



Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH 3500 (3 credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Switzerland / Global Health and Development Policy

PLEASE NOTE: We continuously develop and update our syllabi; therefore actual course content is slightly modified from semester to semester. Thus it is likely that the contents listed below will not coincide with exactly the same lectures and readings of consecutive semesters.

Description

The Research Methods & Ethics seminar (RME) provides the theoretical, conceptual, and practical tools for conducting field research in a new cultural environment. The main emphasis of the seminar is on the development of interactive research skills involving the collection of primary data. The theoretical part of the seminar includes lectures on qualitative methods of research in social sciences, international relations, and public health, interactive research techniques, and the development of a research proposal. The seminar also includes a number of practical exercises such as the organization and conduct of interviews with experts in Switzerland and Morocco, preparation of an application for review of research with Human Subjects, a local case study and the integration of interviews into a research project. The ethical implications of field research will be examined throughout. The seminar helps develop the skills necessary to navigate both the local and international institutional environments of Geneva and Rabat, the capital city of Morocco. Students undertake a number of field visits to learn the specificities of local and international cultures and institutions. The overall aim is to enable students to master experience-based learning processes and prepare them for the development of an Independent Study Project (ISP), which takes into account data gathered from primary sources.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the seminar, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of the impact of researcher's positionality on the research projects;
- Develop capability to formulate a clear research problem and question, carry out a literature review and identify relevant experts for primary data collection;
- Develop networking and organizational skills for interactive research in the local and international environments in Geneva;
- Apply qualitative research techniques such as participant observation and advanced interviewing to collect data;
- Demonstrate capacity to synthesize information gathered from primary and secondary sources and integrate it into the research project;

- Demonstrate awareness of ethical issues in the context of field research in local and cross-cultural settings, taking into account the special needs and concerns of vulnerable human subjects and focus groups, including in the area of public health;
- Produce an Independent Study Project proposal and an application for review of ISP research with Human subjects to be approved by the Local Review Board (LRB) /SIT Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Language of Instruction

The seminar is taught in English, but students will be simultaneously learning French. Students are expected to read the French press and academic articles in French related to the seminar.

Schedule

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.

Module I: Experiential Learning and Positionality / Discovering Swiss Culture and International Geneva

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in a study abroad context. Students learn how to relate to local communities and individuals. Most particularly, this module allows students to discover the power of experiential learning, and use it as a tool to connect to local communities and individuals, and develop into reflexive researchers who are attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research.

Session 1: A Historical Introduction to Geneva, its Humanitarian Tradition and International “Spirit of Peace”

A first field visit is guided by a professional historian introducing students to the ‘local and international’ history of Geneva, from the time of Reformation to present. It includes the visit of respective heritage sites of national and international importance around the old town of Geneva. At this occasion, students discover the history of the “Geneva Spirit of Peace” and learn about the city’s humanitarian tradition.

Recommended Reading:

Kuntz, Joelle. (2001). Geneva and the Call of Internationalism. A History. Genève: éditions Zoé.

Session 2: Studying in a New Environment – Swiss Culture and the ‘Arc of the Lake of Geneva’

This session introduces students to the local context of culture and custom. Students will learn about their new environment, most particularly their homestay family and -neighborhood. In this context, students will also travel to the capital city of the canton of Vaud, Lausanne, where they will visit the cathedral as well as the Olympic Museum where they explore the history of the Olympic movement and its contribution to the development of a more peaceful and health society.

Recommended Reading:

International Olympic Committee. (2017). Institutions and Governance. Retrieved from:

<http://www.olympic.org/about-ioc-institution>

United Nations. (2017). Office on Sports for Development and Peace Retrieved from:

www.un.org/wcm/content/site/sport/home

Session 3: Visit of the United Nations in Geneva and its Library

This field visit introduced students to the “Palais des Nations”, the European Headquarters of the United Nations (U.N.), which has also been the headquarters of the (former) League of Nations. They learn about the origins of the U.N. system, the current structure of the organization and the issue area covered by it. This activity includes a visit lead by professional librarians at the U.N. library to instruct students how to access its distinguished resources and research facilities on international affairs.

Recommended Reading:

United Nations. (2017). History of the United Nations Retrieved from:
<http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/history>

Session 4: Switzerland: History, Culture, and Society

Student will attend a lecture by Lt-Col Thomas Schmidt, deputy head of verification and politico-military advisor on the OSCE at the international relations division of the Swiss Armed Forces within the Federal Department of Defense, who will introduce the historical and cultural context of Swiss society, taking into account the decentralized nature of the country’s administration, it’s 3 official languages, as well as Switzerland’s long tradition of direct-democratic institutions, neutrality, and independence.

Required Reading:

Walter Kälin. (2000). Decentralized Government in Switzerland. Institute of Public Law, University of Bern.

Session 5: Switzerland: Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation

During a one-day study trip to Bern, Switzerland’s Federal capital city, during which students will visit *i.a.* the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), they will learn about Switzerland’s contribution to the alleviation of global food insecurity. Furthermore, they will also have an opportunity to visit the old city of Bern, classified UNESCO world heritage, as well as the Einstein museum and numerous arts museums, and learn more about the Switzerland’s history.

Recommended Reading:

History of Switzerland. (2010). Retrieved from: <http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch>

Session 6: LCS Project Proposal and Individual Advising Meeting

Students submit a written project proposal for their Local Case Study Paper (Local Case Study [LCS]’s proposal), upon which individual meetings with the Academic Director and the Academic Coordinator are organized with students to discuss their proposal, and to identify targeted research settings for this exercise.

A separate assignment sheet will be distributed to students on the LCS.

Module I / Assignments:

- LCS research proposal
- LCS advising sessions

Module 2: Methodology and Ethics

This module further elaborates on the technical parts of module I, focusing on the tools and methods required for conducting field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. The module will also walk the students through the preparation process of their ISP proposal, the LRB (Local Review Board) process, and the *application for review of research with human subjects* (HSR application).

Session 1: Reflections on Positionality and Representation

During this session, students reflect on their own cultural and societal positionality and ways in which it can impact their representation of the host culture. Particular attention is given to ways in which positionality shapes their research questions, relation with their research subjects, approach in data collection, data processing, and the representation of their research subjects in their final ISP.

Required reading:

Holmes, A. G. (2012). *Researcher Positionality: A consideration of its influence and place in research*. University of Hull, Centre for Educational Studies.

Description – Interpretation – Evaluation. (2003). In *Intercultural Communication Workshop SIT*. Brattleboro.

Session 2: Introduction to Research Methods and Ethics in Social Sciences and International Relations

This session provides a comprehensive introduction into qualitative research methods in social sciences and international relations. The session covers criteria in social research, theoretical, epistemological and ontological considerations in research, and further discusses values and positionality of the researcher. It provides an overview of the step by step process in developing a research project from the formulation of a research question, conducting a literature review and the selection of appropriate research methods to the selection of approaches to data collection and analysis and the formulation of conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The session provides an in-depth introduction to ethical issues in research and obligations to Human Subjects.

Required reading:

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 130-154; 380-409.

McRae, A. D. (2014). *Research Ethics*. //Website of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Canada. Retrieved from:

http://www.royalcollege.ca/portal/page/portal/rc/resources/bioethics/primers/research_ethics

World Medical Association (WMA). (1964 & multiple amendments): *Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects*. Retrieved from:

[http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html.pdf?print-media-type&footer-right=\[page\]/\[toPage\]](http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html.pdf?print-media-type&footer-right=[page]/[toPage])

Session 3: Designing a Research Project

This session provides a practical introduction on how to design and develop a research project. It involves the formulation and refinement of the research question(s), the description of the problem, preparation of a literature review with the use of critical and analytical methods and the integration of interview quotes into the research project. The session also covers the project management basics, and the preparation of a work journal and of an HSR application.

Required readings:

Silverman, D. (2005). Writing a research proposal. *Doing Qualitative Research*, 139–146. Retrieved from <http://www.uk.sagepub.com/managementresearch/Easterby-Smith%20Online%20Reading%20Links/Chapter%202/Silverman%20Doing%20Qualitative%20Research%20pp139-146.pdf>

Barakso, M., Schaffner, B., and Sabet, D. (2014). *The Research Question / Linking Theory and Inference*. In: *Understanding Political Science Research Methods*, Routledge. 36-55; 56-80.

In-class Exercise:

Students choose a topic and rehearse how to develop research questions for their ISP projects.

Session 4: Individual ISP Advising Sessions

The objective of the two individual ISP advising sessions is to allow students to discuss the ISP topic, the research question and the interactive research strategies with the Academic Director and Academic Advisor, guiding them in the process of preparation of a coherent ISP final proposal. A third, collective/group meeting with the academic director and the academic advisor will be organized during the ISP period to discuss the research progress.

Session 5: ISP Applied Methodology

This session, which takes place at the opening of the ISP period, provides an overview of the requirements to an ISP. It explains the rationale and the sequence of the theoretical and practical sessions which help develop the skills necessary for a successful design and delivery of the ISP. The session also covers the effective strategies of time management, networking strategies, and the ISP evaluation criteria. It also explains the core requirements in relation to the ISP presentations which take place at the end of the semester.

Required readings:

Bell, J. (2010). *Planning the Project*, In: *Doing Your Research Project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science* (5th ed.), Berkshire England: Open University Press.

Session 6: Mid-term review of ISP research process during ISP period

Students will meet with the Academic Director and the Academic Advisor after the 2 first weeks of the ISP research period. Students will have the opportunity to ask specific questions and exchange ideas related to interactive field research and to the overall planning and design of their project and paper.

Module 2 / Assignments:

- Workshop I: Initial ISP Proposal
- Workshop II: Final ISP proposal, submitted jointly with the Application of Review of ISP Research with Human Subjects

Applying different skills developed throughout this second module, students write an Independent Study Project final proposal, which includes a title, research question(s), description of research methodology, field research design (possible interviews) and bibliography (with a minimum of 8 sources for the final proposal). Final ISP proposals must be submitted with the application of review of ISP research with human subjects.

Module 3: Conducting Field Research on Global Health and Development Policy

This module provides a comprehensive overview of field research techniques with a particular focus on interviewing techniques and looks at the practical application of research in the field of global health and development policy. It focuses on the case of research in Geneva and the challenges of connecting with experts at international organizations and health, humanitarian, and development professionals. The module also includes two case studies: health and development in the Arab world and global governance in the field of health and development.

Session I: Field Research Techniques

This session provides an overview of qualitative field research practices, from basic interviewing to anthropological approaches such as ethnographic studies and participant observation. It also supports students in their networking strategies, and presents best practices how to contact experts in the international environment of Switzerland and Morocco.

Required readings:

Bryman, A. (2012). Interviewing in Qualitative Research. In *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 469-487.

Bryman, A. (2012). Ethnography and Participant Observation. In *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 431-453.

Session 2: Practical Approaches to Health Research

This session first provides a brief overview and introduction to the planning of a research study focused on health.

Required reading

Jacobsen, K. (2012). *Introduction to Health Research Methods. A Practical Guide*. Jones & Bartlett Learning; Sudbury MA, 1-24.

Session 3: Policy-Making on Complex Public Health Issues; Case Study: Drug Policy

The objective of this session is to illustrate how both research and policymaking that the research is supposed to inform, are often both faced with public and global health policy dilemmas complicated by economical, criminological and political dimensions, and with conflict of interests, and to stimulate study on how these multidisciplinary issues should be handled.

Required reading:

Savary, J. F., Hallam, C., & Bewley-Taylor, D. (2009). The Swiss Four Pillars Policy: An evolution from local experimentation to federal law. *The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme*.

Recommended readings:

DeSimone, J. (2002). *Determinants of Drug Injection Behavior: Economic Factors, HIV Injection Risk and Needle Exchange Programs* (No. w9350). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Session 5: Conducting Field Research in Morocco

The objective of this workshop is to allow students to share best practices and to debrief on their experiences with the Group Field Research Projects in Morocco (see also the assignments below).

Module 3 / Assignments:

- Group Field Research Project with the Integration of two Interviews during the Morocco Study Trip

Facilitated by the program advisor for Morocco, and prior to the departure to Morocco, students will split into groups and identify a topic for their respective group field research project, taking into account two corresponding experts or specialized agencies in Morocco whom they will contact and meet during the Morocco study trip. Themes may also relate to either the PGH or DPH seminars. They will compile the results of their field research in a power point presentation which they will present in Switzerland upon return from Morocco during a group debriefing session. This session will also aim at the sharing of good practices among students in carrying out field research.

- Local Case Study (LCS)

The purpose of this exercise is to document students' observations, interpretations, and evaluations of a local cultural phenomenon in its sociopolitical context. This final assignment requires students to apply different skills developed in this seminar to develop a 10-page research report which includes a minimum of 3 face to face interviews.

Student Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of the Main RME Course Assignments:

ISP final proposal: Applying different skills developed throughout this second module, students write an Independent Study Project final proposal, which includes a title, research question(s), description of research methodology, field research design (possible interviews) and bibliography (with a minimum of 8 sources for the final proposal). Final ISP proposals must be submitted with the application of review of ISP research with human subjects.

Group Field Research Project with integration of two Interviews in Morocco: Student form field research groups prior to the departure to Morocco and integrate the results of their group's respective field research into a power point which they will present upon return from the study trip to Morocco.

Local Case Study Research Report: The purpose of this exercise is to document students' observations, interpretations, and evaluations of a local cultural phenomenon in Switzerland in its sociopolitical context. This final assignment requires students to apply all the different skills developed in this seminar to develop a 10-page research report which includes a minimum of 3 face to face interviews.

Assessment:

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| • Attendance and Informed Participation | 10% |
| • ISP final proposal with Application of Review of ISP Research with Human Subjects | 30% |
| • Group Field Research Project with Integration of two Interviews in Morocco | 20% |
| • Local Case Study Research Report | 40% |

Grading Scale

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

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.