Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Australia: Sustainability and Environmental Action

Introduction

Research Methods and Ethics (RME) provides conceptual preparation and skill development for all other program components. Beginning with sessions during orientation week, and continuing throughout the semester, Research Methods and Ethics provides the skills and fosters the ability to observe, interpret, and appropriately function within the Australian environment. This is initially done through a series of discussions designed to break down stereotypes and sensitize students to the values assigned to behaviors and customs based on each individual’s cultural heritage. Later, projects and discussions will focus on various methods of field research to prepare students for the Independent Study Project. The Course is divided into four modules:

1. Cultural Comparison
2. Introduction to the Independent Study Project
3. Research Methods & Ethics
4. Developing a Research Proposal

The objectives and learning outcomes for the course and each of the modules are outlined below.

Course Objectives

1. To introduce field based learning.
2. To encourage analysis of varied social and cultural settings with objectivity and sensitivity.
3. To give students an understanding of the cultural differences between Australia and the United States.
4. To develop attitudes, work habits, methodologies, and techniques essential to the successful completion of field study in general, and the ISP specifically.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

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• Recognize a wide range of field study methods and their appropriate uses
• Compare Australian and North American cultures
• Apply an appropriate selection of research methods to a specific topic
• Employ cultural sensitivity and an appropriate ethical stance in field study
• Appraise previous research and literature on a topic of interest and reference it appropriately
• Design an independent study project and write a project proposal
• Evaluate the success of previous ISP projects and their reports
• Demonstrate a positive attitude towards the independent study process including a willingness to ‘not know’
• Demonstrate increased confidence to engage with another culture

‘Cultural Comparison’ Module Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:
1. Compare Australian and North American cultures
2. Integrate a cultural sensitivity to an Australian context into their independent study project
3. Appraise the effects of this cross-cultural experience on their personal identity and sense of place

‘Introducing the Independent Study Project’ Module Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:
1. Outline three possible models of an ISP
2. Discuss the different expectations that ISP advisors and students have of one another
3. Articulate their personal and academic learning goals for their ISP
4. Develop a suitable ISP topic
5. Maintain an ISP work journal throughout the semester
6. Evaluate the success of previous ISP projects and their reports

‘Research Methods & Ethics’ Module Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:
1. Explain SIT’s Human Subjects Review policy and the role of the Local Review Board
2. Employ appropriate ethical standards in field based learning
3. Recognize a wide range of field study methods and their appropriate uses
4. Explain the basic procedures of sampling appropriate to an ISP context
5. Employ observational and indirect methods of research where appropriate
6. Design an effective survey
7. Conduct an effective interview
8. Analyze qualitative and quantitative data Employ effective written data presentation and oral presentation techniques Evaluate the success of research methods they have used

‘Developing a Research Proposal’ Module Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:
1. Recall details of a standard method of referencing
2. Identify a range of sources of academic and applied literature relevant to their ISP
3. Structure their thoughts and arguments
4. Apply an appropriate selection of research methods to a topic of particular interest
5. Integrate previous literature and research with original ideas and reference appropriately
6. Write an ISP project proposal
7. Assess the accuracy of spelling, grammar and thought structure of written work prior to submitting to ISP advisors

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Assessment

1. ISP Critique 5%
2. Choose 2 of the following 4 exercises in research methods: 20%
   a. Survey Exercise
   b. Intensive Interviewing Exercise
   c. Content Analysis Exercise
   d. Observation Exercise
3. ISP Proposal 25%
4. ISP Work 25%
5. Participation 10%
6. Reflection on the ISP process 15%

Requirements

You are expected to attend and fully participate in all class sessions. You must submit all assigned work. You should familiarize yourself with the policies on academic integrity, ethics, academic warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process that are contained in the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook. See the grading policy in the appendices of the program handbook.

Participation Grade:

This element will comprise 10% of your Research Methods and Ethics grade. The objective of this element of assessment is to give students credit for the ability and the effort made to independently undertake the Study Project in an ethical and culturally appropriate manner, and the effort made to engage Australian culture throughout the semester. An important element of the grading will be how well students adhered to the guidelines on keeping in contact with program staff and advisor during the ISP period. Students will be graded based on what the AD has observed, what has been reported by the ISP advisor and homestay family, and the evidence contained in the ISP journal and report. The following will be considered in determining the grade:

- Did the student take steps to engage Australian culture away from the group?
- Did the student make the most of the opportunities for cultural immersion offered by your homestay?
- To what extent did the student use initiative in developing an ISP topic and establishing contacts in a timely manner?
- Did the student maintain an appropriate attitude throughout the process (e.g. did he/she accept the limitations placed by SIT on ISP topics? Did he/she deal well with adversity during the ISP process? Did he/she display cultural sensitivity when necessary? Did he/she follow the ethics guidelines)
- Did the student turn up on time for all classes and ISP appointments?
- Did the student fill out the ethics and contact forms correctly and submit them on time?
- Did the student put the appropriate amount of effort into the ISP?
- Did the student provide the Advisor or the organization worked with a copy of the paper and the data needed from the ISP?
- Did the student keep the required contact with program staff during the ISP, submit all information on time and keep them informed of his/her whereabouts?
- Did the student fulfill their obligations to the ISP advisor?

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Weekly Schedule

Week 1
Discussions: How to minimize environmental and social impact while studying in Australia
- Cultural stereotypes and expectations of Australians
- Australians’ stereotypes and expectations of Americans
Lectures: What is an ISP?

Week 2
Discussion: Preparation for Homestays: cultural practices in Australian homes
Lectures: Keeping an ISP Work Journal
- Developing ISP topics

Week 3
Lectures: Expectations of Advisors
- Introduction to research methods
- The Interview Process
- Sampling a Population
- Developing and conducting a survey
- Indirect and Observational Methods of Data Collection
- Analyzing and displaying data
Discussion: Homestay – Cultural differences, sense of place, environmental ethics.

Week 4
Lectures: Research Ethics
- Library Skills

Week 8
Lectures: Proposal Writing
- Reviewing the Literature
- Referencing

Week 9
Lectures: Report Writing

Week 15
Discussion: What have we learnt about culture, the USA, and us?

Readings


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