Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 (4 credits / 120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Tanzania: Zanzibar - Coastal Ecology and Natural Resource Management

Please Note: 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.

Course Description
The Independent Study Project (ISP) is an academic project that is designed to allow the student the opportunity to study in greater depth an aspect of particular academic interest relating to the program theme. The topic study can be anything of interest to the student that lies within the scope of the program and the immediate region, and is usually developed out of the lectures, discussions, and field trips of the Coastal Ecology and Natural Resource Management Seminar. Each student will have the guidance of the Academic Director and an advisor in selecting and refining their topic. Advisors are usually host country professors or experienced field professionals, who specialize in the student’s particular field of interest. In conducting their projects, students directly utilize the concepts and skills of field-based learning discussed in the Environmental Research Methods and Ethics Seminar; language capabilities developed through formal instruction in the Intensive Swahili course as well as informal practice; knowledge gained in the Coastal Ecology and Natural Resource Management Seminar; and contacts made in the homestay and larger community setting. Students are expected to complete 120 hours of field-based (non-archival, non-library) research on their topic, submit a substantial written paper on the topic, and deliver an oral presentation of their project.

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

- Demonstrate in depth knowledge of a particular aspect of ecology, development, conservation, environment and/or society in Zanzibar.
- Demonstrate competence in the processes involved in independent research, from choosing a viable topic and appropriate methodologies to final analysis and interpretation of research materials.
• Develop a greater appreciation of the challenges faced by researchers in the environmental sciences.
• Demonstrate independence and self-confidence in functioning in daily life in Zanzibar.
• Develop an internalized and continual consideration for the awareness, development, and incorporation of a standard of ethics for appropriate field research, particularly in terms of reciprocity and sustainability.
• Demonstrate continual awareness of the ethics of field research and cultural learning, particularly in terms of interaction and reciprocity.

Course Requirements
All ISP projects must be approved in advance by the academic director (AD). Students are required to submit formal research proposals outlining the topic of their ISPs, methodology, and the steps which students will take to ensure that the project is conducted in an ethical and responsible, culturally and environmentally appropriate manner. The proposals must meet standards for local academic practice and are approved by the AD in consultation with a Local Review Board and where necessary, SIT Study Abroad’s Institutional Review Board. ISPs that may be further disseminated after the program must confirm to the more stringent standards of the Office for Human Research Protections. Any alteration of the methodology during the course of the ISP must be cleared with the AD.

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’s ISP topic. Students should also consult selected readings from the ERME course covering both anthropological and ecological field methods and techniques applicable to the ISP.

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

Independent Study Project Assignments
Student will spend a minimum of 120 hours on the ISP. These hours, documented in the Independent Study Project fieldwork journals, include time spent reading, interviewing, making field observations and writing, as well as approximately 10 hours of meetings with the Academic Directors and project advisor. The final product is a 30 to 40-page paper, and a presentation to fellow students, program staff, and other invited guests. Alternative forms of Independent Study Projects are a possibility students may explore in consultation with the Academic Director.

In conjunction with the project advisor, the Academic Director will evaluate student performance. Their assessment of the 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, and the quality of expression. Special emphasis is placed on the student’s ability to integrate primary and secondary sources and to present the findings in a clear, organized, and well-synthesized format. Technical details such as format, grammar, spelling and proper citation will also be considered for the final grade. The oral presentation must be well organized, hold the interest of the audience, with a clear explanation of ISP
strategy and implementation. The ISP Journal must reflect and analyze the daily research/work conducted as part of the ISP.

**Evaluation**

Written paper  
Oral Presentation  
ISP Journal  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written paper</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISP Journal</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**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**

Timely completion of all ISP assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All grades assigned will take into account the students’ special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. An “A” grade for any 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.

**Student Expectations**

**Responsibilities when conducting Fieldwork**

- Students must respect, protect and promote the rights and the welfare of all those affected by their work by doing everything in their power to protect the dignity and privacy of the people with whom they conduct field study. Likewise, respect, care and attention should be given to protecting, conserving and restoring the natural environment.
- The right of those providing information to students either to remain anonymous or to receive recognition is to be respected and defended.
- Students must acknowledge the help and services they receive. They must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in culturally and environmentally appropriate ways.
- Students must record and represent accurately all aspects of the field study. This includes not representing as their own work, either in speaking or writing, materials or ideas directly taken 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.
**Student research** (Independent Study Project, Field Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Statement of Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISP/FSPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive, copy, or convert the ISP/FSP for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archives my ISP/FSP in the permanent collection at the SIT Study Abroad local country program office and/or at any World Learning office. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad has a non-exclusive, perpetual right to store and make available, including electronic online open access, to the ISP/FSP. Students retain all ownership rights of the ISP/FSP product and retain the right to use all, or part, of my project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP and FSP form.