

Research Independent Study for the Child Policy Research Certificate

The certificate program requires that each student engage in an original, rigorous, and empirically sound research project of the student's choosing, with the guidance of a faculty mentor.

The goal: The objective of this project is to individualize the certificate for students by helping each focus on a specific topic and mode of inquiry. With this project, the student demonstrates independence of thought, conducts in-depth analysis of a problem facing children, and makes an original contribution to scholarship.

The work: Over the course of the semester, the student is required to develop hypotheses, test the hypotheses using the appropriate methodology, and then draw conclusions to be discussed in the context of a scholarly piece. The methods used by students will be diverse, but could include original data collection, secondary data analysis, qualitative interviews, or case studies. Given that the students represent different disciplinary backgrounds and perspectives, their projects span disciplines and methodologies. Each project culminates in a scholarly written project.

Each student is mentored by a faculty member who is identified by the student in consultation with the certificate's director. Faculty members typically come from a pool of faculty affiliated with the program, but any member of the Duke University tenure-track faculty or a regular rank faculty member may be a mentor, pending approval from the director. The faculty member is responsible for meeting regularly with the student and supervising the student's research. The certificate's director provides support for projects as needed and assists with any management issues that might arise. A list of potential child policy mentors is available [here](#).

Research topics for the independent projects have ranged across disciplines, to include: the relationship of maternal trauma to infant attachment; effects of gang presence on student behavior in middle schools; ethnic identity and youth substance use; cognitive implications of nutrition; the impact of public housing policies on children; after-school programs and academic performance; alternative designs for environmental education programs.

One avenue for completing the research independent study requirement is through completion of an honors thesis in the student's major discipline. Students wishing to pursue this avenue should consult with the certificate director.

It's important that students register for a [RESEARCH independent study](#). e.g., ChildPol 393; PubPol 393; Psych 393 or 394; Soc 393; or for the appropriate departmental honors seminar.

The application process for the certificate independent study course is described [here](#).