Course Syllabus

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:

Bolivia: Multiculturalism, Globalization, 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

The Research Methods and Ethics (RME) course provides the theoretical, conceptual, and practical tools for conducting field research in Bolivia. In particular, it provides the means to identify and carry out an independent three to four-week field-based research topic.

Emphasis is placed on conducting ethical research that acknowledges and respects the historical, political, social, and economic processes in Bolivia’s plurinational context. A strong emphasis is placed on the Andean values of reciprocity and complementarity, and students will be challenged to put into practice the concepts of decolonization and transdisciplinarity in their own research methodology, including new attitudes and practices in the interchange of knowledge and intercultural wisdom. A strong emphasis is placed on grappling with cultural differences and on recording, interpreting, and analyzing information from primary sources.

The concepts and skills developed in the course underlie and reinforce all other program components. The course begins with an initiation to field study techniques during orientation and continues throughout the program. In addition, the ethical implications and consequences of observations, discussions, field exercises, interviews, and work journal assignments are examined throughout. The course facilitates students’ subsequent research of an in-depth Independent Study Project (ISP) largely based on information obtained from primary sources.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Apply adequate methodological tools for cross-cultural research, including journaling, proposal writing, formal and informal interviewing, participant and non-participant observation, conducting life histories, visual anthropology, and case studies.
- Identify, describe, and appropriately make use of primary sources in the field and culture bound local resources.
- Acquire the skills for the use of critical analysis in other cultural settings, including their own.
- Incorporate the values of reciprocity, decolonization, and the mutual interchange of information with members of the culture in which they are conducting research.
- Discern and appropriately respond to ethical questions that arise in an intercultural setting.
- Select, prepare, and carry-out an Independent Study Project that is relevant, realistic, and respectful, considering the time constraints and utilizing the unique human and physical resources available in Bolivia.

**Language of Instruction**
This course is taught in Spanish.

**Course Schedule**

*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.*

**Session 1: Observation and Note-taking**

**Required Readings:**
- Wendt, J. *Description-interpretation-gut reaction* (modified from the original). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

**Optional Reading:**
- Pages 169-190 of above Hess reading.

**Session 2: Selecting and Narrowing Down a Research Topic**

**Required Readings:**
- Tips for choosing a feasible ISP topic, narrowing it down, turning it into a research question. Unpublished SIT Bolivia Handout. Cochabamba: SIT.

**Session 3: The Role of Epistemology (Ways of Knowing) in Research; Introduction to Writing a Research Proposal**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Reading:**

Session 4: Decolonizing Research Methodologies; Journal Keeping

Required Readings:
- Guidelines for ISP Work Journal.

Recommended Reading:

Session 5: Interviewing, Life Histories, and Storytelling

Required Readings:

Session 6: Visual Anthropology

Required Reading:

Session 7: Reciprocity

Required Readings:
- Village Stay Topics and Starter Questions.

**Session 8: Participant Observation**

**Session 9: Ethics; Making Sense of Information and the Production of Knowledge**

**Required Readings:**
- SIT Study Abroad Policy on Ethics.
- SIT Bolivia Student Ethical Situation Scenarios.

**Session 10: Oral Presentations and Human Subjects Proposals**

**Required Readings:**
- Goethe, J. (1835). *Until one is committed*.

**Handouts and Forms:**
- Realities of Conducting the ISP
- Suggestions for Dealing with ISP Advisors
- Letter to Advisor
- Project Advisor Information Sheet
- Human Subjects Review Policy
- Application for Human Subjects Review and Forms
- Requirements for ISP Site Approval
- Final ISP Proposal Guidelines
- ISP Syllabus
- Procedures and Criterion for Non-Traditional ISPs
- Work Journal Guidelines
- ISP Oral Presentation Guidelines

**Session 11: ISP Logistics and Planning**

**Important ISP Information**

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

**Description of Assignments:**

Work Journal: Each student will keep an individual work journal recording and reflecting upon the progress of a small research project (chosen by the student either individually or as a member of a small group), around which each student will practice step-by-step the basic
research techniques and methodological considerations presented in the course. The journal should also contain reflections on readings and on the broader, deeper ethical issues raised in the course, as students explore positionality, the decolonization of research methodologies, reciprocity, and issues of representation and the production of knowledge.

ISP Proposal: Two weeks prior to the beginning of the Independent Study Project period, each student will submit a research proposal for their ISP, including an abstract, statement of purpose, description of proposed field study methods (including potential interview questions), reflections on format and reciprocity, and a preliminary bibliography.

ISP Literature Review: On the last day of this course, each student will submit a 2-3 page paper reviewing relevant secondary source information about their proposed ISP topic and discussing how these sources will serve to inform their own proposed ISP research. Secondary sources may include books, journal articles, previous research projects, newspaper articles, videos, etc.

Participation: This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions, and excursions.

Assessment:
Work Journal 60%
ISP Proposal 10%
ISP Literature Review 10%
Participation 20%

Grading Scale
94-100% A Excellent
90-93% A-
87-89% B+
84-86% B Above Average
80-83% B-
77-79% C+
74-76% C Average
70-73% C-
67-69% D+
64-66% D Below Average
below 64 F Fail

Expectations and Policies
- **Assignments:** Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.
- **Excursions:** The objective of the educational excursions is to learn from experience. Many of the visits will be to underprivileged areas, challenging students to understand how historical oppression and public policies affect the lives of peoples today.
- **Readings:** Students are responsible for all of the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear in class. The readings will help place the classes in context, engage lecturers, generate questions for class discussions, and deepen student knowledge of particular issues discussed in class.
Alternative Forms to Written Assignments
In this course, as for all courses on this program, students are invited to submit some or all of
your assignments in formats other than the traditional written paper. Alternative (or
nontraditional) formats could include photography, video, music, creative writing, painting, etc.
Students must obtain prior approval from the AD for nontraditional formats and set up clear
criteria for insuring academic rigor.

Video Students
Students who plan to produce their ISP in video format should submit appropriate sections of
your journal in video format (for example, the interviews and participant observations during
the village stay).

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, please refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and
the materials given to you at Orientation.