



Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 Credits / 120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Cameroon: Development and Social Change

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

The culmination of the program, the four-week independent study project (ISP), offers students the opportunity to pursue a particular aspect or question relating to development and social change in Cameroon, in-depth. During ISP, students directly apply the concepts and skills of experience-based learning articulated in the Research Methods and Ethics course, the Development and Social Change seminars, and French. Orientation, homestays, educational excursions, and other experiences establish additional skills necessary for the successful completion of the Independent Study Project. The final product provides material evidence of students' capacity to implement methodologies and synthesize experiences in Cameroon. While the ISP period officially lasts for one month, students are expected to carefully manage their time throughout the rest of the semester. Topic development, initial inquiries, and project planning will all be done before the actual ISP period begins. Students can do three types of ISP: research-based, a creative project, or internship.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will:

- Synthesize field data into both a written and an oral presentation;
- Understand the importance of ethics and human relations in field research;
- Analyze information gained from primary and secondary sources;
- Practice awareness of individual time and resource management in a cross-cultural settings;

- Demonstrate competence in the processes involved in independent research, from choosing a viable topic and appropriate methodologies to final analysis, interpretation and written/oral delivery of research results.

Methods

- Conversations with the academic director (AD) regarding choice of potential ISP topics will begin during the first week of the program and continue until the beginning of the ISP period;
- From the second to the ninth week of the program, students will conduct a research project in preparation for the ISP. This project is conducted alongside the research methods and ethics classes and will help them practice and refine their research skills prior to the ISP;
- A minimum of 120 hours of independent fieldwork will be conducted (during a four week period) - fieldwork refers to hours of active data collection and analysis (i.e. interviews, observation, participant observation, note transcription, reading supplementary materials, writing, etc.) and not merely time spent in the field;
- All data will be transcribed into a field journal according to criteria presented and practiced in Research Methods and Ethics (RME);
- Students will work in conjunction with a local academic advisor (preferably a host country national);
- An oral summary will be presented to the group and invited guests upon completion of project;
- A well-documented, culturally sensitive and in-depth presentation of field study findings will be written.

Course Requirements

While the student can count on the academic director (AD) to help focus the desired study, advise about practical realities of the local situation, and assist with advisors and contacts, it is incumbent upon the student to come up with their ISP topic themselves. The Independent Study Project format allows the student flexibility and the ability to exercise individual initiative, while also promoting academic quality. In turn, the ISP paper provides the material evidence of capability in handling methodology and in synthesizing experiences in the host culture. The final project should have a clear thesis, should be fieldwork-based, and should include a clear description of ethical considerations.

You will be required to complete the following:

- 1) Four interviews with the academic director (AD) prior to the beginning of your ISP in order to discuss your topic and your research approach.
- 2) Approval by the AD and the LRB (Local Review Board) of the final project regarding possible ethical issues.
- 3) A minimum of 120 hours of fieldwork towards completion of the project.
- 4) A minimum of 10 academic bibliographical sources.

- 5) Two ISP proposals to submit before the ISP period begins.
- 6) Five (5) clean hard copies, and one electronic copy (emailed to the AD) of the final paper.
- 7) A thirty-minute oral presentation upon completion of the project.
- 8) A well-documented, sensitive presentation of field study findings following standard academic protocols. The ISP paper should be 30-40 pages.
- 9) Contact the academic director twice a week during the ISP period.

Oral Presentation

Presentation length is 20 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for questions and answers.

Evaluation of presentations includes the following criteria:

- Comportment
- Organization, clarity, and accessibility of presentation (including use of audio/visual aids or demonstrations)
- Clear explanation of ISP objectives and research questions
- Clear explanation of field strategy and implementation
- Ability to field questions and comments from the audience

ISP: Fieldwork Journal

Objectives:

- To document progress on your Independent Study Project
- To practice effective note-taking and transcription techniques

During the ISP period, you will be expected to keep a specific journal devoted entirely to recording field experiences. Some uses of the ISP Work Journal are as follows:

- Recording names and locations of contacts persons, especially possible ISP advisors and other ISP resources.
- Recording thoughts about how you want the ISP to develop, the progress of the ISP and changes or developments in plans.
- Recording interviews conducted in the field relevant to the ISP.
- Recording observations and inferences made relating to the ISP.

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

Evaluation is based on content, organization and development of perspective, analytical quality, effective processing of data gathered from primary and secondary sources, achieved objectives, narrative quality and commitment to the learning process. The evaluation of the **written ISP paper** will be based on the following:

- Development of topic and achievement of objectives

- Project definition and focus
- Methodology
- Accuracy of information
- Critical analysis and thought
- Use of information from participation, observation, interviews and other techniques
- Use of cross-cultural communication skills
- Style and expression
- Grammar and documentation

Grading

• Written ISP paper	60%
• ISP field Journal	10%
• Oral Presentation	10%
• Advisor evaluation	20%
Total	100%

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

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

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.**

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.

