Course Description
The Research Methods & Ethics Seminar (RME) provides the theoretical, conceptual and practical tools for conducting field research in Switzerland and Morocco. The course also includes several field studies into which the student can apply and use the concepts learned in class. The course will help students to learn and adapt to different cultures and environments. Thus, emphasis is placed on grappling with cultural differences, as well as on identifying cultural similarities.

The focus is to strengthen interactive research skills and methods, such as exploring cultural and professional environments, conducting background research, developing contacts and finding resources, developing skills in observation and interviewing, applying field study ethics, gathering, organizing data and maintaining a field work journal. The ethical implications and consequences of observations, interviews and field work journal assignments are examined and discussed throughout.

The concepts and skills developed in the seminar underlie and reinforce all other program requirements and link directly to the Independent Study Project.

Course Objectives
This course will help students to:

- function in different cultures and environments;
- become familiar with some of the standard methodologies used in the social sciences, including in-depth interviewing, participant and non-participant observation;
- consider ethical issues in the context of field research in another culture;
- develop an understanding of the contextual opportunities and limitations for their Independent Study Project;
- see how the knowledge and skills acquired may be applied in the students’ own cultural and geographic context.

*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 Learning Outcomes
At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- make use of the proper methodologies for cross-cultural research in the field of global health and development policy
- gather, analyze and interpret information from a range of sources
- discern and deal with ethical questions that may arise in intercultural settings
- identify and make use of culture bound local resources
- assess their own culture and deal with people from other cultures in later life
- Write a research essay which includes primary and secondary sources

Course Activities
Activities will include lectures, case studies, briefings at international organization and NGOs and class discussions, assignments and presentations. Activities of the three modules will help the students to be optimally prepared to work on their ISP.

Course Content
Module 1: Introduction to field studies
- Introduction to field methods (participant observation, interview techniques, elicitation of data)
- Field work journals and recording data, both in Switzerland and Morocco
- Ethical considerations for field-based research
- Homestay and day to day experience as a cultural experience and source of knowledge
- Drop off activity and group presentations

Readings

Module 2: Conducting a research project
- Conceptual understanding of field-based learning (methodology): difference between qualitative and quantitative research
- The stages of a research project: choose an ISP topic, form a research question, literature review, methods for data collection
- Designing interviews

Reading
- Designing qualitative research, Uwe Flick, 2007 Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Ca, USA, chapter 1
- Doing interviews, Steinar Kvale, 2007, Sage Publications
- Using visual data in qualitative research , Marcus Banks, 2007, Sage Publications

Module 3: Field studies in Geneva and Morocco
- International organizations (UN agencies) and NGO visits in Geneva and Morocco, field trip in Morocco

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• Data analysis, introduction to quantitative research
• Understand the difference between writing an academic paper and other writings (journalism, reports): citation, use of secondary and primary sources, field-based sources

Readings
Designing qualitative research, Uwe Flick, 2007 Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Ca, USA, chapter 3

Module 4: ISP
In the final four weeks of the semester each student pursues an Independent Study Project related to the program’s themes. During the semester, students work with the academic director to develop plans of study utilizing primary and secondary sources. All projects must be in accordance with the Human Subjects Review process.

Students work closely with a project advisor or the academic director(s) during the independent study period. The culmination of this project is typically a 20- to 40-page paper that is presented to colleagues, the academic director, and often the project advisor and other interested host-country individuals.

Student Evaluation
ISP paper: 40%
ISP Oral presentation: 20%
Work Journal: 20%
Literature review: 20%

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:
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

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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: the syllabus, course content, lecturers, and readings may be modified by the Academic Director in order to better suit the needs of the course and its participants. Should any change of class topics or lecturers be necessary, students will be promptly notified.