS faculty do work on a broad range of topics. Some examples include:

- College affordability, student debt, faculty labor, and student life
- Critical race theory and racial identity formation
- Human-environment relations, environmental politics and meanings attached to nature
- How religion and cultural shape human relationships
- Innovative technology for student-centered teaching and learning, online foreign language instruction design, and mobile language learning
- Research ethics and study design
- Women’s empowerment through sport, media and digital fan-cultures

- Transnational adoption from Asia and Asian-American representations in popular culture
- Interconnections among poetry, philosophy, and politics
- Conflict resolution
- How Latinx communities make meaning across cultural contexts through food, writing, and technology
- And much, much more!

7. Does IRIS have a website that has information on possible research opportunities?

[www.gvsu.edu/iris](http://www.gvsu.edu/iris)

8. Is there any person in the department that I can have follow up conversations with on undergraduate research?

For questions about undergraduate research opportunities or other questions about the IRIS Department and its programs, please call (616)331-8020 or email [irisdept@gvsu.edu](mailto:irisdept@gvsu.edu). You can also ask to speak directly with the IRIS Department Chair, Melanie Shell-Weiss ([shellm@gvsu.edu](mailto:shellm@gvsu.edu)).

9. What undergraduate research projects have done in the past?

Examples of some recent work by students in our programs can be accessed on the Integrative Studies Program website at [www.gvsu.edu/int](http://www.gvsu.edu/int) under Student Work and Accomplishments. Each year, students in IRIS present their work through the university's Student Scholars Day in addition to publishing co-authored papers with faculty mentors and presenting at national and international conferences. Samples of some of this work can be viewed through ScholarWorks: [https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iris\\_undergrad/](https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iris_undergrad/)

10. Are there any summer research programs in IRIS?

IRIS Department faculty participate broadly as mentors on summer research programs through the Office of Undergraduate Research. When possible, faculty also work with undergraduate students on externally funded research through organizations like the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, Wabash Center, and others.

The best source for information on summer research programs is definitely the Office of Undergraduate Research: [www.gvsu.edu/ours](http://www.gvsu.edu/ours).

11. Are there alternative research opportunities outside of GVSU?

Contact the professor who you share interests with and ask for more information.

## Questions regarding Research & Me

1. Will research be hard for undergraduates like me?

Research is difficult but it will not be that hard as you will work with professors who will guide you through the research process. So it would not be very difficult and it would be worth your while to go through one research project to understand what research truly means.

2. What skills/attributes do I need to have to do research?

Skills can be trained which is what you will get from the research experience. On your part, research interests in certain fields and patience when conducting research are necessary.

3. What are the benefits of conducting research with professors?

You can gain knowledge on research methods and skills on critical thinking, collaboration, verbal and written communication skills.

4. What could I get when I complete a research project?

Aside from the research skills mentioned above, you can enhance your resume with your publication, which can lead to further studies in graduate schools and/or better job prospects (e.g., recommendation letters from professors).

5. Where should I start with if I am interested in this?

Coming to the fair is the first step as you can talk directly to us, share your interests with us and we can take notes and make recommendations.