

Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 credits)

Chile: Social Justice and Human Rights

This syllabus is representative of a typical 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) is designed to provide students the opportunity to study in greater depth an aspect of particular academic interest relating to the program themes: social justice and human rights. Students are required to indicate their proposed area of study as part of the admissions process. In most cases, the topic is then revised once in Chile, or a new topic emerges from the lectures, discussions, and field trips of the thematic seminar. With the assistance of the academic director, a project advisor appropriate to the topic is selected. Advisors are usually host country professors or experienced field professionals. In conducting their projects, students directly utilize the concepts and skills of field-based learning discussed in the Research Methods and Ethics seminar, language capabilities developed through formal instruction and informal practice, knowledge gained in the thematic seminar, and contacts made in the homestay or larger community setting. In the process, students hone their skills in dealing with, and learning from, the unexpected, while accomplishing a major academic project in a challenging new environment.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- *Synthesize* country-specific knowledge about the topic chosen for ISP investigation, including how the phenomenon unfolds and expresses itself in the Chilean context, how Chilean, Argentine and/or Mapuche people, professionals and officials respond to this reality and about the challenges and opportunities presented.
- *Identify* the complexities of conducting research in a cross-cultural context and the importance of using academic rigor, critical thinking, creativity, ethical considerations, and reciprocity in future research endeavors.
- *Demonstrate* awareness of how small-scale field study projects can be an excellent instrument for increasing understanding of a culture, promoting and developing critical thinking and analytical skills, and sharing acquired information with others.

Course Requirements

For study abroad students, an important part of the cross-cultural learning process is the Independent Study Project (ISP). The ISP offers students the opportunity to undertake a specific and individualized independent field study. The ISP provides access to material and human resources in Chile and facilitates greater understanding through further immersion into the host culture. The ISP topic is the fulcrum for this process. Orientation, language training, the homestay, the academic seminars and

excursions and the community organization work experience provide the information sources and additional skills and training for the study. During the direction and monitoring of the students during the ISP phase methods of learning as well as progress towards the finished project is reviewed. The final paper, in turn, provides the material evidence of capability in handling of methodology and in synthesizing experiences in the host culture.

Project should be based on field study and designed to take advantage of the unique human and material resources available in Chile. To help determine the appropriateness of your preliminary proposal, you should ask yourself the following questions:

1. Could this project be done in the U.S. (If so, inappropriate topic)
2. Does this project require extensive library research? (If so, inappropriate topic)
3. Can I reasonably expect to complete this project in the actual ISP period (actual study period = 1 month) given the limitations of time, transportation, linguistic problems, access to resources and costs? (If not inappropriate topic)
4. Will this project involve me in extensive contact with Chileans/Mapuche/Aymará and their cultures? (If so possibly an appropriate topic)
5. Could this project yield and interesting, specific insight into some aspect of Chilean culture as well as new learning skills? (If so possibly an appropriate topic)

Project Requirements

- A minimum of 90 hours of fieldwork and 30 hours of preparation work toward the completion of the ISP
- Demonstration of the implementation of field study techniques learned in the RME
- Adherence to SIT Study Abroad Policy on Ethics and the SIT Human Subjects Review Process
- Use, above all, of *primary sources* of information as opposed to restricting research to just library or web-based resources
- At the minimum, one initial meeting with the supervising AD to discuss the student's ISP proposal, followed by twice a week check-ins during the research period
- Weekly meetings with ISP advisor during the month-long ISP period
- Submission of two progress reports/drafts to AD for review (dates included below)
- A well-documented, well-written, in-depth paper or material project presenting field study findings and conclusions
- A well-prepared 20-minute oral presentation on the ISP to the group at the final evaluation.
- Distribution of paper or material project to interested individuals and agencies
- Success in meeting the established ISP deadline
- Demonstration of increased depth of understanding, analytical clarity and cross-cultural sensitivity

Final ISP Draft (electronic copy)

ISP Guidelines

ISP Written Presentation/Paper

This paper should consist of **20-25 pages (excluding references and appendices) of typed, Arial font, 1.5 spaced, text written in Spanish** (except for the abstract in English-see below). Print on **both sides of the paper** (hint: print odd pages and then even pages). While a good presentation is

expected, an inordinate amount of time or money should not be spent on decoration e.g. artwork or color photos at the expense of substance.

NOTE: The ISP is not a matter of collecting enough data to fill 20-25 pages. Remember, you're answering a research question or problem! **Be succinct!**

When writing remember to **substantiate** any opinions you offer and **differentiate** clearly between data collected and conclusions drawn from that data.

For students conducting a non-traditional ISP, see below regarding research guidelines and requirements. All ISP proposals must be approved by the supervising AD.

ISP Title

Your title must clearly reflect the focus of your study, so that someone seeing it will have a good idea of what your talk or paper is about. The title of your final paper which you hand in needs to have a “stand alone” part of no more than 50 characters including spaces and punctuation which adequately explains your study. Your SIT transcript will reflect this title, so you want it to make sense.

1. When writing remember to **substantiate** any opinions you offer and **differentiate** clearly between data collected and conclusions drawn from that data.
2. **Format:** The format of each paper will vary but must include the following (all starting on a separate page):

2.1 Title Page:

- Title (the title should be short and yet aim at indicating the content of the report as accurately as possible - you will be graded on this)
- your name
- the program for which the paper is submitted
- the semester and year
- the project advisor's name and affiliation (make it clear that s/he is the advisor and not the author and ensure that this information is correct)
- your Academic Director

a. Abstract:

Write the abstract in **English**. It is typically 2-3 paragraphs but no more than one page. This is a self contained and self-explanatory summary of the **whole paper including the research question, background, methodology, results, and any conclusions and/or recommendations reached**. It is designed to allow a potential reader to decide if there is anything of interest to them in the paper.

2.3 Table of contents and page numbers

2.4 Acknowledgments (acknowledge everyone, including organizations, who have helped you with your project, give their affiliations and, most importantly, the nature of their assistance). *Give credit where credit is due!*

2.5 Lists of figures, tables (with page numbers) **and abbreviations** (if you are using a lot of acronyms)

2.6 Introduction includes statement of problem, justification for study, a review of previous research, aims of the study, and, if needed, a definition of key terms. Your review of previous research should evaluate any differences in the findings of previous studies and how they might relate to your study

2.7 Conceptual-Referential Framework presents key concepts/theories developed by previous researchers/experts in an attempt to explain the phenomena or reality(ies) that you are researching. These concepts (or theories) can be useful as references in your field data collection and subsequent analysis. This framework also provides further context, both historically and in the present, about your research focus.

2.8 Methodology should be comprehensive enough to show that your approach to the ISP was systematic and that there was coherence between your research problem and your selected research methods. Examples of topics you should discuss in this section are:

- where and when you conducted your research.
- how you collected your data
- how you recorded information
- how you analyzed your data
- what key limitations you encountered during your study

2.9 Body of the paper is to be divided into **chapters or sections** and includes your results and a discussion of your results. **Remember to clearly differentiate between results (description) and discussion (interpretation or analysis).**

Your **results** should focus on **describing the relevant findings related to your research** (including graphs, tables and maps if appropriate). The text in this section should point out the important elements in these figures and tables but you should generally refrain from discussing the results.

Your **discussion** should put your results in the **context of previous research and conceptual or theoretical considerations** which may have been discussed in your introduction or conceptual-referential framework (e.g. do your results agree with similar studies? how do they differ?). What do your results mean in theory and in practice?

2.10 Conclusions should state explicitly how your findings relate to your study goals as detailed in the introduction (NOTE: your conclusion and introduction sections should be closely related, you will need to keep your introduction in mind when writing your conclusions and you may have to go and rewrite or edit your introduction after you have written your conclusion). Also include management recommendations and recommendations for further study. This all needs to be well argued and supported by the data you have gathered. You should refer frequently to findings detailed earlier in your paper to support your conclusions.

2.11 References should be an **alphabetical list of all sources cited in the paper**. It is useful to separate references in type of sources: books and academic papers, newspapers, web pages, interviews, observations, other.

The **reference list** should always contain the author's name, year of publication, title of text, volume and issue number if a journal, publisher, place of publication and edition.

2.12 Appendices are used for material which, though relevant to the subject, is particularly detailed or lengthy and if included in the main text would distract the reader from the main argument. If in doubt about whether to include something in the text or as an appendix, talk to the AD.

3. Technical Details: Part of your grade will be based on the technical aspects of writing a research paper.

3.1 Spelling: Use a spell checker on your computer; there is no excuse for spelling mistakes. But realize that you can't rely on a spell checker alone. Edit the paper for spelling and use a Spanish dictionary if you are not sure.

3.2 Grammar, punctuation etc. Edit your paper before making a final copy. Leave yourself adequate time to do this. Get a friend to read your paper.

3.3 Referencing: All ideas and materials that are not your own need to be cited. This is crucial. You must make clear differentiation of the different sources of data. The major features of this system that you should adhere to are:

- authors' names and dates of publication are given in parentheses in the body of the text;
- citations are listed alphabetically by author in the references section;
- the reference list includes all publications or people cited in the text. Don't include anything else, this is not a bibliography;
- choose one citation system APA

3.4 Number the sections and pages of your report. Use headings and subheadings and refer in your text to points made in other sections of your report.

4. Your paper should include, **where appropriate, maps, diagrams, tables, graphs and photos.** These can often convey a message more thoroughly and succinctly than words. They should not be included unless they directly help to illustrate a point you are trying to make. They should be referred to in the text. They should be clear, not include irrelevant data, but include attributions or sources, and explanatory captions. Maps should include all standard components. All figures should be included in the text **as close as possible** to the first reference to them.

5. You should begin the process of writing your ISP during the last week of the ISP field study period. This will involve organizing and analyzing your data and reflecting on its significance; formulating and organizing your conclusions; writing your paper in note form; making rough drafts of tables, graphs, maps etc.; reviewing relevant literature that you have not yet read. Don't leave all this to the ISP preparation week or you'll run out of time!

6. Remember **no incompletes** are possible except for serious and substantiated medical reasons.

7. Delivery format: You must produce at least **3 copies of your ISP** as follows:

- One spiral bound copy for your supervising Academic Director
- One spiral bound copy to be retained for the SIT-Chile library (for future reference use)
- One for your ISP advisor (this can be either spiral bound copy or an electronic copy). Please include a thank you note to your advisor with their copy.

Your **ISP work journal** is due at the same time as your ISP research paper.

You should not need anything in your work journal for your oral presentation. Your presentation should be a summary of your paper.

ISP Oral Presentation

1. Remember this presentation is worth **30%** of your ISP grade, so make sure you devote an appropriate amount of time to preparing for it and rehearse your talk at least once to ensure you have your timing right. The most common problem with presentations is that students spend too much time on the introduction (under no circumstances should this take any longer than 5-7 minutes and ideally should be shorter than this).
2. You have only **15 minutes** to present. This means you have to be well organized; you need to decide what the important points are that you need to get across and the evidence you need to show to support them. Don't forget to **explicitly state your research question and conclusions**.
3. There will be **5 minutes** for questions following your presentations. You will be graded on how you respond to questions and also on the quality of questions you put to other students following their presentations. Questions allow you to expand on your presentation and clarify points. It is a chance to improve your grade, so don't be defensive when answering questions.
4. You should use visual aids e.g. power point presentations, slides, samples. These should be clear and uncluttered. If using figures from your written report make sure they are big enough to be read from the back of the room.
5. You should not read from a prepared text, but a presentation outline is fine.
6. Never pass items around the audience while making your presentation.
7. Be creative and have fun!!!!

Criteria for Non-Traditional ISP

Introduction

For certain ISPs, the primary outcome may not be an extended narrative or monograph. Projects that are in creative arts, photography, theater and dance, field-based language learning, cooking/cuisine, textiles/fashion and musical performance all fall into this category.

Regardless of the category, **in addition** to the ISP creative “activity” or “product” the following criteria and conditions apply to all:

A written paper (in Spanish) that includes the following:

- ✓ Contextual issues (historical, social, cultural, political, economic, etc.) that are related to the project or within which the project was created;
- ✓ Specific project learning goals including the project's social relevance
- ✓ Description of methods and resources used and documentation of activities;
- ✓ Description of project's results/"products";
- ✓ Critical analysis/reflection of project experience including difficulties encountered and recommendations for future study.
- Guidance, direction and evaluation of an in-country advisor.

- If the student is participating in an activity as part of the ISP, this participation should be narrowly focused to the topic, e.g. set-design, acting, director, for a theater project.
- A bibliography and/or resource list.
- Some projects in this category may require the prior approval of the students' home university if the student expects to get credit.
- Consideration should be given to special materials, expenses and travel which such project often necessitate.
- The length of the written paper will be negotiated with the Academic Director prior to the beginning of the ISP period.

The following suggests procedures to define and set criteria for ISPs in these categories:

Short stories poetry or other literary narrative

The final project should be a broad sampling of writings, which reflect the values particular cultural behavior, topography, and "local color" of the host country based on the students' observations and experience in that culture. A part or all of the paper might be written in the host language.

Photography

As a monograph ISP, a preliminary outline of the study should be submitted to the Academic Directors. Again, there should be a broad sampling of photos. Other criteria should include:

- ✓ Clear labeling of photos.
- ✓ The photos should have a thematic presentation; a "photo-essay"
- ✓ The photos should reflect a depth of engagement and experience in the host culture.
- ✓ A written explanation should accompany the photos as a summary.

Music

Musical compositions should again be peculiar to the styles of the host culture. There should be an ample sampling not just a single song. Songs could be written in the lost language. The student should arrange for the music to be performed and recorded for final presentation and as an archive (see Dance and Theater above).

Film

The film should be focused on a single topic in the host culture, e.g. village festivals. It should be accompanied by a script. A series of touristy moving photos do not constitute a film. Is there ample time in ISP period for student to make an adequate short film? Can the student sustain the expense of making a film? Is there adequate equipment available? Will the process of filming offend cultural norms in the host culture?

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

• Evaluation of Written Work (70%)

This will be graded on the following criteria:

- ✓ Introduction to research topic and clarity of research question/problem
- ✓ Methodology, including limitations
- ✓ Theoretical, conceptual and/or contextual framework
- ✓ Quality, accuracy and completeness of information gathered in fieldwork
- ✓ Depth of analysis
- ✓ Conclusions and recommendations

• Evaluation of Oral Presentation (30%)

This will be graded on the following criteria:

- ✓ Discussion of general context of research topic and research problem/question
- ✓ Discussion of methodology (including limitations)
- ✓ Discussion of research findings and analysis
- ✓ Discussion of conclusions (and recommendations if there were any)
- ✓ Presentation:
 - Quality of expression and communication
 - Audiovisual support in presentation

**** Be sure to manage your Independent Study Project time well so that you meet all deadlines.. Please remember that late ISPs will not be accepted unless there is a very serious and substantiated medical or emergency reason and prior approval by supervising AD. **Late ISPs without prior approval will be graded down 5 points per day late.** Excuses about formatting problems or printing problems will be not accepted as a reason for not submitting your work on time. It is an integral part of the ISP that you should leave yourself sufficient time to write, edit and print your ISP, so please do allow yourself some contingency time in the case of problems. If you do experience a technical emergency, do not hesitate to call so that we can help find a quick and appropriate solution to your problems.**

Grading Scale: The grading scale for ISPR 3000 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 the ISP, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual and/or historical evidence and evidence of cross-cultural sensitivity.

Student research (Independent Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, 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 may archive ISPs 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 my project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP form.

If the research has been funded by a U.S. government agency, or if the student plans to take this research back to the home school or community for further dissemination, then the student may be required to follow standards from their home institutions in addition to the Local Review Board and those of the Office for Human Research Protections, with which SIT is registered. For applications that require a full review, the academic director will forward any questions or concerns that cannot be resolved at the program level (through the Local Review Board) to SIT's Institutional Review Board.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.