

Policy on offering Reading or Independent Study Courses

The Policy:

It is the policy of the Department of Computer and Information Sciences that no faculty member should give any of our regularly scheduled Computer Science courses as a reading course to any student. By "**regularly scheduled**" we mean courses that are offered on the annual or biennial schedule agreed upon by the department. Readings courses in topics seldom or never covered in our regular program, and for rarely-offered courses on our course list, are exempt from this policy.

The reasons for this policy are the following:

We have adopted this policy for reasons of fairness. Specifically, we have the following concerns.

If some students are given readings courses, then fairness requires the department to advertise the course as being available to all other students in the same format. But the department cannot afford to offer any of its regularly scheduled courses on a one-student-one-teacher basis. The department cannot favor students who aggressively seek special treatment, since other less aggressive students may have equally compelling reasons for needing such treatment.

Typically when a student takes a course by reading, no firm deadlines are imposed on the student's progress. Thus the student is allowed to set his/her own pace, which is not fair to students who must take the course in one semester and meet a sequence of course deadlines.

Since it is unlikely that a faculty member giving a reading course will lecture on a regular basis to the student, the student misses an important component of the course, which may not be compensated for by reading from a text. There is a danger then that the student will be given a pared down version of the course.

If some faculty members agree to allow students to take regularly offered courses by reading, then other faculty members feel pressured to do so out of a sense of responsibility to help share the load. Those who did agree to give such courses might feel resentment against those who did not. Also, faculty members who refused to do so might gain a reputation among students as being unsympathetic to student needs.

When confronted with an extreme hardship case of need for an exception to this policy, a faculty member should bring the student's request to other members of the department for discussion of whether an exception to the policy should be made.

Adopted February 23, 1990
Reaffirmed on August 24, 1993 and May 3, 2002
Department of Computer and Information Sciences