Course Syllabus

Public Health Research Methods and Ethics

IPBH-3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Chile: Public Health, Traditional Medicine, and Community Empowerment

Course Description
The Public Health Research Methods & Ethics Seminar (PHRME) provides the theoretical, conceptual, and practical tools for conducting field research in the public health, traditional medicine, and community empowerment program in Chile. In particular, it provides the means to identify and carry out an Independent Study Project field based research subject. Emphasis is placed on gathering, recording, interpreting, and analyzing information from secondary and primary sources. The concepts and skills developed in the seminar underlie and reinforce all other program components. The course begins with an initiation to field study techniques 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.

Course Objectives
- To develop and sharpen students' understanding of health research methodologies in a cross-cultural context
- To prepare students for the Independent Study Project (ISP), through an evolving series of discussions, assignments and related readings and lectures
- To enable students to apply and improve language skills (as well as those acquired from the intensive language course), knowledge gained from academic seminars and excursions, and their experience of everyday life in Chile
- To assist students in designing an ISP research topic and plan that is suitable to the existing cultural context, limitations of time and resources, but that also provides an original and critical perspective on their chosen research topic
- To learn from primary sources in the field and gain confidence and skills to research and communicate the progress and results of their research in Spanish in an analytical and critical manner
- To introduce a problem-based form of analysis that can be applied to students’

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ISP
- To consider ethical issues in the context of field research in another culture

**Expected Outcomes**
By the end of the seminar, students will be able to:
- Examine the role and importance of the scientific method in the health care arena
- Define a relevant research topic that is realistic and respectful, considering the constraints of time and resources
- Collect, analyze, and interpret basic statistical and epidemiological information
- Carry out research using qualitative and quantitative methods
- Identify relevant ethical issues that affect health care research

**Program Calendar**

**I. Epidemiologic Research Techniques (Week 3-5)**

**Basic Epidemiologic Concepts**
History of Epidemiology
- Descriptive Epidemiology
- Analytic Epidemiology

*Required Readings*

**Introduction to Statistics**

**A. Defining Statistics**: Descriptive Statistics vs. Inferential Statistics
- **Descriptive Statistics**: General terms used throughout statistics: population, sample, types of data, qualitative, quantitative, summarizing and presenting data, frequency tables, histograms, pie charts, exploratory data analysis.
- **Inferential Statistics**: Parameter, statistics, levels of measurement, accuracy vs. precision, uses and abuses of statistics.

*Required Readings:*

**B. Statistical Association and Cause-Effect Relationships**
- The presence of a valid statistical association
- Cause-effect relationship
- Evaluation of a hypothesis

*Required Readings:*

**C. Measure of Disease Frequency**

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• Measures of disease frequency
• Prevalence and incidence
• Adjusted (standardized) rates

D. Measures of Association
• Measures of association
• Relative risk
• Mortality ratios
• Interpretation of measures of association

Required Readings:

E. Descriptive Studies
• Types of descriptive studies
• Correlation
• Case reports and case series
• Cross-sectional surveys

Required Readings:

F. Presentation and Summarization of Data
• Types of variables
• Data presentation
• Summary statistics
• Measures of central tendency
• Measures of variability

Required Readings

G. Structure of Human Populations and Mortality Statistics
• Mortality rates
• Age standardized mortality rates (direct and indirect methods)
• Demographic life tables
• The population pyramid
• Vital statistics

Required Readings:

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II. Methods and Techniques in Public Health Research Methods and Ethics

MODULE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (Week 3)

Required Reading:


MODULE 2: BEGINNING FIELDWORK (Week 6)

PLANNING YOUR INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECT (ISP)

Required Reading:


Suggested Reading:


Available at: http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-05/05-2-43-s.htm

MODULE 3: MANAGING FIELD NOTES AND ANALYSIS (Week 8)

Required Reading:


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Suggested Reading:


MODULE 4: ETHICS

Suggested Reading:

Note: The CIH program will provide a complete text with a summary of all the suggested lectures by subject, and more information related with Independent Study Project issues.

Student Evaluation and Grading Criteria

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.

Class participation, preparation, and positive attitude 10%
Practical application exercise and written work 50%
ISP proposal 20%
ISP Fieldwork Journal 20%

Grading Scales and Criteria
Grades are given both fairly and rigorously and in accordance with the system below. They will reflect a combination of absolute quality of performance, progress made, the ability to take into account and assimilate the academic director’s and the teachers’ advice in assessing the work done. An “A” letter grade reflects exceptional work, perfect combination of academic competences and personal research and analysis. It shows great ability to integrate field-based investigation and personal reflection into a structured and well argued paper. A “B” letter grade reflects serious and methodical work as well as a substantial effort at analyzing and understanding cross-cultural issues. A “C” letter grade shows the work meets the requirements but needs more in-depth reflection and personal involvement. A “D” letter grade is insufficient and clearly reflects lack of work or serious deficiencies.

The grading scale for all classes is as follows:
94-100% A

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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

Please see 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.

Please Note: Course content, lectures, and readings may be modified as needed. Should any change of class topics or lectures be necessary, students will be promptly notified.

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