Course Description
The Social and Community Health Research Methods course seeks to provide students with the necessary methodological and conceptual tools needed for independent learning in a cross-cultural environment. This course will also enhance students’ capacity to learn through experience in field-based contexts, a core principle which guides the purpose of the Independent Study Project (ISP). Course materials are divided into modules and conceived with the intention of providing students core knowledge in the area of primary research and developing secondary resources as well as the methodological tools typical of research in the area of public health.

Course Objectives
The Social and Community Health Research Methods course has an interdisciplinary and critical focus encompassing 45 academic hours (3 credits). Its main objectives:

- To become aware of experience-based learning processes outside an institutional structure, and to develop confidence and initiative in learning from experience;
- To become practiced in using basic social science research methodologies, including in-depth interviewing, and participant and non-participant observation, in an ethical manner;
- To select and develop an ISP topic and investigation methodology that is realistic within the constraints of time and resources, ethical in terms of local relationships, and capable of yielding interesting, fresh perspectives on South Africa;
- To prepare students in basic methodologies used in health care research as well as ethical considerations in field study and public health practice.

Expected Outcomes
Students can expect to gain:

- The ability to effectively carry out basic research methodologies typical in the social sciences, including interviewing, observation, taking field notes and the integration of secondary sources.

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• The capacity to carry out mentored independent research in the context of South Africa;
• The ability to apply research methods used for health-related research in the context of South Africa;
• The capacity to prepare a completed research paper and present one’s findings.

Course Requirements

Readings
You are responsible for all the 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 necessary tailor-made for each and every class. Supplementary reading materials, not mentioned on the list, will sometimes be assigned and made available.


PLEASE NOTE: COURSE CONTENTS, LECTURERS AND READINGS MAY BE MODIFIED AS NEEDED. SHOULD ANY CHANGE OF CLASS TOPICS OR LECTURERS BE NECESSARY, STUDENTS WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assignments
Timely completion of all seminar assignments is expected. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments and papers must be turned in on the due date, by 5 pm at the very latest. Assignments may be given to the Academic Director (AD) or Program Assistant. Any assignments received after 5 pm on the due date will be considered late. Late assignments will be docked 5% of the total grade for each day late. No assignment will be accepted after 7 days late, i.e., your grade will be a “0” if it is more than one week late. If special circumstances arise and you believe you will be late in turning assignment, it is your responsibility to talk with the AD at least one day before the due date. No extensions will be given on the date an assignment is due. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding; argumentation and presentation of evidence. Students will be assessed on the quality of their graded work and their thoughtful participation in the seminar.

Grading Breakdown
Cultural Observation or Participant Observation 10%
Life History 20%
Application of Epidemiological Methods 20%

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Grading Scale: 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

Grading Criteria
An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence. In terms of class Participation, an “A” grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all Academic Seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of the students’ participation will be monitored and taken into account.

Program Calendar
Course content is organized through three distinct modules:

Module 1 – Cross Cultural Issues and Experiential Education
“Experiential learning”
“Acculturation”
“Homestay critical reflection”
“Cultural dos and don’ts”

Module 2 – Methods and Techniques for Field Study
“Conceptual framework”
“Planning the ISP”
“Managing field notes and analysis”
“Ethical issue and the ISP”
“Interviewing”
“Observation”

Module 3 – Epidemiological Research Techniques
“Basic epidemiological concepts”
“Introduction to statistics”
“Statistical association and cause-effect relationships”
“Measure of disease frequency”
“Measures of Association”
“Descriptive studies”
“Presentation and summary of data”
“Structure of human populations and mortality statistics”

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Student Expectations

Class Participation
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all academic seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. You are also expected to practice culturally sensitive behavior at all times and put forward a solid effort to use the local language.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.

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