

How Do I Declare the ISF major?

The ISF major allows a student to develop an *interdisciplinary Research Program* that consists of a **Course of Study** and a **Senior Thesis**. The Research Program and Course of Study are chosen by the student from the disciplines and departments of the social sciences and humanities. The ISF Major has a two-course prerequisite and requires students to take 6 courses (at least 20 units) in at least three different departments. The capstone experience of the major is the composition of a 30-40 page Senior Thesis on a research topic that grows out of the Course of Study and is developed in consultation with ISF faculty advisors. **This major prepares students to be world-class researchers. Students will develop research skills that are in demand and marketable in any professional or academic field of endeavor.**

Step 1:

Learn More about ISF

Pick up the ISF Student Handbook (outside 263 Evans) or access it online at the ISF website, look over the teaching interests of the ISF faculty, read about the prerequisites and requirements, and consult some of the ISF Research Fields to assist you in developing your ISF Research Program. If this unique major interests you, pick up the ISF application from Evans or on the ISF website: <http://isf.ugis.berkeley.edu/>.

Step 2:

Identify a Research Program Using the ISF Research Fields (Research Program = Course of Study Classes + Senior Thesis)

Take a look at the ISF Research Fields: <http://isf.ugis.berkeley.edu/isf-research-fields>. ISF has identified a number of Interdisciplinary Research Fields that have engendered excellent scholarship and attracted students across campus. Although ISF students may pursue other research fields identified in consultation with ISF faculty and academic advisors, these ISF Research Fields provide **models** and **resources** about scholarly interests shared by many ISF students and faculty. The title of your research program should be short and descriptive, capturing a social issue, topic, or theme that you want to investigate throughout your Course of Study and across its component disciplines. It's time to brainstorm: try out different ways of identifying your interests thematically, geographically, or historically. Think about keywords that can help crystallize your thinking. Remember: the Research Program is NOT the same thing as your Senior Thesis, nor is it a research question: its title should be descriptive and general, but accurately reflecting your interdisciplinary interests.

Step 3: Select Potential Courses for your "Course of Study" (lists of classes from at least three different departments, amounting to at least 20 units.)

Once you have chosen the topic, theme, or issue of your Research Program, consider what classes and from which departments you wish to include in your Course of Study. Which disciplines have inspired you? What classes might fit together and complement each other? Look at the list of **ISF Research Fields**: <http://isf.ugis.berkeley.edu/isf-research-fields> and become familiar with the **Townsend Center for the Humanities Course Threads Program**: <http://isf.ugis.berkeley.edu/course-threads> to help you identify your own research interests and to help you customize your own course of study. Try making lists of courses using the online Berkeley Guide from disciplines throughout the social sciences and humanities. If you're having trouble, it might be a good time to consult with the Academic Advisor in 263 Evans.

Step 4:

Meet with an ISF Faculty Advisor. Now you're ready to meet with an ISF faculty advisor, who will help you refine your Research Program and choose your Course of Study. ISF faculty advisor office hours are listed on the bulletin board outside 263 Evans or on the ISF web site: <http://ugis.ls.berkeley.edu/isf/people.php?id=3>. Questions? Turn the page over.

What classes may I take right now to check out ISF?

Answer: ISF 100A is a required course in theory and methodology based on readings of classical social theory (Marx, Weber, Foucault) that is taught every semester. It is a major requirement and meets a breadth requirement. In addition, in **fall 2017**, the following ISF courses are being offered:

- **ISF 10:** This course is a broad survey of major canonical works (“Great Books”) emphasizing the Premodern traditions of Western Civilization since the Greeks. These texts offer responses to central questions that continue to inform contemporary work in the social sciences and the humanities.
- **ISF 100H:** How have international actors used media to construct public opinion about issues such as war, terrorism and intervention, international trade and finance, global warming and resource depletion?
- **ISF 100J:** In this class, we will look at computing as a “social” phenomenon: to see it not just as a technology that transforms but to see it as a technology that has evolved, and is being put to use, in very particular ways, by particular groups of people.
- **Once you are an ISF major, there are fabulous classes like ISF 189, which provides comprehensive training in research methodology, as well as the thesis seminar, ISF 190, where you get to apply your new research skills to something that matters.**

How do I choose a research program?

Answer: Think about a current or historical **social problem** or **social issue** that’s been of interest to you. Maybe you’re curious about the causes of economic growth, the effects of new media on social and political movements, microfinance in Ghana, or a comparison of early childhood development in Japan and Sweden. Lots of students work on public health issues, on various dimensions of globalization, on technological change, and on poverty and development in the Global South. Others choose topics about the origins of consumer culture, the causes of poverty, or the mitigation of climate change. Think about some of the courses you’ve enjoyed most at Cal, and focus on the issues or topics that interested you.

Is there a deadline to declare?

Answer: The **application deadline for fall 2017 is Monday, October 2, at 5PM**. Applications may also be submitted at any time before that, but will not be reviewed by the ISF Faculty Advisory Board till after the deadline. In preparation, you should start thinking about possible topics of interest and classes you want to take. It’s best to do this before the second semester of your sophomore year so as to maximize your chances of fulfilling your ideal Course of Study, and so that you can take the required ISF courses and complete the major requirements without stress.

Have I finished one or both of the prerequisite courses?

Answer: Maybe, and if you’re already a sophomore or a transfer student, it’s quite possible. Check the approved list of courses in section 3.2 of the ISF Student Handbook or our website: <http://isf.ugis.berkeley.edu/>.