How do I Declare ISF?

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: http://ugis.ls.berkeley.edu/isf/resources/files/HANDBOOK-13-14.pdf. While you’re on the ISF website, look over the teaching interests of the ISF faculty, read about the prerequisites and requirements, and consult some of the sample Research Programs (Course of Study + Senior Thesis) that past ISF students have undertaken (p. 15). If you’re interested by this unique major, pick up the ISF application from Evans or on the ISF website.

**Step 2:**

Identify a Research Program (Research Program = Course of Study Classes + Senior Thesis)
The sample Research Programs can suggest possibilities, but your Research Program is your own. Its title 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? Try making lists using Berkeley’s course catalog from disciplines throughout the social sciences and humanities. Since classes listed in the catalog aren’t always offered when you want them, enlarge your list to include ten or twelve courses or more. Think about how these could fit together: in what order might you want to take them? If you’re having trouble, it might be a good time to consult with the ISF Student Academic Advisor in 263 Evans.

**Step 4:**

Meet with an ISF Faculty Advisor. Now you’re ready to meet with an ISF instructor, 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.
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 Spring 2014, the following ISF courses are offered:

- **ISF 100B**: This course explores how we understand the idea of the self in contemporary social worlds. It also satisfies major and a breadth requirement.
- **ISF 61: Moral Reasoning and Human Action**

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**: No. But 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 met the two World Civilization prerequisites for ISF?**

**Answer**: Maybe, and if you’re already a sophomore or a transfer student, it’s quite possible. Check with the Student Academic Advisor in 263 Evans. Alternatively, you could read about the types of classes that are usually approved on page 8 of the ISF Student Handbook on the bulletin board outside of 263 Evans. You can also check it out online at: http://ugis.ls.berkeley.edu/isf/resources/files/HANDBOOK-13-14.pdf