MEMORANDUM TO: Bread Loaf Students
FROM: Django Paris
SUBJECT: Independent Reading Projects

July 1, 2013

If you wish to undertake an Independent Reading Project (IRP) over the next academic year, 2013-14, please read the following guidelines carefully.

I also invite/encourage you to make an appointment with me this summer in Vermont or when I visit Santa Fe and Ashville (or with Emily Bartels, when she visits Oxford) to talk about your ideas and the shape of your proposal. Copies of successful proposals and reading lists are available online, in the IRP conference folder on BreadNet.

What is an Independent Reading Project?

The Independent Reading Project is a project of reading, research, and writing that you carry out on your own during the academic year and bring to completion in a Bread Loaf summer. The IRP is an extension and intensification of work in a field that you have already explored in a Bread Loaf course. Projects can be approved only if you have received a grade of A- or above in the course out of which the project grows.

The project needs to approximate a 3-credit graduate/Bread Loaf course in scope and depth and result in an essay or portfolio of roughly 30-35 pages. IRP’s can be extended essays of literary analysis or portfolios of other extended research and writing. Essays may include creative or pedagogical work, but only as an appendix to an analytic centerpiece. Members of the Bread Loaf Teachers Network (BLTN) and other students taking courses in literacy and pedagogy may use pedagogical and curricular research carried out in BLTN and/or their classrooms as the centerpiece of their IRP portfolio, though extended written work in the form of a research article or essay must also be a part of the IRP portfolio.

In all cases, projects should be grounded on a set of well-defined research objectives and complemented by a substantial reading list.

Advisors

IRPs are not correspondence courses between Bread Loaf students and faculty. Bread Loaf faculty will guide you through the conceptualization and completion of the IRP during the summer, but they are not available for consultation during the academic year. You will have two advisors during the IRP process:

- one (ordinarily the instructor from the course on which the IRP is grounded), whom you will choose and consult as you draft your proposal during the summer, and who must sign off on the final proposal before you submit it;
• one (often but not always the same) whom I will appoint when you turn in the first version of your IRP and who will guide you in bringing the project to completion during the following summer.

Submission and Approval of the Proposal

The IRP proposal will consist of:

• a detailed description (roughly 2-3 pages) of your research subject, agenda, and approach, including discussion of how the project builds on one of your Bread Loaf classes;

• a preliminary but extensive bibliography of relevant primary and secondary materials;

• the signature of a faculty advisor, approving your project design.

After you have drafted a proposal, consult with a Bread Loaf faculty member from the relevant field or course. Your advisor’s job is to make sure that the project is tenable and the bibliography adequate—not to design the project for you. Often proposals will need to be reworked at least once; do allow time. Proposals are due in the Bread Loaf office on the last Monday of class at your campus this summer (2013); they must be approved and signed by your faculty advisor. In addition to handing in the signed hardcopy, please email an electronic copy (signed or unsigned) to Sandy LeGault (Sandy_LeGault@breadnet.middlebury.edu). Late or unsigned proposals will not be accepted.

Final approval: In September, I will review all proposals—along with the evaluations from the courses on which these build. If your grade in the course relevant to the IRP is an A- or above, and if the proposal is adequately refined and detailed, you will be approved to proceed with the IRP. If your proposal needs revision, you will have an opportunity to revise and resubmit; ordinarily, revisions are due by 15 October.

Enrollment for Summer 2014 and Completion of the Project

A complete and polished (not rough) version of your project is due by April 1 of the year that you mean to complete the IRP. Send a copy of your manuscript (electronically, if possible) to Sandy LeGault at the Bread Loaf office in Vermont. You will be enrolled in the IRP for the coming summer session and charged for a course at that point. The IRP has the same cost as a single Bread Loaf course. You will need to attend a Bread Loaf campus where there is a faculty member in your field.

Once you have submitted the initial version of the IRP, I will assign you a project advisor and forward your work to her or him. You’ll receive the advisor’s comments in early May, and you will have until the first day of the summer term to revise the work and submit it to your advisor. You should then arrange to meet with your advisor and decide a course of action for the summer. IRPs usually require at least one additional round of revision before they are ready for a final grade. As with all Bread Loaf courses, your IRP grade must be a B- or better for credit.