

South Africa: Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 credits)

South Africa: Identity, Multiculturalism, and Social Political Transformation

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

This course is designed as a combination of theoretical, practical, and reflexive engagement with what it means to be doing academic research as an American undergraduate student in South Africa. It is nested within and related to the other streams of the semester programs including orientation, academic seminars, assignments, and your own experience.

The design of the course is drawn from the Community Development Resource Action's (CDRA) Action Learning Cycle which defines learning as: "A continuous cycle – the end of each learning cycle becomes the beginning of the next cycle." We will start at the 'reflection' phase, using key readings from postcolonial theory to introduce you to critical thinking around issues of ethics, power, positionality, and reflexivity. Seminars will be structured around drawing lessons from reflecting on your experience in relation to these readings. Then more practical readings will help you think through tentative planning for your site visits, where you will put into action some of the things you have been learning. You will then return and present your findings to the group, followed by reflection in order to learn from your experiences before planning and taking your next action an iterative learning cycle. This cycle builds to include the readings, seminars, site visits, one-on-one mentoring sessions, journaling, local review board processes, interaction with your ISP supervisor, and skills-based workshops. Different methods will be used in the seminars to encourage participation and sharing.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Use the one-month mentored research project on a chosen topic in South Africa as a learning experience;
- Apply ethical research norms to a chosen methodology and think critically and reflexively during the research process;
- Consider broader ethical issues and responsibilities from a post-colonial and reflexive perspective in the context of conducting a research project in South Africa;
- Design a research topic for study, refine its scope, execute it, and produce a substantial document based on four weeks of field experience.

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 research methods and ethics in South African context.

Instructional Methods

In class activities and excursions.

Required Texts

Hall, Stuart (1992). 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power' in Hall, S. & Giebens, B. (Eds.) *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge and Oxford. Polity Press and Blackwell: 185-227.

Batchelder, D. (1993). *The green banana. Beyond Experience: The experiential approach to cross-cultural education*, 2nd ed. Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Meeting Qualitative Enquiry in Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Kapoor, I. (2004). Hyper-self-reflexive development? Spivak on representing the Third World 'Other'. *Third World Quarterly*, 25(4): 627-647.

Njambi, W. N. (2004). Dualisms and female bodies in representations of African female circumcision A feminist critiques. *Feminist Theory*, 5(3): 281-303.

Racine, L. (2003). Implementing a postcolonial feminist perspective in nursing research related to non-Western populations. *Nursing inquiry*. 10(2): 91-102.

Additional readings and articles as assigned.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) First Impressions (10%)

Write a letter to yourself on your first impressions of South Africa since your arrival. You should confine your impressions to the first two weeks of your time in South Africa. You will not be marked on the content of the letter; your completion of the exercise will give you a pass/fail grade.

2) Journaling (30%)

You are required to keep a research journal on the following:

Seminars & Readings: Keep notes on your thoughts on the readings to assist you in contributing to class. Feel free to make these notes on the hard copies.

School & NGO visits: Use your journal as a place to keep 'field notes' – observations, your own responses and reactions, and thoughts about the process.

Johannesburg travel: Keep notes on what you are observing and learning, and reflexively think about how your own position is influencing, how you as an individual are making meaning, and how the group is making meaning to what they observe.

3) Interview Report (50%)

The interview practice is your extended experiential experience outside our core group. Among other things it is an opportunity for you to put into practice all that you have learned, so far, about primary research. In Cape Town you will determine a question to be answered. Due to the limits of time and potential language barriers, along with considerations drawn from the postcolonial critical reflexive lens, please ensure that you do not write as though you are discovering or uncovering the truth, your findings represent the community of Cape Town as a whole or some imagined entity called 'South Africa culture.' Rather ensure you are clear that you are exploring the subjective opinions of a few residents and/or your own subjective observations. Ensure you try and follow Spivak's (in Kapoor) injunctions for mediating your complicity in the research process.

Some topic areas for the interview report you may want to consider:

The geography of the city you're living in: Layout of the area, relationship of buildings and housing, significance of this vegetation, geography-principal physical features: rivers, roads, fields, sacred sites, tombs. The "center of the universe" consideration for Cape Town residents (look back at "The Green Banana").

Cultural Environment: Name of the community and meaning of the name; important people; places of interest; taboos, rituals, spirituality, religion. (Recording children's games. Music: on phones, in a church, local songs, traditional songs).

People: Family structure; population: age breakdown, gender representations, ethnic groups (Are there only isiXhosa speakers living here?), Gender roles (What is the process of getting married?) Traditional and current value systems. (How do clan names work?)

Economy: Primary occupations, economic indicators (expressions of wealth), organization of economic system: types of markets, goods available, external trade jobs/labor; sources of labor; available technologies.

Ecology: Waste disposal (water, household trash. What was in the trash in the home environment you stayed in and what happened to it?); natural resources of the area; water sources and value; relationship of people to the environment.

Communication and transportation: Information dissemination in the community; access to outside information; primary transportation means, frequency of use, value placed on transportation means. (What happens in emergencies? What does the government provide?)

Social: Community groups and organizations; special events or activities - what, when, who, where, why; leisure activities, sports, concept of "fun".

Interview report structure and word count.

Use the ISP structure to write up your report, combining the literature review and methodology section, and ensuring that you demonstrate the critical reading and application of the RM&E readings, citing at least two RM&E readings, and one reading from the Xhosa Identities module of the Narratives of Identity and Social Change section.

Word Count Limit: minimum 3000 words, maximum 4500 words. Assessment

This paper is a 'practice' paper for your ISP and will be graded as a learning exercise. Your paper will be marked for clarity (the quality of your writing and communication), consistency (do you keep to your topic, explain yourself well) and coherence i.e. what have you asked as your central research question, how have you gone about gathering information to answer it (methodology / literature review), what are your findings, what do they tell you about your question. Particular attention will be paid to your relational and pragmatic ethics, and your reflexivity.

4) Participation (10%)

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

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during virtual 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 classes and discussions
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

First Impressions – 10 %

Journaling – 30 %

Interview Report – 50 %

Participation - 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in 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 site virtual 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.

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

- Attendance: promptness to class, and positive presence in class.
- Active listening: paying attention in class/during virtual excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in class discussions: either in small or large groups sharing knowledge and information.
- Group accountability: participates as part of a group during virtual excursions and classes.
- Respect: culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities
- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed, where assigned, 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 and done accordingly to the specified requirements. All the assignments will be evaluated according to the fulfillment of

instructions, organization, analytic quality, depth, argumentation, and evidence presentation.

- Ask questions in class, not for the sake of questions or demonstrating your engagement, rather for clarification, to satisfy your curiosity, to expand your understanding.
- Comply with academic integrity policies. No plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical.
- Respect differences of opinion. This includes the opinions of classmates, lecturers, and local constituents that you interact with during 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..
- 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. To the extent possible, we 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 your Academic Director and/or seek help from our counseling services.

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), 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.

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 1: Postcolonial Lenses, Ethics, Power, Positionality, and Reflexivity

This module includes an introduction to the course and the themes of the course. Evaluation of student research experience and intentions (Social Analysis, Creative ISP's or Internships). Introduction to the distinction between relational and practical ethics (with some clear SIT guidelines for unsuitable research subjects). Thinking about relational ethics and how

to mediate power during research and academic knowledge production, and participation in 'development' initiatives or NGOs.

Module 2: Thinking About Research & Internships in Action

Thinking about research methodologies and internships. Preparing for schools visit and participant observation exercise. First taste of 'pragmatic ethics' – Students are required to read and sign a 'Statement of Ethics' before they start any fieldwork.

Module 3: Putting Research Methods and Ethics into Practice

Students will write an interview project into a mini-ISP (training in practice and format). They will have two weeks until the ISP proposal is due. Student might start thinking about refining their ISP topic at this stage and will have an opportunity to informally engage as a group.