

## Private Startups and Public Interest I (Online)

AFRS-3000 (3 credits)

### Business in Ghana: Private Startups and Public Interest

*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

Ghana has always been open for business: from indigenous traders to contemporary entrepreneurs, the country boasts of vibrant endeavors from people whose actions enhance the socio-economic pulse of the country. Entrepreneurs in particular bolster the formal economy and have an effect on public discourse as is shaped by traditional and social media. Media outlets such as private radio and television stations, as well as social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram on the other hand provide avenues for advertisement and audience engagement for startups. In a country where internet access is rapidly expanding, these situations have a tremendous effect on the changing landscape of the country.

This course will take place online, with the purpose of providing a window through which students will explore the digital footprints made by entrepreneurs and key players in the media sector. As a foundational course for the in-country equivalent, this offering is focused on providing contextual information to prepare the student for physical immersion into urban Ghanaian society. Through online interviews, browsing, and social media-based activities, students will interact with the principal actors in Ghana's media and business spaces. Students will also be paired with Ghana-based students to perform comparative analyses of different aspects of American and Ghanaian culture.

#### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Familiarize themselves with major Ghanaian social and traditional media content generators;
- Identify the digital strategies that private startups use to engage audience in Ghana;
- Illustrate the general the relationship between startups and public advocacy; and
- Produce a solution to a communication problem online.

#### Language of Instruction

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

### **Instructional Methods**

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of *a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

### **Required Texts**

Bokor, M. J. (2015). New media and democratization in Ghana: An impetus for political activism. *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1-16.

Hartman, S. (2008). *Lose your mother: A journey along the Atlantic slave Route*. Macmillan.

Plockey, F. D. D. (2015). Indigenous Knowledge Production, Digital Media and Academic Libraries in Ghana. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 8(4), 32-44.

Willems, W., & Mano, W. (Eds.). (2016). *Everyday media culture in Africa: Audiences and users*. Taylor & Francis.

Additional readings and articles as assigned.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

#### Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

##### 1) What is Ghana/Africa to You? (20%)

Through different digital platforms and social media spaces, students will do research on Ghana and Africa by researching into the ways in which Ghanaian media houses present on the country in particular and the continent in general. Further details for this assignment will be covered in class.

##### 2) Website Case Studies (20%)

Each student will browse through a major Ghanaian website to ascertain the structure that underpins the workings of the website. This report will involve critique of the ease of access, implication of design choices, content placement, and audience engagement, among other parameters.

### 3) Research Paper on Startups and Public Advocacy (30%)

Working on this assignment will be a cumulative process ending in an 8-10 page paper. Students have wide latitude regarding the topic and research approach for this paper. For instance, students may choose to discuss their topic or research question through online communication with business owners or entrepreneurs working in Accra; alternatively, students can decide on a public-interest topic related to health, education, sports, gender, development, etc). The research paper must be submitted on time during the final week. Unexcused late papers will be reduced one grade (e.g. A becomes B) for each late day.

### 4) Final Presentation (20%)

Students will present their research at the end of term via a combination of audio-visual resources. This presentation should last for 6-8 minutes and will be expanded further in a separate handout borne out of student discussion.

### 5) Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, and discussions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and fellow students

### Assessment

What is Ghana to You? (20%)

Website Case Studies (20%)

Research Paper on Startups and Public Advocacy (30%)

Final Presentation (20%)

Participation (10%)

### Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

### Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the

culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

### 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

### **Program Expectations**

- 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.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Moodle. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the

course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.

- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Classroom recording policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

## **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.