Environmental Research Methods and Ethics
ENVI-3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management

Course Description
The Environmental Research Methods and Ethics (ERME) seminar prepares you for independent study through an evolving series of field projects, workshops and related lectures and activities. Initial sessions conducted during orientation focus on the development of cross-cultural and observational skills, self-awareness and on providing a conceptual foundation for later analysis of Madagascar’s culture, ecology, and resource management. A series of ERME sessions, conducted prior to the Independent Study Project, introduces field techniques that help to prepare students to undertake independent study in Madagascar.

Course Objectives
The Environmental Research Methods and Ethics seminar has an interdisciplinary and critical focus encompassing 45 contact hours (3 credits). Its main objectives:

- To promote awareness and development of experience-based learning processes outside an institutional structure.
- To develop self-confidence and ability to initiate experiential learning.
- To enable students acquire techniques in designing and developing original field studies, and be able to practice specific natural and social science field methodologies.
- To discover how to and be able to function in Madagascar and cope with logistics of day-to-day life.
- To apply language skills and knowledge from the Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management seminar and other sources to extend and deepen interest, knowledge and integration in Madagascar.
- To enable students select an ISP topic and methodology that are appropriate and that will yield an interesting, fresh and realistic perspective on Madagascar within the constraints of time and resources available.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students should have attained the ability to:

- Articulate the experience of adjusting to a new culture, learning more about oneself and about one's own culture;

*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.

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• Conceptualize, develop and articulate reasonable study proposals and carry out independent field research within the appropriate cultural and environmental contexts;
• Apply knowledge of various field techniques, such as ecological inventories, transects, population density estimates, and interviewing techniques; and
• Continually engage in experiential learning that leads to a fuller understanding of complex issues concerning ecology, conservation, and natural resource management through a combination of primary field research backed by appropriate secondary sources.

Course Requirements

Readings
Required readings included in your reading packs are presented below, under thematic headings. Many additional resources are available in the Library – see the extended Bibliography in your reading pack. You are responsible for all the required 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 necessarily tailor-made for each and every class.

Cultural Awareness and Orientation


Experiential Learning

Ethical Considerations
SIT Ethics Policy, 2004, Pages 62-63 of this syllabus.


Introduction to Natural Science Methods
Floral inventory for the Community Ecology Study with Madame Bakoly.

Lemur Ecology and Community Ecology Course Notes, SIT, Fall 2012 Semester.


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Introduction to Social Science Methods
Bernard, HR 2006, Field Notes: How to take them, code them, manage them, Chapter 14 in Research Methods in Anthropology Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Alta Mira Press.

Bernard HR 2006, Unstructured and Semi-structured, Chapter 9 in Research Methods in Anthropology Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Alta Mira Press.

Bernard HR 2006 Observation : Direct and Indirect, Chapter 15 in Research Methods in Anthropology Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Alta Mira Press.


Writing Skills


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

ERME Assignments
Your experiences are integrated into your subsequent preparations for independent study. Our sessions address some of the unique problems and difficulties faced in the process of information gathering and field study in Madagascar. Through structured activities, case studies, readings and discussions we will investigate natural science and social science field methodologies and their appropriateness for fieldwork in Madagascar.

Various methods of field study will be discussed and tried during the semester. The application of appropriate methods for particular kinds of studies will be examined within the local cultural and environmental contexts, along with the ethical suitability of different methods. Students will have the opportunity to practice methods in many different settings, with the goal of preparing students to utilize appropriate methods in independent study. Assignments and discussions will provide the opportunity for feedback. Topics include:

• Observation: subjective and objective
• Participant observation
• Interviewing: structuring interviews, developing questions, cultural considerations
• Interviewing techniques for environmental themes
• Developing a study question
• Recording information: developing a work journal, taking field notes, organizing information
• Performing transects, population counts and density estimates, field inventories

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*Developing contacts, selecting a study site
*Analyzing information
*Evaluation of field study projects
*Ethics
*Presenting findings

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

Assignments/exercises will require submission of a written document and/or an oral presentation in French or in English. Specifications for each exercise are provided at assignment. Assignments will be graded with consideration to both content and mechanics.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written assignments</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field/Work journal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Students should refer to 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.

**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**

All grades assigned will take into account the students’ special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. 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.

**Student Expectations**

**Class Participation**

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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.

PLEASE NOTE: All classes leave ¼ of the scheduled time for the purpose of class discussion of the lecture and/or readings.

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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