Social and Political Dimensions of Health

IPBH-3000 (3 credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Madagascar: Traditional Medicine and Health Care Systems

Course Description
The existence and practice of traditional medicine in Madagascar was not officially recognized until late 2007. This is despite the fact that traditional medicine has been practiced in Madagascar since time immemorial. The challenges brought by colonization have seriously impacted on the traditional healer and traditional medicine, diminishing their influences among societies and in effect disrupting the natural balance of coherence of mind, body and soul. The Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar introduces students to the cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts of health care in Madagascar, allowing them to understand Malagasy cultural assumptions and practices as they relate to health care. The course also explores the role of post-colonial and contemporary Malagasy politics as applied to health care policy and delivery, and introduces students to major economic activities in the formal and informal sectors as they relate to health care and access to health systems. The Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar is designed to enable students acquire a new theoretical framework and world view on the global challenges and opportunities in traditional and allopathic health care. Through lectures, discussions, educational excursions, extensive field experiences and assignments students will be encouraged to explore the course material through a constant interrogation of the theory/practice dynamic. The language of instruction is English and with lecturers made up of faculty from the Faculty of Science and Medical School of the University of Antananarivo, traditional healing specialists, non-governmental organization (NGO) officials, and local clinic practitioners.

Course Objectives
The Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar has an interdisciplinary and critical focus encompassing 45 academic hours (3 credits). Its main objectives:

- To introduce students to the cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts of health care in Madagascar
- To explore Malagasy cultural assumptions and practices, particularly those of the Merina [inhabiting the Analamanga (Antananarivo) region], with an emphasis on health care traditions and beliefs
- To examine post-colonial and contemporary Malagasy politics as applied to health care policy and delivery

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• To introduce students to major economic activities in the formal and informal sectors to position health care and access to health systems

Intended Learning Outcomes:
At the end of the program, students will be able to:
• Understand the cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts of health care in Madagascar
• Demonstrate an understanding of health care traditions and beliefs of the Malagasy based on Merina cultural assumptions and practices
• Critically discuss Malagasy health care policy and delivery as they pertain to post-colonial and contemporary Malagasy politics
• Position health care and access to health systems in Madagascar vis-à-vis the major economic activities in the formal and informal sectors in the country

Course Requirements

Readings
You are responsible for all the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear on discussions in class. The readings will help you place the classes in their context, to challenge and engage lecturers, to generate questions for class discussions and to deepen your knowledge of particular aspects discussed in class. They are not necessarily tailor-made for each and every class.

General Required Readings


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**Other readings on related topics**

As the Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar is carried out alongside and interwoven with the Healthcare Practice in Madagascar Seminar, students will be expected to complete all assigned readings for both program components.


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PLEASE NOTE: COURSE CONTENTS, LECTURERS AND READINGS MAY BE MODIFIED AS NEEDED. SHOULD ANY CHANGE OF CLASS TOPICS OR LECTURERS BE NECESSARY, STUDENTS WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar Assignments
Students are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate fully in all lectures, discussions, and additional field visits. In addition to completing the required readings, students are encouraged to read local newspapers and other media for more local context. The Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar assignments are designed for students to study, reflect upon and draw conclusions about particular issues of cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts of health care in Madagascar based on lectures, discussions, educational excursions, and extensive field experiences during the duration of the program. Grades are based on preparation and participation in all lectures, discussions, and activities; leadership of a student in discussion group; demonstrated completion of all assigned readings; the accuracy of information, quality of analysis, variety of sources, and clarity of expression for the research paper. The Academic Director assigns all grades.

Evaluation
Seminar Paper 25%
Research Paper 50%
Presentation 15%
Participation 10%

Seminar Paper
The seminar paper offers students time and space to explore the literature on a topic of their choice relevant to issues of Social and Political Dimensions of Health in Madagascar. The Seminar paper will provide conceptual basis for the Health Care Research Paper. Students will

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be encouraged to discuss the topic of the seminar paper with the AD from the start of the program.

**Traditional Medicine Research Paper**

Students will use their seminar paper as a platform to launch a research process on a topic related specifically to Traditional Medicine, and its role in Madagascar. Students will work with the AD to design and conduct research relevant to the topic.

**Presentation**

Students will prepare a short presentation to share the findings of their Traditional Medicine research papers with peers and invited guests.

**Participation**

- Assessment of a student's participation in the program is based on the following criteria:
- Attendance – promptness to all activities, and positive presence in all program environments.
- Active listening: paying attention in class/during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in class discussions: either in small or large groups sharing knowledge and information.
- Respect – positive and full interaction with host institutions, learners, SIT program affiliates, SIT staff, homestay communities, and fellow students.

**Grading Scale:** The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Criteria**

All grades assigned will take into account the students’ special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence. In terms of Class Participation, an “A” grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all Academic Seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of the students’ participation will be monitored and taken into account.

*All written assignments should be typed unless permission is given otherwise. Texts sent by e-mail will not be accepted. Make sure you have a flash drive, laptop or computer available and keep back up files so nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.*

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Program Calendar
The Social and Political Dimension of Health Care Seminar is a two and a half-week lecture series with integrated excursions. The lectures take place mainly at the Pharmacology Department, University of Antananarivo. The Seminar has three major components as follows:

A. People and Biodiversity – The Health Relationship
Students will complete an intensive set of lectures and field trips to explore the relationships between people and biodiversity in Madagascar. Field trips will include visits to local traditional medicine resource markets in Antananarivo and a visit to “Parc Botanique et Zoologie” de Tsimbazaza. Possible topics of exploration include:

- Principles of Ethnobiology
- Ethnobotany and Health
- Development and sustainability
- Biodiversity conservation and traditional medicine practice
- Sustainability of traditional medicine product use (environmental considerations)

B. Traditional Medicine of the Merina.
Students will complete an intensive set of lectures and field trips to explore traditional medicine among the Merina people of Madagascar. Field trips will include visits to Traditional Healers Centers and discussions with members of Traditional Healers Associations. Possible topics of exploration include:

- Traditional medicine and traditional healers in Malagasy society
- Medical and health care beliefs of the Merina
- Role of traditional healers in the Merina society (past and present)
- Relations between Merina traditions and traditional medicine in Madagascar

C. Political History of Madagascar.
Students will complete an intensive set of lectures and field trips to explore the political history of Madagascar with an emphasis on the development and practice of traditional medicine. The lecture series will look at the political history of Madagascar in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. The field trips will include visits to Rovas (palaces of ancient kings and queens of the Merina kingdom) and other places of historical and political importance. Possible topics of exploration include:

- Pre-colonial Period (Prior to 1894):
  - Malagasy ethnic groups and cultural commonalities
  - History of the Merina Ethnic Group
  - Hierarchy and power relations
  - Role and value of traditional medicine and traditional healers in society

- Colonial Period (1894-1960):
  - Structure of the Malagasy society in general and the Merina in particular
  - The fate of traditional medicine and traditional healers

- Post-Colonial Period (1960 till present):
  - General politics in Madagascar
  - Traditional medicine and traditional healers
  - Economic activities in urban and rural settings
  - Poverty and its relation to health care

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Student Expectations

Class Participation
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all Academic Seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.

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