Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Peru: Indigenous Peoples and Globalization

Course Description
This course on Research Methods and Ethics (RME) is the cornerstone of the semester. The course will provide the necessary conceptual and methodological tools for the formulation and development of fieldwork (Independent Study Project, ISP) in Peru. The RME course seeks to integrate academic and cultural learning with the fieldwork that the students will develop.

This course also seeks to encourage students to engage in critical reflection on what permits one to live and study in a culture so distinctly different from their own. This intercultural competency is expected to develop throughout the various experiences and exchanges of the program, and is an essential element in developing the ISP.

Emphasis will be placed on fieldwork and developing tools such as participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews and mapping. The course will also address the ethical dimensions of research from an intercultural perspective. Another important aspect of the course is support in designing the ISP from the formulation of the research problem, to planning and implementation of the research and finally analysis of field research data.

Course Objectives
The main objectives of this course are:

- To provide basic tools for field research: participant observation, interviews and mapping
- To instill in students the importance of ethical considerations when designing and carrying out research
- To familiarize students with the use of field notes
- To provide spaces for intercultural reflection in class discussions as well as in field excursions and daily student life
- To provide space for reflection on the complex dimension of ethics in fieldwork

*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.
Expected Outcomes
By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:

- Define and implement methodological tools that will enable the student to gather appropriate data for their field research
- Design an ethically sound and culturally appropriate research project within the local context
- Identify salient research topics and develop appropriate research questions
- Demonstrate awareness of the importance of ethical consideration in conducting fieldwork/research

Course Content & Program Calendar

**RME 1: Location: Urubamba**
Reflection on stereotypes of indigenous people.
Who is an indigenous person? *Indio, cholo, nativo, campesino, mestizo, blanco.*
The ethical component of a socio-cultural investigation
Debriefing.

**RME 2: Location: Cusco**
Developing intercultural sensitivity
How to observe change: Acculturation and adaptive change processes

The ISP / Defining topics of investigation
Bibliographic research / Tool: Bibliographic cards

The central question as a foundation for methodology
Sources of research: primary, secondary

**RME 3: Location: Cusco**
Preparation of ISP:
Types of research (exploratory, descriptive, explanatory)

Elements of a research proposal
Importance of the justification of the topic

General introduction to basic research techniques
Sociocultural: Participant observation, interviews (key informants / focus group),
Life histories, polls/surveys, timelines

**RME 4: Location: Cusco**
Research technique: Participant Observation
Decription, Interpretation, Evaluation
Observe vs. Judge / Listening to the exterior Other
Research tool: Fieldnotes
Research tool: Working with a field journal

Research technique: Interviews with key informants / Focus group

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Research tool: Interview guide
*Preparation for excursion to Iquitos and Native Communities (CCNN)*

RME 5: Location: Communities of Yarina and 20 de Enero
Interviews in an intercultural context
Debriefing: Reflection/Impressions about the Amazonian world
Interview preparation, refining ethical criteria

RME 6: Location: Communities of Yarina and 20 de Enero
Debriefing community visits and interviews

RME 7: Location: Lima
ISP Preparation: Revising polls/surveys from the jungle
Introduction to indigenous communities in the city. Resistance and acculturation

RME 8: Location: Lima
Research technique: Life histories and interviews (individuals and with key informants)
Introduction to IRB
Debriefing experiences and perceptions of Lima

RME 9: Location: Cusco
ISP Preparation: Theoretical-conceptual frameworks / Methodological frameworks
Reviewing examples
Debriefing.
*Preparation for excursion to Colca.*

RME 10: Location: Cusco
ISP Preparation: Data analysis. Review of examples.
How to write up a research paper
Debriefing.

RME 11: Location: Colca
Organization of research groups
Distribution of students for community stays
Preparation of interview guides for Colca

RME 12: Location: Arequipa
Debriefing applied resaerch from Colca
Discussion of progress and ethical aspects of research proposals

RME Final: Location: Cusco
Submission of research proposal and executive summary for IRB
Submission of Field Diary
Forms: contact, ISP location, etc.
Final consultation prior to ISP

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The Academic Director and Program Coordinator will meet with students individually to strengthen the student’s RME learning experience as well as to assist students in defining their ISP topic and advisor.

Course Requirements
Readings
You are responsible for all the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear on discussions in class. The readings will help you place the classes in their context, to challenge and engage lecturers, to generate questions for class discussions and to deepen your knowledge of particular aspects discussed in class. They are not necessarily tailor-made for each and every class.


Student Evaluation and Grading Criteria
Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three exercises</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Exercise 1: Interview Guide for the Jungle
Exercise 2: Submission of interview transcriptions and of ethical procedures applied in the jungle
Exercise 3: Oral group presentation of results from Colca

Grading Scales and Criteria
Grades are given both fairly and rigorously and in accordance with the system below. They will reflect a combination of absolute quality of performance, progress made, the ability to take into account and assimilate the Academic Director’s and the teachers’ advice in assessing the work done. An “A” letter grade reflects exceptional work, perfect combination of academic competences and personal research and analysis. It shows great ability to integrate field-based investigation and personal reflection into a structured and well argued paper. A “B” letter grade reflects serious and methodical work as well as a substantial effort at analyzing and understanding cross-cultural issues. A “C” letter grade shows the work meets the requirements but needs more in-depth reflection and personal involvement. A “D” letter grade is insufficient and clearly reflects lack of work or serious deficiencies.

The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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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

Please see the SIT Study Abroad student handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, academic warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

Please Note: Course content, lecturers, and readings may be modified as needed. Should any change of class topics or lecturers be necessary, students will be promptly notified.