Course Syllabus

Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 Credits / 120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Kenya: Urbanization, Health, and Human Rights

Course Description
The Independent Study Project (ISP) - the fulcrum of the SIT Study Abroad semester – is a self-designed academic project allowing each student the opportunity to study in greater depth an aspect of particular interest related to the program theme. The ISP challenges students to integrate the content, skills, tools, and techniques learned in each of the other four courses of the Kenya: Health and Human Rights program – formal instruction and informal practice in Kiswahili, the concepts presented in the thematic seminars, and experiential skills honed in the Research Methods and Ethics course – together with contacts made in the homestay and within the broader community. Each student will plan, develop, and independently undertake a research project, with the advice and guidance of the academic director and an ISP Advisor – a local academic and/or experienced field professional. The topic of study may be anything of interest to the student, within the scope of the program theme and the immediate region, and is usually developed out of lectures, discussions, and educational excursions. Students are expected to complete 120 hours of field-based (primary, non-archival, non-library) research on their topic, submit a substantial written paper, and deliver an accompanying oral presentation. It is not uncommon for ISPs to strongly contribute to the student’s choice of subject for graduate studies or professional career.

In the first month of the program, students submit a substantive fieldwork project proposal, which includes primary and secondary sources, a literature review, a discussion of methods and project significance and integrates advice from the Academic Director (AD) and ISP Advisor. Successive drafts of the proposal are worked on in conjunction with the ISP Advisor and AD, who approves the final proposal before the project begins. It is assumed that most students will be conducting fieldwork on this scale for the first time. Accordingly, evaluation for the ISP includes consideration of the process involved in designing and executing a project of this scale through the ISP Work Journal, which provides a means to assess students’ learning over the entire semester.

Course Objectives
The Independent Study Project has an interdisciplinary and critical focus encompassing 120 academic hours (4 credits). The main objectives of the ISP are to:

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• Provide students with the opportunity to study issues related to health and human rights in Kenya in greater depth;
• Propel students to creative, critical, and integrative thinking; allowing them to incorporate information from different primary sources available only in Kenya to inform a coherent work;
• Stimulate independent thought and academic responsibility among participants, while encouraging curiosity and motivation;
• Promote opportunities for continual awareness of the ethics of field research and cultural learning, particularly in terms of interaction and reciprocity.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, students will:
• Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of a particular aspect of health and/or human rights in Kenya;
• Gain competence in the processes of independent, primary, research – from choosing a viable topic and appropriate methodologies to final analyses and interpretations of data;
• Develop a greater appreciation of the challenges faced by field researchers;
• Demonstrate independence and self-confidence while functioning in Kenyan daily life;
• Develop an internalized and continual consideration for the awareness, development, and incorporation of appropriate ethical standards for cross-cultural field research, particularly with respect to reciprocity.

Course Requirements
SIT conforms to US-based university standards and US federal guidelines for research involving human subjects. Therefore, the ISP topic must conform to the norms of academic ethics and policies related to human subject research. This means, for example, that a student cannot pursue a topic that would put the student or subject in danger, or is illegal, or is a topic that is too culturally sensitive for the student's level of scholarship (certain issues of religion, politics, or gender, may be deemed too volatile for an undergraduate study).

All ISP topics must receive advanced approval by the Academic Director and the Local Review Board. Students are required to submit formal research proposals outlining their ISP topic, methodologies, and the plan for implementation to ensure that the project is conducted in an ethical, responsible, and culturally appropriate manner. The Local Review Board, comprising the AD and up to four additional local academics and/or practitioners, will determine if the proposed study is approved as submitted, requires additional review, or is rejected on the basis of US federal requirements for human subjects and local scholarship norms. The choice of ISP site must also be approved by the AD for safety and security reasons.

Students often revise the ISP site and topic from the original proposal submitted before the program, or they develop a new topic stemming from the lectures, discussions and educational excursions of the SIT semester curriculum. Major changes of site, topic or type of ISP are not permitted after week seven. Research projects hastily cobbled together will lack the sophistication expected of the ISP, and may not be considered adequate for a passing grade.

All ISP topics must receive advanced approval by the Academic Director and undergo an approval process through the Local Review Board. Students are required to submit formal research proposals outlining their ISP topic, methodologies, and the plan for implementation to ensure that the project is conducted in an ethical, responsible, and culturally appropriate manner.

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Readings
Readings for the ISP are based on the topic of study. Reference articles and books are available from local libraries, the program library, and SIT's electronic library database specifically related to student ISP topics. Students are also expected to consult appropriate course readings applicable to the ISP. While the ISP is an opportunity to conduct field research and while primary data form the bulk of the information obtained, a well-considered literature review comprising high quality academic sources is required to contextualize the information obtained in Kenya.

ISP Guidelines and Requirements
The final ISP product will be an academic paper of approximately 30 written pages and a 20-minute oral presentation highlighting student research findings and analyses to colleagues, community members, program supporters, the Academic Director, and project advisors (see additional information below). Students may also choose to complete a “non-traditional” ISP in which the research findings are presented in a creative format. If this option is selected, students are still required to complete rigorous research and submit an accompanying written paper. Observations and analyses should be evident in the final product.

Note #1: “Non-traditional” projects may require prior credit approval from your home university.
Note #2: “Non-traditional” ISPs are usually more difficult to produce than “traditional” ones.

Human Subjects Review
All ISP proposals must reflect a thoughtful and culturally appropriate consideration of the effects of the inquiry on the participants in the project. To that end, students are required to submit an “Application for Review of Research with Human Subjects,” to include a discussion of any potential harm that might come from the study, and to provide appendices including interview and survey protocols. If the Academic Director/Local Review Board believe that the proposed research insufficiently addresses the concerns of this policy, students will be asked to revise their proposal. Standards for this review are developed in-country and reflect local academic practice.

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
ISP Assignments
Timely completion of all ISP assignments is expected. Late submissions will be penalized. In conjunction with the ISP Advisor, the Academic Director evaluates the various components of each student’s ISP. Assessment of written work and oral presentation is based on the accuracy of the information conveyed, the breadth and appropriateness of sources, the depth of analysis and insight, quality of expression, and adherence to the highest ethical standards. Emphasis is placed on the student’s ability to integrate primary and secondary sources and to present findings in a clear, organized, well-synthesized written and oral format. Technical details such as language usage, format, grammar, spelling, and proper citation, for example, are also considered. Grades are weighted as follows (with additional criteria below):

- ISP work journal 20%
  - The work journal should document preparation and follow-up meetings with AD and advisor, key ISP contacts, ISP abstract, Kiswahili ISP vocabulary, self-evaluation of progress, etc.

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- ISP final paper or final paper/non-traditional presentation 60%
  - Approximately 30 pages of written content, footnoted where appropriate and including a full bibliography. If illustrations and appendices are necessary for clarity, they must be included with full citation. Correct citation is expected.

- ISP oral presentation 20%
  - Public presentation will be 20 minutes, with 5 additional minutes for questions. The oral presentation grade includes your participation in the presentations of your colleagues, as evidenced by active listening and engaged questions.

**Grading Scale:** The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-83%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>77-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>74-76%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-73%</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>64-66%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 64</td>
<td>F</td>
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**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.

**Additional ISP Guidelines and Requirements**
- The completed paper must not exceed 35 pages. We take this page limit very seriously.
- The purpose of the ISP is to give you an opportunity to integrate and apply the skills and knowledge you’ve accumulated this semester: language, interviewing, data collection and analysis. While your main resources will be people, library resources will be critical to giving you background information, a framework for making comparisons, and the “big picture” related to your topic.
- Conducting an ISP is also about time management. Allow for serious obstacles or the possibility of illness and plan accordingly. Keep in mind that printing and binding your ISP must be arranged at least one day prior to the final deadline.
- You may be as creative as you like in your presentation, as long as you convey your thoughts and conclusions effectively. Follow the outline provided below to help you organize your written report. Please include all the sections, as we will be looking for them.
- Upon completion, submit two bound, typewritten copies of your ISP paper. One copy will be for the SIT Kenya archive, the other will be delivered to your advisor. If you want to take home a hard copy, then you need to make three copies. Word-processing facilities are available in most of Kenya’s larger urban areas.
- In addition to the submitted hardcopies, email the final version of your ISP to your AD.
- Oral Presentation: Include the important and interesting aspects of your study and present them in an engaging way. You have 25 minutes total, including the question

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The ISP is evaluated on the basis of content organization and development of ideas, and creativity and depth of analysis in both oral and written presentations. Special emphasis is placed on the students’ abilities to use local resources in an appropriate manner. Comments and evaluations of the ISP advisors are integrated into the final evaluation.

Late papers will marked down one step (B- to C+, e.g.) for each day they are late.

Additional Evaluation Criteria

(1) ISP Work Journal (20%)
This is the reservoir of all your fieldwork and the planning for the project. The extent to which you can use the ISP Work Journal is limitless but, at minimum, it should include records of preparation and follow-up of your formal meetings over the semester and progressively refined versions of your ISP abstract. Some other suggestions:

- names and locations of contact persons (maintaining anonymity as appropriate), especially possible ISP advisors and other ISP resources
- site plans, grids, maps, drawings, photographs, recordings
- notes from interviews conducted in the field relevant to your ISP
- statistical or other quantitative data, whether gathered in the field or through appropriate readings
- vocabulary items, phrases or excerpts from ISP-relevant written or oral works in Kiswahili

Evaluation for the ISP Work Journal emphasizes your attention to process and degree of preparation for each of your formal meetings. The following evaluation items will also be noted:

- effort made in meeting all assignment deadlines
- consistency of entries demonstrating a steady pace of progress
- development of project in relationship to your objectives
- evidence of preparation for and follow-up from your formal meetings over the semester
- integration of Kiswahili language learning or other local language, as appropriate

(2) ISP Final Paper (60%)
The Final Paper should be approximately 30 pages of analytical, written content, exclusive of secondary material such as photographs, maps, bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. It is expected that the ISP Final Paper be rigorously edited so that it exhibits the following attributes: freedom from grammatical errors and typos; compliance with a standard format of citation for both primary and secondary sources; and, most importantly, concise and logical argument. Start writing longhand versions well in advance if your ISP site is far from computing facilities. Evaluation includes the following criteria:

- Critical analysis of topic and clarity of presentation
- Use of primary resources and demonstrated cross-cultural communication skills
- Use of appropriate secondary sources in support of information gained from primary sources
- Concise use of language purged of ‘filler’ phrases/adjectives
- Quality and clarity of argumentation, analyses and conclusions
- Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation

Final Paper Checklist

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1. COVER PAGE must include:
   - Student name
   - Program title
   - Semester and year
   - AD name
   - Advisor name
   - ISP title

2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS are for thanking the people/organizations who supported you during your ISP period, i.e. KENGO, World Vision, particular people, departments, projects, etc. This should not be more than one page.

3. TABLE OF CONTENTS with PAGE NUMBERS (hint: write this last).

4. ABSTRACT: One paragraph summary of the study that is an overview orienting the reader. State the salient points without going into detail. This is also referred to as an executive summary in reports and proposals.

5. INTRODUCTION: 2 - 5 pages giving the reader background information about your topic (summarize library research, i.e., history, background politics, the questions you focused on, etc.), what you did (very briefly) and why you did it (the rationale). State your goals and objectives in the introduction in narrative form.

6. THE SETTING: 1 - 2 pages of narrative detailing where you were and the conditions under which you worked, and more background information specifically related to your study (such as more recent history, politics, social and economic factors). You may include maps here but, if so, do not count them as your pages of description.

7. METHODOLOGY: Explain the “nuts and bolts,” of what you did and how you did it. This should be short and to the point, about 1 page. Indicate the number of people interviewed, e.g. six primary school teachers, 15 students, one MP, etc. Also, mention the different methodologies, e.g. six informal interviews, two focus group discussions, etc.

8. DISCUSSION and ANALYSIS: What did you find out? And why does it matter? This should be the largest section of your paper. This is the place to pull together the information you collected first hand and discuss it in light of the history you wrote about in the introduction, the reading you’ve done, and whatever else you know about the subject. Look at your objectives, your actual experience, and your data and analyze the areas of concordance and discrepancies. Clearly state your theories, ideas and opinions, and draw (tentative) conclusions supported by your research. Discuss what you believe to be the ramifications of your study.

9. CONCLUSION: Summarize your findings and make final comments about what you learned.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS: How could this study be extended or expanded? What else would you have liked to find out, if you had had more time? If someone wanted to study more about this topic, what would you recommend? If you want to include recommendations for your particular project, the two kinds of recommendations MUST be separated into two sections.

11. APPENDICES: Include DEFINITIONS OF TERMS or a glossary, copies of any SURVEYS you have used, DATA you collected that are pertinent or particularly interesting but did not fit within the body of your paper, etc.

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12. ANNOTATIONS/FOOTNOTES: Throughout the paper, refer the reader to your sources, clearly differentiating your ideas from the ideas of your sources. A simple way to do this is by noting the author, year of publication and pages inside a set of parenthesis like this: (Obiero, 1995:45). Done in this way, there is no need for footnotes, as the reader can refer to the author in the bibliography. In the case of referring to an interviewee, state the name or alias of the person clearly.

13. BIBLIOGRAPHY: Includes books, articles, organizations with their addresses, your contacts and their titles, etc. You should have at least 20 citations, of which at least 10 must be books or scholarly articles. You may also cite newspaper articles, films, videos or television programs. Please cite these in the proper format (you may choose the specific citation style but you must be consistent throughout). Keep in mind the following:
   - Please use correct punctuation, exactly as it is shown in the format below.
   - References must be complete and include the city, publisher, and year.
   - The bibliography must be alphabetical.

Sample formats:
Author (Last name, First name). Book Title. City: Publisher, year.
Author. “Chapter Title.” In Book Title. City: Publisher, year.
Author. “Article Title.” Magazine Name, day, month, year, page #.
Author. “Article Title.” Journal Name # (month, year): page #.

(3) ISP oral presentation (20%)
The oral presentation should not be more than 20 minutes total, with an additional 5 minutes for questions, and should summarize the contents of the ISP final paper and discuss your research process. Students are welcome to use props (themselves included), photographs, images, posters, and so on.

It may be helpful to think of the ISP oral presentation as though you are teaching a class to a group of semi-specialized listeners. Rather than simply giving a speech keyed to the pages of the ISP final paper, try to teach listeners about the topic and include information and background that you may take for granted. You may wish to make a handout with specialized Kiswahili vocabulary items. PRACTICE so that your timing is within the 20-minute frame.

Evaluation includes the following criteria:
- Organization, clarity and accessibility of presentation
- Use of appropriate examples and personal experiences
- Clear explanation of ISP strategy and implementation
- Ability to field comments and questions
- Ability to listen actively and ask questions of colleagues

Additional AD Advice for a Successful ISP
We sincerely hope that you have a thrilling and interesting experience during your ISP. However, you should also keep in mind that you are being evaluated on your ability to produce a quality academic paper or non-traditional piece of work.

Helpful Hint #1: Read each other’s work in progress. Bounce ideas off your classmates, discuss your opinions. Check each other’s papers for spelling, grammar, awkward sentences and especially for meaning, content and clarity. Sometimes it’s difficult to get perspective on your own writing. If you are alone during this stage, try reading your work out loud - sometimes hearing your own voice helps distance you from your work.

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Helpful Hint #2: Begin writing your paper with about 2 weeks to go in the ISP period, while you are still doing research. Doing this may help you to realize several things before it is too late to fix them, including: a) what your paper/research is actually about, b) what you don’t know that you still need to know, and c) who you haven’t yet talked to and need to talk to.

The success of your project depends on your enthusiasm, determination and motivation. Fieldwork can be extremely trying, tedious, and even boring. Things may not proceed as planned, people may be uncooperative, contacts may not pan out. It is up to you to keep rolling and find alternatives, make new contacts, come up with a new plan, etc. On the other hand, sources may turn up unexpectedly and unlikely people may provide you with energy, assistance, and friendship. This is the nature of field study and you will learn a lot by going through this. We want to caution you against becoming discouraged halfway through and giving up; you would be letting yourself down. Persevere! Keep your chin up, use your knowledge and skills (you possess more than you may realize!), remain safe, and HAVE A GREAT TIME!!

Student Expectations

Responsibilities when conducting fieldwork:
- Students must respect, protect, and promote the rights and welfare of all those contributing to, and affected by, their work by protecting the privacy and dignity of the people and communities with whom they conduct field study.
- The right of those providing information to students to either remain anonymous, or to receive recognition, must be scrupulously defended and respected.
- Students must acknowledge the help and services they receive and must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in culturally appropriate ways.
- Students must record and represent accurately all aspects of the field study. This includes not representing as their own work - either in spoken or written form - materials and ideas directly obtained from other sources.

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.