Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (6 Credits / 180 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Uganda: Development Studies

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent 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 is intended to foster either of two competencies, depending on what students choose for the specific focus of their ISP. Students may complete a practicum with a development organization, using that opportunity to learn in greater depth about development, as it is practiced. To this end, they will apply and test the concepts and skills gained in the research methods seminar, the language capabilities developed through both formal and informal instruction and the theories and concepts conveyed in the development studies seminar. They are expected to write a thirty to forty page critically reflecting on their experience. Alternatively, the students may write a thirty to forty page research paper based on primary data collected in unfamiliar settings. Students use this research ISP to hone their skills in dealing with and learning from the unexpected, and accomplishing a research project task in a new and challenging environment. By the end of the six weeks practicum/ISP, students will have had either a hands-on experience with a development project or built the competence to conduct data in unfamiliar settings and produce a well written research report.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the practicum/ISP the students will be able to:

- Develop a profile for the host organization and set up an organization be it at home or in the host country;
- Articulate the role(s) of the host- and similar organizations within the local development context;
- Reflect on the practicum and assess lessons learned regarding the challenges of NGOs in their role to support growth and development in a country like Uganda;
- Apply different research methods and critique their effectiveness; and

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• Learn how to build rapport at an organization within a community;

OR

• Define the ways through which one can navigate and mitigate the challenges of collecting data in unfamiliar settings;
• Construct a well written research report;
• Interpret the norms and practices that guide research activity in unfamiliar settings such as Uganda; and
• Assess the relevance and applicability of conventional research methods in the Ugandan cultural setting.

Methods
From the first week of the semester, you should begin serious thoughts about your practicum or ISP (see also Research Methods and Ethics section). You should work with the AD and other program staff to brainstorm and refine your practicum/ISP ideas. In addition, begin to consider possible advisors and start having preliminary discussions with them regarding what your role will be at the organization. You should have solidified a substantial part of your ideas before the ISP/practicum related ISP period begins.

For practicum you may do either of the following:

a) Investigate a specific issue(s) that relates to an organization’s mandate, using both primary and secondary sources. In this case your practicum paper will constitute a case study of the particular issue that you investigated.

b) Describe and analyze your work and involvement with the organization, identifying the lessons that you have learned from the experience.

For ISP you are required to investigate a research question, based on the proposal that you developed in the Research Methods and Ethics course, and to write a 30-40 page independent study paper.

Requirements
You will spend a minimum of 180 hours on the practicum/ISP. This includes time spent reading, developing contacts, interviewing, making field observations, writing, meeting with the academic director and your practicum advisor, and actual hands-on work in a development organization. The final product is a typed and bound 30-40 page paper. The highlight of the assignment is a twenty-minute presentation to fellow students, program staff, your advisor and other invited guests.

Assessment
The academic director evaluates your work, based on a rubric that you will be provided. Attention is given to the following criteria:

• Organization of the report, i.e. all required components in a systematic and
concise manner.

- Relevance of the topic/issue or organization, i.e. relevance to development studies, contribution made to local/organizational needs.
- Depth of analysis, i.e. extent to which connections and relationships are made among the various sets of data and between the data and theory, relevance, quality and depth of the discussion and conclusions.
- Coherence, i.e. logical flow and clarity of expression.
- Language, i.e. punctuation and writing conventions.

**Suggested Readings:**
See the Research Methods and Ethics syllabus for suggested readings, which you may consult from time to time during the practicum/ISP.

**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.