Critical Global Issues

Global Health
Identity and Globalization
Natural Resource Management, Biodiversity, and Environmental Policy
Post-Conflict Transformation
Social Movements, Education, and Human Rights
Sustainable Development
Global Health

SIT Study Abroad programs in global health consider diverse wellness systems by examining the strengths and limitations of competing health care delivery models. Students are challenged to consider the assumptions, practices, and perspectives associated with both traditional and allopathic health care from distinct cultural contexts.

Topics for inquiry include:

- Public health care planning and practice
- Traditional healing
- The intersections between health and development, race and ethnicity, and gender
- Infrastructure and access to health care
- Social exclusion in public health outreach programs
- Concepts of health in the host society

With a strong portfolio of health programs in diverse regions, students can choose to examine community health care projects in rural Kenya; concepts and practices of health by Candomblé healers in Brazil; or the role of pharmaceutical enterprises, international trade, and intellectual property rights concerning medicines in Switzerland.

SIT Study Abroad’s global health programs incorporate academic partnerships, community-based learning, and multidisciplinary collaboration. Students learn from educators, academics, scientists, nongovernmental organizations, community leaders, traditional healers, governmental officials, public health activists, and health care professionals.

“My experience at SIT helped me understand various aspects of health in a different setting. SIT support, especially through the Independent Study Project, enabled me to begin an exploration of Afro-Brazilian adolescents’ self-images. After my Fulbright, I aspire to establish a nonprofit organization to serve low-income African-American preteens.”

Kyasha Moore
Spelman College
2009 Fulbright Recipient
Brazil: Public Health, Race, and Human Rights

 programas

- B R A Z I L  Public Health, Race, and Human Rights
- C H I L E  Public Health, Traditional Medicine, and Community Empowerment
- K E N Y A  Health and Community Development
- M A L I  Health, Gender, and Community Empowerment
- S O U T H A F R I C A  Community Health and Social Policy
- S W I T Z E R L A N D  Global Health and Development Policy

Brazil: Public Health, Race, and Human Rights.
Staff photo by Damiana de Miranda.
Identity and Globalization

Indigenous groups, local communities, and national movements worldwide are striving for recognition and self-identification. These processes include the preservation of cultural character; the empowerment of historically marginalized groups working to protect and project their identity on a national or transnational scale; and the redefinition of national identity to reflect more accurately a country’s multicultural composition.

SIT identity and globalization programs examine the often complex roots of identity in the context of historical, sociopolitical, economic, and transnational forces. Students consider patterns of group cohesion, social splintering, empowerment, and cultural shifts as shaped by internal identity politics, regional geopolitics, and increased engagement in global networks.

Topics for inquiry include:
- Past and current disparities between ethnic groups
- Politics and ethnicity
- Migrants, refugees, and exile communities
- Multilingualism
- Religious movements
- Impact of tourism
- Evolving artistic traditions

With diverse programs in multiple locations, students can examine issues such as cultural loss, revitalization, and retention of cultural identities in Peruvian indigenous communities; Arab nationalism in the context of Tunisia; Pan-African movements and Ghanaian identity; nomadic culture, nationalist movements, and the emergence of democracy in Mongolia; or contested notions of national identity expressed in the arts of India or Bali, Indonesia.

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Natural Resource Management, Biodiversity, and Environmental Policy

Across the globe, individuals are recognizing the profound importance of understanding the natural world and its complex relationship with society. In recent years, this has included an increasingly close analysis of the links between human action locally and environmental impacts globally.

SIT Study Abroad environmental studies programs explore the relationship between environmental and resource management policies, socioeconomic objectives, and ecological realities on scales ranging from local to national to international.

Environmental components for examination include:
- Tropical rainforest ecology
- Coral reef ecology
- Protected-area management and human wildlife interface
- Community-based forest management
- Cultural beliefs and human impacts on the environment
- Comparative marine ecology
- Indigenous land rights and resources
- Cloud forest ecology
- Savanna wildlife conservation efforts
- Delta ecology and water resources management

Students learn how to collect, analyze, integrate, and report social and ecological data in selected ecosystems to understand and evaluate critical environmental issues related to the program theme. Students are expected to consider the cultural and political context of current environmental challenges, such as reforestation and erosion control in Madagascar; species diversity and commercialization of forest products in the Amazon; coral reef ecology and ecotourism on the Great Barrier Reef of Australia; or efforts to preserve forests in Tasmania. Programs also consider the transnational effects of environmental change.

AUSTRALIA Rainforest, Reef, and Cultural Ecology
AUSTRALIA Sustainability and Environmental Action
BOTSWANA Community-Based Natural Resource Management
BRAZIL Amazon Resource Management and Human Ecology
ECUADOR Comparative Ecology and Conservation
MADAGASCAR Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management
PANAMA Tropical Ecology, Marine Ecosystems, and Biodiversity Conservation
TANZANIA Wildlife Conservation and Political Ecology
TANZANIA Zanzibar—Coastal Ecology and Natural Resource Management
VIET NAM Delta Ecology and Resource Management
Post-Conflict Transformation

SIT Study Abroad programs in post-conflict transformation explore the historical, geopolitical, and social dimensions of contemporary conflicts, as well as the present-day realities facing post-conflict societies. Students examine theories of conflict and conflict transformation and also the changing foci of conflict studies in relation to factors such as economic development, immigration, and public policy.

Topics of inquiry include:
- Historical roots of conflict
- Structural violence and the state
- Mediation and negotiation techniques
- Identity politics and the peace process
- Reconciliation and development
- Nation-building and citizenship

Grounded in each program’s distinct geographical and cultural context, students can choose to explore subjects such as the anthropological and cultural composition of South African society; the short- and long-term impacts of Central American revolutionary movements from the Nicaraguan perspective; or post-socialist transformation in the Balkans.

“It really helped that we were able to see these sites firsthand because now I am able to visualize where key events took place in Irish history. It's like opening up a history textbook and instead of listening to a lecture in a classroom, you are able to jump in and take a look for yourself.”

Mina Won
George Washington University
Ireland: Transformation of Social and Political Conflict

THE BALKANS Post-Conflict Transformation in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia
IRELAND Transformation of Social and Political Conflict
NICARAGUA Revolution, Transformation, and Civil Society
SOUTH AFRICA Social and Political Transformation
UGANDA/RWANDA Post-Conflict Transformation
Social Movements, Education, and Human Rights

SIT Study Abroad programs focused on social movements examine the role of civil society and mass groups—including labor, environmental, indigenous, and gender—in relation to improved social conditions and human rights. Students consider concepts and applications of human rights, from theoretical and applied perspectives, as well as social movement theory and practices of group mobilization.

Topics of inquiry include:

- Political engagement of civil society
- Class dynamics and interactions
- Impoverishment and collective coping strategies
- Education policy and its impact on social indicators
- Civil society, human rights, and sexuality in international development
- Women’s rights and the struggle against gender-based violence
- Linkages between human rights and sustainable development
- Access to literacy, education, and justice

Students examine the diverse ways in which different social actors become involved in issues such as the acquisition of better social services, including education; cultural and land preservation efforts; and processes of democratization and enhanced legal protections.

With programs in diverse locations, students may choose to consider *quilombo* communities and liberation movements in Brazil; conditions of women in rural and urban Morocco; the history, cultural norms, and political structures shaping attitudes towards sexuality and gender in the Netherlands; or questions of ethnicity and diversity in educational systems in Chile.

ARGENTINA Social Movements and Human Rights
BRAZIL Social Justice and Sustainable Development
CHILE Comparative Education and Social Change
CHILE Cultural Identity, Social Justice, and Community Development
MOROCCO Multiculturalism and Human Rights
THE NETHERLANDS International Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender
SOUTH AFRICA Multiculturalism and Human Rights
SWITZERLAND International Studies, Multilateral Diplomacy, and Social Justice

Argentina: Social Movements and Human Rights. Photo by Anna Stressenger.
Sustainable Development

SIT Study Abroad programs in sustainable development examine current concepts and debates in international development and consider how a host of factors—both internal and global—contribute to economic and social development patterns in the host country. Students are challenged to consider the interrelated issues that determine the sustainability of development efforts aimed at different sectors and groups.

Students gain extensive exposure to vital issues in the development field such as:
- Social entrepreneurship and civil society development
- Grassroots development and social change
- International and regional trade agreements
- Formal and nonformal training
- Paradigms of international development practice
- Geography, resource use, and market accessibility
- Development in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, and child labor
- Appropriate technology and resource allocation
- Gender gaps and development
- Microfinance and entrepreneurship
- Governance and regulatory frameworks

With programs in multiple regions, SIT participants study a wide array of subjects in diverse locations. These include energy policies and diversification efforts in the Gulf; shifts in public policy to achieve alternative development paradigms in Chile; emerging patterns of social entrepreneurship in Nepal; social change and social justice in India; and localized agricultural and artist cooperatives in Uganda.

“Words cannot explain how blessed I feel for the opportunity to study in Uganda, actively immersed in the culture and witnessing the triumphs and challenges of development firsthand. Surrounded by my peers and SIT staff who pushed me academically and socially, my experience was full of unforgettable moments.”

Barbara Vi Thien Ho
University of Notre Dame
Uganda: Development Studies
Independent Study Project

The engaged, active learning of the Independent Study Project (ISP) is the culmination of the semester in most SIT Study Abroad programs.

Conducted during the program’s final month, students pursue original research on a selected subject requiring deep investigation and analysis. The academic director advises students on developing a project plan based on primary sources and in a variety of settings including community organizations, schools, government offices, and field research stations.

Based on SIT Study Abroad’s commitment to reciprocity, students are encouraged to consider how their ISP might positively impact host communities. Some projects have been used by local government ministries or have otherwise become assets to local communities.

SIT Study Abroad student ISPs, whether in the form of research papers, case studies, or artistic presentations, have led to Fulbright and Watson project topics and other longer-term research, as well as honors theses at students’ home colleges and universities.

“The Independent Study Project] tested my language skills, and made me think critically…. Many different perspectives emerged in my interviews, and I thrived on the challenge of trying to integrate them all into one paper.”

Megan McDermott
Skidmore College
Mali: Health, Gender, and Community Empowerment