



Independent Study Project in Finance

ISPR 3000 (6 credits / 180 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:

Switzerland: Banking, Finance, and Social Responsibility

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.

Description

The Independent Study Project in Finance (ISPF) is designed to give students the opportunity to do fieldwork and design a project that carries an innovative proposition to address banking or finance issues from a social responsibility perspective. In addition to the research tools acquired in the classroom and field based participatory action, students take the research methods and ethics module and maintain regular individual meetings throughout the semester with their academic director and a local advisor. Projects may include proposals for a sustainable business, regulatory mechanisms for financial control and ethical account reporting, or approaches to tax evasion or debt forgiveness. Regular reflection and assessment meetings are held with the academic director to review the progress of the ISPF. Students are required to author and submit a final ISPF document that articulates program readings and field data into a theoretically-informed, carefully analyzed, ethically rigorous, and substantive report of their research questions, primary field research methodologies, collected data, and subsequent findings.

Learning Outcomes

The Independent Study Project in Finance course comprises 180 class hours of instruction (6 credits). Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Conduct a field-based project in finance/banking in observance of academic and professional ethics;
- Produce an ISPF that demonstrates critical thinking, intellectual flexibility, and reflective assessment of international financial institutions/systems;
- Provide an oral presentation in which they present the design of their field data;
- Show understanding of socially responsible banking/finance;
- Assess the challenges of international finance systems and alternative forms of intermediation in the European context.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Course Schedule

*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module I: Research Methods and Ethics

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. The module walks the students through the preparation process of their ISPF, the LRB (Local Review Board) process, and the application for human subjects review (HSR application).

Session 1: Positionality, Representation, and Fieldwork in Switzerland

This introductory session asks the students to reflect on their own positionality and ways in which it can impact their data collection and representation of the host culture. Particular attention is given to ways in which positionality shapes the research question, relation with the research participants, approach in data collection, data processing, and the representation of research participants in the final ISPF.

Required Reading:

Sultana, Furhaha. (2007). Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research. In *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6:3, 374-385.

Session 2: Doing Research on Finance/Banking in Switzerland

This session provides a comprehensive overview of field research techniques with a particular focus on qualitative research in a cross-cultural context and research methods in business. The focus is on research and interviewing techniques in Geneva and the challenges of connecting with professionals at banking institutions and international financial organizations.

Required Reading:

Ghauri, Pervez and Gronhaug, Kjell (2010) *Research Methods in Business Studies* (4th Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Session 3: The Ethics of Fieldwork in Finance

The session provides an in-depth introduction to ethical issues in research and obligations to human subjects. The session also introduces SIT's policy on ethics and research on human subjects.

Required Reading;

Bolt-Lee, Cynthia and Moody, Janette (2010) Highlights of Finance and Accounting Ethics Research. Retrieved from: <http://www.journalofaccountancy.com/Issues/2010/Oct/20102896.htm>

Session 4: 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 project management basics, the preparation of a work journal, and the preparation of an HSR application.

Required Reading:

Silverman, D. (2005). Writing a research proposal. *Doing Qualitative Research* (pp. 139–146).

Retrieved from: <http://www.uk.sagepub.com/managementresearch/Easterby-Smith%20Online%20Reading%20Links/Chapter%202/Silverman%20Doing%20Qualitative%20Research%20pp139-146.pdf>

Potential list of Independent Study Projects in Finance:

1. Awareness level on sustainable finance issues among bank workers and consumers
2. Profit-generating potential of ethical bank products versus classical bank products
3. Role and efficiency of multistakeholder initiatives in the field of ethical investment
4. Gaps in the existing sustainable finance regulatory system
5. Alternative ways of financing, new initiatives, and their risks (crowdfunding, etc.)

Human Subjects Review

All ISPF proposals must reflect a thoughtful and culturally-appropriate consideration of the effects of the inquiry on the participants in the project, with an eye to the highest standards of academic scholarship. Any questions or concerns that cannot be resolved at the program level (through the Local Review Board) are forwarded to SIT's Institutional Review Board for review.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

At the end of the ISPF period, students are expected to present their work to the group. Assessment of both written work and the oral presentation is based on the quality of research and academic scholarship and adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Assessment of the ISP in Finance

Assessment of the ISPF is done on the basis of SIT's assessment rubric for the Independent Study Project. The scale is as follows:

ISPF paper	80%
ISPF presentation	20%

Grading Scale

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

Student research is a product of fieldwork and, as such, students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical fieldwork, as stipulated in the SIT Statement of Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore, copies of ISPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive, copy, or convert the ISP for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archives the ISP in the permanent collection at the SIT Study Abroad local country program office and/or at any World Learning office. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad has a non-exclusive, perpetual right to store and make available, including electronic online open access, to the ISP. Students retain all ownership rights of the ISP product and retain the right to use all, or part, of the project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP form.

Academic Policies: SIT prides itself on providing students with an experientially based program; we hold ourselves, and our students, to the highest of academic standards. Students are asked to refer to the **SIT Study Abroad Handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, academic 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>.