



## Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 (4 credits / 120 class hours)

### Switzerland: International Studies in Multilateral Diplomacy

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 Independent Study Project (ISP) offers students a unique, interactive research opportunity in their field of interest in international studies. In most cases, topics of ISPs grow out of lectures, briefings and discussions from the International Security, Peace, and Stability seminar and the International Relations and Multilateral Diplomacy seminar. Students directly apply the concepts of experience-based learning and interactive research skills learned in the Research Methods and Ethics seminar. The ISP also includes a Work Journal and an Interactive Research Log that identify the design of the project as well as the stages and the completion of the interactive research. The Independent Study Project is an important part of the cross-cultural learning process during the semester. The ISP offers students the opportunity to undertake a specific and individualized independent field study that falls within the program's parameters.

The different components of the program provide sources of information and additional skills training for the topic of the study. The direction and monitoring of the students during the ISP phase reviews methods of learning as well as progress towards the finished project. The final paper, in turn, provides the material evidence of the student's capability in the handling of a given methodology.

### Course Objectives

To enable students to:

- identify, design, and implement an individual project in the various areas of international studies: international organizations, multilateral diplomacy, geopolitics, security, conflict analysis, European politics, international trade and cooperation among others;
- apply field-based study techniques;
- take advantage of the Geneva based resources in international studies;
- write an Independent Study Project that is relevant to students' careers and academic interests and demonstrates critical thinking.

## **Expected Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the ISP period, students will be able to:

- Identify, describe and analyze information relevant to their research topic;
- Acquire relevant information using language and intercultural skills learned in the program;
- Apply a relevant research methodology learned in the program;
- Discuss and reflect upon specific research issues identified in the program;
- Explain phenomena or issues relevant to their research topic;
- Write a research essay which includes primary and secondary sources;
- Undertake interviews that are focused and relevant to the research topic;
- Record relevant information.

## **Human Subjects Review**

All ISP proposals must reflect a thoughtful and culturally appropriate consideration of the effects of the student's inquiry on the participants in the project. To that end, you are required to submit an "Application for Review of Research with Human Subjects," which includes questions about any potential harm that might come from your study; appendices include interview and survey protocols. If the Academic Director believes that you have not sufficiently addressed the concerns of this policy, he/she may ask you to revise your proposal. Standards for this review are developed in country and reflect local academic practice.

If a student's research has been funded by a US government agency or if she/he plans to take this research back to his/her home school or community for further dissemination, then the student must follow more stringent standards, i.e., not only those of the host community, but also those of the Office for Human Resource Protections, with which SIT is registered. Any questions or concerns are forwarded to SIT's Institutional Review Board for review.

## **Course Methods**

Throughout the ten weeks of seminars, students identify primary and secondary sources related to the topic of their ISPs. Students meet the Academic Directors regularly to evaluate and discuss their progress of ISP research. Students contact experts working in fields related to their ISP topic and will meet such experts at various international organizations in Geneva. During the last month of the program, students work exclusively on their ISP project which includes data collection, synthesis and analysis, interactive research, interviewing experts, writing the ISP paper, writing in their work journal and interactive log, and preparing for their oral presentation. Students choose a project advisor and continue to meet with the Academic Directors throughout the ISP period.

## **Course Requirements**

1. At least three meetings with project advisor and four meetings with the Academic Directors;
2. Approximately 120 hours of field-based study that applies methods of interactive research (e.g. extensive interviews) towards completion of the project; the ISP work journal accounts for the design of the project, the time periods of research, the research locations, and the human resources/experts;
3. A 30 minute oral presentation and discussion of the ISP with a handout for the participants;
4. A 30 page (250 words/page) academic paper that includes: abstract, title page, acknowledgments, table of contents, theoretical framework of analysis, research methodology, conclusions, notes, and bibliography;
5. The original ISP paper, Work Journal and Interactive Research Log submitted to the Academic Director;

- Electronic version (disk or e-mail) of your fully formatted ISP.

### Student Evaluation and Grading Criteria

The evaluation of the ISP will be completed by the Academic Directors with critical comments and evaluation from the project advisor. Assessment of the written project and the oral presentation is based on the accuracy of information conveyed, the clarity of the presentation, the use of hand-out material, the quality of analysis and argumentation, oral expression, clarity of answers to questions and civility of interaction. Special emphasis is put on the student's ability to integrate primary sources and methods of interactive research and to present the findings in a clear, organized and well-synthesized format. The Academic Directors assign the final grade.

ISP Paper	60%
Oral Presentation	25%
Work Journal and Interactive Research Log	15%

### Grading Scales and Criteria

Grades are given both fairly and rigorously and in accordance with the system below. They will reflect a combination of absolute quality of performance, progress made, the ability to take into account and assimilate the Academic Director's and the teachers' advice in assessing the work done. An "A" letter grade reflects exceptional work, perfect combination of academic competences and personal research and analysis. It shows great ability to integrate field-based investigation and personal reflection into a structured and well argued paper. A "B" letter grade reflects serious and methodical work as well as a substantial effort at analyzing and understanding cross-cultural issues. A "C" letter grade shows the work meets the requirements but needs more in-depth reflection and personal involvement. A "D" letter grade is insufficient and clearly reflects lack of work or serious deficiencies.

#### 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 note, the syllabus, course content, lecturers, and readings may modified by the Academic Director in order to better suit the needs of the course and its participants.** Should any change of class topics or lecturers may be necessary, student will be promptly notified

**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](mailto: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>.