Independent Study Project
ISPR 3000 (4 Credits / 120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
India: National Identity and the Arts

Course Description
The Independent Study Project (ISP) is a self-designed study focusing upon India’s rich history and culture. This study applies the concepts and techniques of experience-based learning gained in the Field Methods and Ethics and the National Identity and the Arts Seminar courses. Students will use the language skills and contacts developed in the homestay and in the broader community. Each student will undertake a research project with the guidance of the Academic Director and an ISP Advisor - a local academic or art/architecture professional.

The topic will be within the scope of the program and is developed out of lectures, discussions, and program excursions. The final project should provide evidence of appropriate methodologies and synthesizing experiences in the host culture. As well as completing preliminary archival/library research, students will complete 120 hours of field-based (non-archival, non-library) research on the topic, submit a substantial written paper, and deliver an oral presentation.

Most students will be conducting research on this scale for the first time. Accordingly, evaluation for the ISP includes consideration of the process from the initial topic choice to the final paper composition. The assessment of the ISP work journal helps in charting student research progress. It is not uncommon for ISPs to strongly contribute to the student’s choice of subject for graduate studies or professional career.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, students will have:

- Demonstrated the ability to develop and conduct ethically sound fieldwork using primary sources in India;
- Learned to integrate library/archival and field based research;
- Analyzed information gathered through appropriate research methods within the broader areas of knowledge gained in the thematic seminar;
- Learned to organized and structure field notes and research materials in a work journal;
- Developed a relationship with an ISP advisor and actively sought the academic advice and guidance of this scholar;
- Composed a clear and comprehensive written paper synthesizing primary and secondary sources;
- Learned to give a well-organized presentation of research findings in an academic setting;
- Demonstrated basic language skills in a fieldwork setting.

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Course Requirements
As the ISP is the academic culmination of the semester, students are encouraged to start thinking early about the ISP topic. All components of the program, beginning with orientation and including the Field Methods and Ethics course, the thematic course, homestay, excursions, language study, and associated forms of cultural interaction may be used to develop a meaningful topic.

Discussions with the Academic Director will help students identify topics, and resources, including an ISP advisor. The successful completion of the independent study project depends on the methodological rigor, and sophistication of the research topic. The final paper should be between 20 and 30 pages.

All ISP topics must be approved by the Academic Director. Students will submit a draft proposal, as well as a final proposal. The formal research proposals include the ISP topic, methodologies, annotated bibliography, ethics assessment and risk assessment. A successful ISP shows that the student has considered topic, logistics and ethically sound research.

Readings
There can be no successful fieldwork without preliminary research. Reference materials are available from local libraries, the program library, and SIT’s electronic library databases. Students are also expected to consult appropriate course readings applicable to the ISP.

ISP Guidelines and Requirements
The student will spend a minimum of 120 hours on the ISP. This includes time spent reading, developing contacts, interviewing, participating, making field observations, writing, and meeting with the Academic Director and Advisor. Unless approved for an alternative ISP, the final product is a typed and bound 20-30 page academic paper (monograph-based ISP) or 20-30 page academic paper (practicum-based ISP), double-spaced, with 12-point standard font. Students will share their ISP findings with a formal 20-30 minute oral presentation.

Sample ISP topic areas, among many, include:
- Challenges of historical preservation in a developing society
- The expression of power in Mughal architecture
- Building colonial identity in New Delhi
- A painting survey of the Buddhist pilgrimage route
- Heritage Conservation and Public Perception of Value
- Sectarian Tensions Reflected in Public/Political Arts Projects
- Arts Education in India
- Bazaar Art: Mass produced Religious Imagery
- Female Identity: Blue Jeans, Saris, and Aspirational Fashion
- Groovy Transport: The Art of the Jingle Truck and Embellished Rickshaw
- Pop-Bhajans: Devotional Music and Film Music
- Food Culture: Fast food vs Traditional Religious Food Ideals
- The Video-Wallah: The Changing Rituals of Indian Marriage
- Bollywood at Home and Abroad

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
Assessment of both written work and the oral presentation is based on the accuracy of the information, the breadth and appropriateness of sources, the depth of analysis and insight, the quality of written and verbal expression, the level of cultural sensitivity displayed, and adherence to ethical standards.

During the process of planning, developing, executing and presenting the ISP, students are evaluated on their ability to:

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- Work independently and respectfully within India and in cooperation with institutions and advisors;
- Develop a coherent framework for the project, and justify how the chosen topic lies within the scope of the program and region;
- Critically evaluate theories, papers, and published materials on the ISP topic;
- Clearly present the main objectives of the project;
- Present a reasonable methodological framework;
- Present a coherent historical and cultural context of the topic;
- Present problems, findings and conclusions based on the methods used, data and information collected, and/or analysis performed;
- Illustrate all relevant art historical sites;
- Meet all assignment deadlines.

A monograph-based ISP is given a letter grade, weighted as follows:

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<th>(1) ISP Final Paper: approximately 25–30 pages of written content, exclusive of secondary material such as abstract, maps, bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. It should be footnoted where appropriate and include a full bibliography. If illustrations or recordings are necessary for clarity, they must be included with full citation. Correct Turabian/Chicago citation is expected. The ISP fieldwork journal will be part of the assessment.</th>
<th>60%</th>
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A practicum-based ISP is given a letter grade, weighted as follows:

| (1) ISP Final Paper: approximately 20-25 pages of written scholarly content, exclusive of secondary material such as abstract, maps, bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. It should be footnoted where appropriate and include a full bibliography. If illustrations or recordings are necessary for clarity, they must be included with full citation. Correct Turabian/Chicago citation is expected. This is not a memoir of your practicum, but an academic study of the subject matter. The ISP fieldwork journal will be part of the assessment. | 40% |
| (2) ISP Final Performance/Product Presentation (for practicum-based ISP only): 25 minutes (20 minutes for presentation, 5 minutes for questions). See ISP Supervisor regarding specific individual requirements. As a courtesy to your audience and to other presenters, you must adhere to the time limit. It is expected that careful rehearsal will help with time management. | 60% |

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
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Evaluation criteria for ISPs include:

**Content**
- Coherent development of the project
- Analysis of information
- Use of primary sources (interviews, observations, direct experiments, etc.)
- Use of appropriate secondary sources in support of information gained from primary sources
- Use of Hindi language skills
- Concise use of written language purged of jargon, fluff and ‘filler’ phrases/adjectives
- Correct style, spelling and punctuation

Evaluation criteria for presentations include:
- Organization, clarity and accessibility of presentation
- Appropriate demeanor, manners and language choice
- Clear explanation of methodology
- Ability to field questions
- Time management
- Acknowledgements: Formally thanking others who helped with project: school, scholarships, foundations, SIT, the Academic Director (AD) and advisor

Evaluation criteria for performances/products:
Final performances/products are for practicum-based ISP’s only and will be evaluated by criteria agreed upon in advance by the student, the AD/ISP Supervisor and the ISP Advisor. If you are planning a practicum-based ISP, be sure that you and your AD/ISP Supervisor are in agreement on the objectives to be achieved. If warranted, students may propose an alternate weighting of course components for a practicum-based ISP, to be negotiated with the AD/ISP Supervisor, and approved by the Asia Pacific Dean in Brattleboro. This may be considered if you plan an exhibition of artistic products, or an extensive set of printed materials such as a work of fiction or collection of short stories or poems.

**ISP Mechanics**

**Getting Started**

1. **Decide on a topic**
The topic should lead to a fruitful analysis of a subject related to the program.

2. **Find an ISP advisor**
You need an advisor for your project. The AD will provide you with possible contacts, but it is YOUR responsibility to make the initial contact and obtain the advisor’s consent.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when choosing an advisor:
- The advisor should be someone who has expertise in the subject. The person may or may not be a scholar, for example, the advisor could be an artist, musician or architect.
- Find someone who can spend time with you. Many potential advisors are busy professionals who may not be able to give you adequate time – in that case you may need to look elsewhere.

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After the ISP begins the student and Advisor meet for at least three sessions to discuss, and evaluate progress.
- It is the STUDENT’s responsibility to find an Advisor and to make (and keep) appointments with him or her. This is one of the challenges of the ISP.
- ISPs unsupported by the assistance and evaluation of an ISP advisor will not be accepted.

3. The Draft Proposal and LRB (This is part of Field Methods and Ethics Course)
The ISP Proposals should provide a clear description of your topic, research questions and intentions, and expectations. The draft proposal includes an annotated bibliography of a minimum of ten sources. The proposal will help plan library time, fieldwork time, budget, travel logistics, risk assessment and ethics assessment. Your draft proposal will be submitted to the Local Review Board for assessment of topic value, logistics, risks and ethics. Any requested revisions by the LRB must be implemented before submission of the Final ISP Proposal.

4. After the LRB: Final ISP Proposal and fully filled forms (ISP)
After any necessary LRB revisions for the final proposal, students must submit the following updated material before departure for ISP: research thesis, proposed methodology, budget, itinerary, daily schedule/timeline, literature review of a minimum 15 sources, glossary, ethics assessment, risk assessment, Copyright Release form, Site Information form, HSR application (if working with Human Subjects), complete advisor’s name and address, complete updated student contact info: current email, Indian cell number, mailing address.

ISP Written Format – Organization and Presentation

I. Introduction
   a. State the topic and its relevance to the program theme. Keep a neutral non-subjective voice.
   b. Define the general outline of your study, including the scope, depth and expected outcomes (hypothesis).
   c. Define your terms, including the overall theory on which you are basing your work.

II. Body of Paper/ Methodology
   a. Describe your research methodology such as interviews, library research, site plans, dance classes, music recordings, etc. Explain how you protected the identity and integrity of your participants, maintaining the integrity of your data, how you planned to avoid any misunderstanding/misinterpretation of your data.
   b. Describe the obstacles that arose during the course of your research/practicum.
   c. If necessary, explain how and why you had to change your original plans (basically a cause/effect section) and how that affected the quality, depth and scope of your data.

III. Findings
   a. Focus on the important points of your hypothesis in this section. Keep a non-subjective voice.
   b. Highlight the important aspects of your data and cite responses that either prove or disprove your original hypothesis (it’s ok to be wrong, it is often useful to find out that original assumptions were proven incorrect, or slightly different, than what you had anticipated).

V. Conclusions
   a. The final assessment allows your personal interpretive voice while proving or disproving your original hypothesis.
   b. You can include your analysis/interpretation of findings in this section as the proof you need to argue for or against your original theory.

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c. Describe what the implications of your study are (i.e., Why your findings are important. How can this information enhance the existing body of knowledge already available on the topic? What new questions arose out of your findings? How will these findings inform your future research interests?).

VI. Limitations of the study and Recommendations for further study:
Though optional, this section is highly recommended. Legitimize your study by pointing out its shortcomings and biases (all studies have them, of course). Give recommendations for further research; either your own research, or that of future students.

VII. Citations:
Do not use endnotes. Use bottom of page footnotes. Use Turabian/Chicago footnote style. Be consistent.

VIII. Bibliography and List of Sources:
This should include all primary and secondary resources used. Primary resources and secondary (textual) resources should be listed under separate headings. Please use Turabian/Chicago style citation and be consistent.

IX. Appendices
a. Maps, illustrations, recordings, (with full citation).
b. If used, include a copy of your questionnaire, or survey questions,
c. Include a copy of your written consent form (not the ones signed by participants - those you keep in a safe place). If you do not have written consent, you can state that you have a record of the verbal consent given by the participant.

Role of Academic Director (AD) and ISP Advisor: The AD advises students on methodology, background reading, and in-country contacts. The AD, in consultation with the in-country advisor, evaluates the completed project and assigns the grade.

The advisor should be a host national or long-time foreign resident, who has knowledge of the ISP topic. The project advisor may be an academician, or topic-relevant professional. Finding an advisor is the student’s responsibility, but the AD must approve the advisor. The purpose of an advisor, beyond providing needed expertise, is to provide students with the experience of working closely with local professionals.

Students meet with the ISP advisor at least three times during the semester to discuss the ISP topic and research progress. It is the student’s responsibility to secure and keep appointments with the project advisor.

Responsibilities when conducting fieldwork:
- Students must respect, and protect, 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 must either remain anonymous, or to receive recognition, must be scrupulously defended and respected.

- Students must acknowledge the help they receive and must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in appropriate ways.

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• Students must 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.

Expectations and Policies

• All written assignments are to be typed and handed into the AD’s box.

• Whether a monograph-based or practicum-based ISP, all components of the course must be completed satisfactorily to receive a passing grade.

• If your chosen ISP site is far away from computing facilities, please be sure to factor writing, editing and proofreading time into your ISP itinerary. Give yourself ample time to write. Write every day, so that you do not write up your research in a last minute rush. The consolidation period is intended for last minute printing, not for composition of the ISP Final Paper and Presentation.

• Conducting an ISP is also about time management. Keeping track of your ISP tasks and time limits will save you anxiety and will lower your stress levels. Allow for obstacles (such as power outages, holidays, traffic, computer crashes, illnesses, lost flash drives, lost field notes, etc.) and plan accordingly. Keep in mind that photocopying and binding takes at least a day.

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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