Course Syllabus

Traditional Societies in Transition
PACI 3010 (3 Credits /45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Samoa: Pacific Communities and Social Change

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent 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 examines key aspects of traditional Pacific societies as well as the physical and historical forces that have shaped islands in the Pacific Islands region. It focuses on the ways in which traditional societies have adapted to the waves of development and change that have reached their shores. The course has components in Hawaii, Samoa, American Samoa and Fiji. Lectures and discussions are conducted in cooperation with the University of Hawai‘i, the East-West Center, the National University of Samoa and the University of the South Pacific in Alafua, Samoa and Suva, Fiji with support from additional local professionals.

The course assists students in developing insights into the values of traditional societies and how they are being challenged, adapted and blended as the subsistence economies move towards cash economies. It encourages students to analyze their own experiences and learning, as well as providing information needed to continue further intensive study for Independent Study Projects. Field experiences and assignments are structured to complement the lectures and readings.

This course begins with an overview of lectures and activities during the first week in Hawaii and runs through the first five weeks of course work. A ten day village stay and interaction with Samoan homestay families are key elements of this course. Research and presentation of a village study project culminate this course.

This syllabus is supplemented by a course handbook which explains expectations for all assignments in greater detail.

Learning Outcomes
At the conclusion of this course, it is expected that students will be able to:

- Describe the values of traditional societies and assess ways in which these values are being challenged, adapted and blended as the subsistence economies move towards cash economies;
- Analyze opportunities and constraints as villagers adapt to a more globalized world by exploring key values seen in the ten-day village homestay;

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• Analyze and theorize personal experiences and learn critically by comparing and contrasting contemporary issues faced by traditional societies in transition;
• Identify key aspects of traditional cultures and examine the changes brought by Christianity, cash economies and other Western influences;
• Evaluate a significant aspect of history, politics, environment or other pertinent issue in Samoa in a research paper.

Course Requirements

Course Schedule

Module 1: Pacific Societies (12 hours)
This module looks at Pacific migrations, how the Pacific was settled and the challenges Pacific Islanders have faced adapting to their unique bio-geographical, environmental and social contexts in both the past and the present. This module is hosted by the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii, Manoa.

Assessment Tasks
• 3 Reflective Writings on Pacific Societies (800-1200 words)
• Hawaii
• American Samoa
• Fiji
• Peer Learning Discussions
• Participation and effort

Session 1: Pacific Origins and Migrations
This lecture looks at the peopling of the Pacific and the migrations of Pacific peoples from Southeast Asia into the Pacific. It examines the role of Lapita and traces its spread as well as situating Samoa as the cradle of Polynesia.

Session 2: Hawaiian History
This lecture gives a brief overview of Hawaii and the Hawaiian kingdom. It looks at key Hawaiian values and how they play out today. It also examines the impact of US intervention in Hawaii and attitudes to sovereignty.

Readings:

Session 3: Visit to Bishop Museum
Bishop Museum is the premier place to experience the history, arts and culture of the Hawaiian people. Bishop is recognized throughout the world for its scientific research, educational programs, and extensive collections which give voice to the stories of Hawai'i and the broader Pacific.

Session 4: Educational Tour of Oahu
This day-long tour showcases the diverse landscapes of the Hawaii and their impact on Hawaiian lifestyles. It visits places of historic, religious and economic interests including the Pali Lookout, Byodo-In Temple, Laie Point and surfing and tourism sites on the North Shore. Commentary on history, geology, tourism and the military provide context throughout the day.

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Module Two: Traditional Samoan Life (22 Hours)
This module looks at the key elements of the fa’asamoa or Samoan way of life and the role of Christianity. It examines the challenges rural families face in terms of health, education, and economics.

Assessment Tasks
- Critical Research Paper (1000-1200 words)
- Participation and effort
- Debate

Session 1: Traditional Samoan Society
This lecture studies the key aspects of the traditional Samoan Society. It looks at the key elements around which traditional Samoan society is structured and examines ways in which traditional Samoan Society has adapted to development and change.

Readings:


Session 2: Religion and Culture
This lecture describes Samoan indigenous religion and culture and looks at reasons Christianity was readily adopted in Samoa. It also examines the impacts of Christianity on village structure, women, education and the Samoan language as well as Samoan culture’s impact on Christianity.

Readings:

Session 3: Gender Equality in Samoa
This session examines women, girls and gender issues in Samoa. Issues include equal employment opportunities, access to health and education, domestic violence, sexual abuse and the gender roles of fa’afafine in Samoa.

Readings:

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Video:
Exploring Gender Equality in Samoa (2012): 26 minute documentary film exploring gender equality in Samoa that provides women and men with an opportunity to articulate barriers to gender equality in Samoa.

Session 4: The Fa’afafine Worldview
This session defines gender terms and examines the role of the third gender in Samoa. It examines reasons for the acceptance of fa’afafine in terms of their social roles and evaluates the impact of contemporary society on fa’afafine.

Reading:

Session 5: The Girl in the Moon Circle Book Discussion
The Girl in the Moon Circle shows Samoan life through the eyes of a ten-year-old girl called Samoana who talks about school, church, friends, family violence, having refrigerators and television for the first time, chunky cat food, a made-in-Taiwan Jesus, pay day, cricket, crushes on boys, incest, legends and many other things. Her observations offer a compelling look at Samoan society. Often fiction allows authors to tell truths that otherwise would be too painful; Sia Figiel is uninhibited.

Reading:

Session 6: Key Elements of the Fa’asamoa
This lecture examines the key elements of fa’asamoa or the Samoan way. Key elements include the fa’amatai or matai system of governance, roles in the aiga (extended family) and the influences of the church on fa’asamoa. It also looks at the importance of respect, maintaining relationships and reciprocity.

Reading:

Session 7: Video: Samoana (2000)
A documentary that recounts events of Samoan history from the creation story to the New Millenium. Topics include Settlement, Lapita people, and the expansion of European influence in the Pacific beginning with explorers, whalers, traders, missionaries and eventually colonists. It examines how modernization introduced alien values and how Samoans have negotiated the two systems of values and regained their independence in 1962.

Session 8: A Historical Overview of Education
This session traces the development and achievements in primary, secondary, and post-secondary education in Samoa and analyzes the issues and challenges facing education in Samoa today. It attempts to evaluate the role education plays in a developing society.

Reading:

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Session 9: Traditional Art and the Role of Dance
This session describes basic types of Samoan dance and the role dance plays in Samoan society. It traces the evolution of Samoan dance and examines contemporary impacts on dance. The lecture is followed by a series of dance practices in which students learn a contemporary dance to perform at the farewell function in the village.

Session 10: The Matai System and the Rule of Law
This session describes the fa’amatai, the rule of law and its implications for governance at both the village and national levels. It assesses changes and adaptations faced by Samoa’s fa’amatai in Samoa’s 50 years of independence. It evaluates the ways Samoa has adapted democracy and the ways in which the fa’amatai has been recognized and accommodated within Samoa’s democratic system of government.

Readings:

Session 11: Health and Nutrition Issues
This session describes lifestyle diseases in Samoa and the role of nutrition and evaluates how change of diet has impacted the health of Samoans.

Reading:

Session 12: Village Life and Economics
This session examines sources of income in the village setting and analyzes the transition from subsistence to a cash economy. Students are asked to share their observations from their village homestays.

Reading:

An ethnographic documentary on traditional life, values and issues filmed in Rotuma. It was written and produced by Vilsoni Hereniko, one of the lecturers in Hawaii. Students are asked to compare and contrast traditional life in Samoa and Rotuma and identify challenges faced by Pacific Islanders as they transition into a more globalized world.

Session 14: Village Stay: Values, Identity, and Gender
A ten day village stay in Lotofaga on the southeast coast of Upolu is an opportunity to identify and analyze the values of fa’asamoa through observations and interactions in host families and class discussions. Students will compare and contrast communal society to an individualistic society, describe and analyze gender roles and daily activities and evaluate the role of subsistence agriculture. They will also observe and explain the role of Christianity in village life and interpret the impacts of Christianity on the fa’asamoa.

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Students will also participate in a number of village activities including:

- Welcome _ava_ ceremony (.5 hour)
- _Umu_ making and food preparation (2 hours)
- Observations and lessons at village primary school (1.5 hours)
- Evening prayer and church services (2 hours)
- Dance practice (1.5 hours)
- Farewell _flafia_ involving traditional song and dance (1 hour)

**Module Three: Contemporary Samoa Life and Issues (11 hours)**

This module compares life in a rural village with that of the urban area. It examines challenges Samoans currently face in terms of health, education, and the economics of a cash economy as well as how successfully Samoan communities are incorporating change and at what costs.

**Assessment Tasks**

- Village Values Paper (1500-word)
- Peer learning Discussion

**Session 1: Challenges and Constraints in Education**

This lecture examines the major problems and challenges in education and explains the policies and plans of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture with regards to quality, efficiency, and relevance of education. Policies and practices with regard to bilingual and cultural education are also examined.

**Readings:**


**Session 2: Current Issues in Agriculture: Challenges and Constraints**

This session describes the role of agriculture and the challenges and constraints faced by Pacific Islanders. It evaluates the vulnerability of agriculture in terms of pests, diseases and natural disasters.

**Reading:**


**Session 3: The Changing Health Status of Samoans**

This session evaluates major health concerns of Samoans and their causes. It examines global forces and how they impact the lives of Samoas.

**Reading:**


**Session 4: The Changing Matai System and Democracy**

This session examines the ways in which the fa'amatai has adapted to democracy and change. It evaluates the tensions and contradictions between democracy and the fa'amatai.

**Reading:**

Session 5: Religion, Politics and Current Issues
This session examines the interconnections between religion and politics and analyzes current religious issues including freedom of religion and the role of churches in social development.

Readings:

Session 6: Artists Speak Out on Contemporary Issues
A visit to a local art gallery is an opportunity to examine themes and issues addressed by contemporary artists. The role of art and artists in addressing social issues and change is also discussed.

Reading:

Session 7: Documentary: A Chief in Two Worlds (1992)
A documentary on the trans-nationalization of the matai system produced by Micah Van der Ryn. The documentary reviews the basics of the matai system and follows a Los Angeles matai from his life in America to a village in Savaii where his title is bestowed again by the entire family. It shows changes in his life following the bestowal of his title. Students meet the film maker in American Samoa.

Session 8: Student Village Study Presentations and Peer Evaluations
This course culminates with 10 minute individual oral presentations on topics culture and religion, family structure and daily life, the matai system and politics, women and development, migration and remittances, agriculture, health, education, youth and gender. The presentations should synthesize learnings and go beyond simply answering questions. Visuals and creative presentations are encouraged.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Student assessment
Assessment for the course is based on a variety of tasks and assignments. Students are expected to attend all lectures, complete all readings and participate in all sessions. They will be asked to complete a series of tasks including:

- Three reflective writing exercises [800-1200 words each] ask students to discuss their observations, opinions, lectures and experiences in and out of the classroom during excursions activities in Hawaii, American Samoa and Fiji.
- A 1000-1200 word paper on an aspect of history, politics, environment or another pertinent element of traditional society issue using 3-5 secondary sources found in Samoa.
- A 1500 word village study paper exploring key values seen in the village stay and the opportunities and constraints as villagers adapt to life in a more globalized world.
- A final essay evaluating growth and learning relating to societies and values in transition. The paper will also discuss personal values and how they may have changed.

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Final grades will be assigned by the Academic Director using the following criteria:

**Participation and Effort**  
10%

**Reflective Writings (3)**  
30%

**Research Paper**  
20%

**Village Values Paper**  
20%

**Final essay**  
20%

**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

**Expectations and Policies**

- Attend and Participate: Students are expected to attend all class sessions, participate in all sessions, and keep careful notes.
- Ask questions in class and engage the lecturers: Ask at least one question per lecture and make evaluative comments about each lecture.
- Comply with academic integrity policies: No plagiarism or cheating.
- Complete assignments on time according to requirements.
- Respect the opinions of classmates, lectures and local constituents.

**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 program handbook given to you at Orientation, particularly the code of conduct, the policy on blogging and taking photographs, and the grading policy.

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