Course Syllabus

Field Methods and Ethics
ANTH 3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
China: Language, Cultures, and Ethnic Minorities

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
This course provides training in field methods and enables students to learn effectively from living and conducting field study in unfamiliar environments. The course challenges students to go beyond the familiar confines of the home campus and take full advantage of opportunities for learning and field study in China.

The concepts and skills developed in this course underlie and reinforce all other program components and have three related objectives. Following an immersion in local cultural and communication dynamics through a variety of experiential learning opportunities, the seminar introduces methods of ethnographic field study, emphasizing qualitative research methods such as participant observation, interviewing, and simple questionnaires and surveys. Emphasis is placed on collecting, interpreting and using information from primary sources. Discussions, field exercises, and work journal assignments focus on observations and interviews, with analysis and insight into the cultures studied emphasized throughout. Next, the seminar includes in-depth readings and discussion of the importance of ethics in the context of fieldwork, including the history of ethical guidelines in the social sciences and the processes of Human Subjects Review. Finally, the course focuses on the development of a research proposal for the students’ subsequent in-depth one-month Independent Study Project (ISP) largely based on information obtained from primary sources. For the ISP, students are guided to develop a proposal in which the topic of study and the methodology are realistic within the constraints of time and available resources, and yield interesting, fresh, and insightful perspectives, while comparing and contrasting the findings from primary and secondary sources.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the Field Methods and Ethics course, students will be able to:
- Perform ethical field study in China, including effective communication and independent provision for basic needs and travel;
- Demonstrate sensitivity to their impact on the local cultures within which they are operating within a framework of ethical fieldwork;

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• Develop initiative in, and responsibility for, their own learning, through academic, cross-cultural, and social skill-building activities;
• Analyze data gathered in the field and make empirically supported interpretations and conclusions.
• Identify and work with primary sources in the field by engaging in methods of data collection such as participant observation, interviewing, and simple questionnaires and surveys.
• Differentiate field-based learning processes from traditional academic structures. Develop confidence and initiative in the ability to learn from experience in field-based exercises through cultural analysis and self-reflection;
• Design an Independent Study Project and methodology that is realistic within the constraints of time and available resources, and that will best yield interesting, fresh, and insightful perspectives on the host culture and that compares and contrasts the significance of primary and secondary resources in fieldwork methodology;
• Become familiar with fieldwork ethics, including the historical background and importance of this complex ongoing academic and moral discussion. Students should recognize and employ currently accepted ethical guidelines in place for anthropologists and social scientists;
• Recognize and reflect on the complexities inherent in working with a foreign language, including the use of translators, interpreters and ethical methods of working with local communities, cultural informants and interviewees;
• Apply information from the thematic seminar, the program and Brattleboro-based SIT library and accessible databases, as well as other web-based information to extend and deepen interest in, knowledge of, and integration into, the cultures of China, including ethnic minorities in Yunnan.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English or in Chinese with English translation.

Course Requirements

Course Schedule
This Seminar is designed to take advantage of local resources and field exercises. It is usually initiated by a lecture or an introduction to the field study activities, followed by a focused field study exercise, and reflected upon through presentations, analytic papers and group discussions. Debriefing sessions led by students or faculty, come at the end of each module.
Reading assignments are attached to each section.

The Seminar is built around six modules: (1) Orientation and Cross-cultural Exchange; (2) Group/Individual Exploration; (3) Cultural Emersion-Homestays; (4) Field Work Methods; (5) Field Work Ethics; (6) Reentry Issues

Module 1: Introduction and Cross-Cultural Exchange (10 hours)
This module serves as an introduction to the social environment, cultural setting, and communication practices of China in general and Yunnan in particular. The students are pushed to function in Chinese society and to interact with the local people from very beginning in order to develop a foundation for learning and conducting field based study methods.

During the program orientation period in Tonghai, the work journal assignment is introduced. Students are asked to keep a field studies journal, separate from a personal journal, with entries integrating subjective accounts of cultural events, lecture and reading notes, as well as recording contact information for those students planning on pursuing an Independent Study Project. The Journal is a tool for processing

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information received from a multitude of sources and serves as a repository for contact e-mail addresses and phone numbers for potential resources in future projects. It is also useful for recording interviews and meetings with informants in Kunming and in the field.

**Session 1: Intercultural Communication and Understanding in Tonghai**
Shortly after arrival in Kunming, the group travels to the smaller town of Tonghai, a more representative example of a Yunnanese town than the rapidly modernizing capital City of Kunming. Tonghai is the ideal setting for our orientation meetings and discussions, which are held in both our Tonghai hotel conference room and in the Xiushan temple complex, located on a Buddhist and Daoist mountain which forms the backdrop of Tonghai town. Containing both ancient as well as modern elements in Tonghai, students are immediately exposed to life in a traditional and historically important town, at some remove from urban life, where students visit temples and attend a traditional musical performance. Students emerge from their three days in Tonghai with cultural do’s and don’ts and what they may expect from the experiential learning and field studies on which they are about to embark. The experiential components arranged in this section include:

- Meeting and performance with Tonghai Bound Feet Women Dance and Exercise Group (Liuyi Village)
- Xiushan Buddhism Mountain (Tonghai)
- Ancient Dongjing Music (Tonghai)
- Yuanming Buddhism Temple (Tonghai)

*Reading Assignments:*

**Session 2: Crossing Cultures: Discussion**
This exercise consists of a debriefing and reflection on experiential activities, and a discussion of readings, encouraging each student to recognize shared fears and expectations regarding field studies in China.

*Reading Assignment:*

**Session 3: Cross-Cultural Discussion with Students at Yunnan Nationalities University**
This discussion is an informal meeting between students at nearby universities, including our own campus at Yunnan Nationalities Universities. SIT students interact and form friendships with Chinese students and within the host culture. Integrates students into the local university community. Gain greater insight into the Chinese educational system and Chinese student life.

*Reading Assignment:*

**Session 4: Kunming Drop-off Exercise**
This exercise, common to all SIT study abroad programs but different in each program location, introduces students to the program base in Kunming through small group explorations which encourage the use of local public transportation and empowers students in the skills acquisition required to move about in what

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Reading Assignment:

Module 2: Group/Individual Exploration (22 hours)
This module, which contains a group or individual exploration project in Yunnan or nearby provinces in China, is one of empowerment. Requires language and cultural learning. Utilizes basic skills required for life in China. Evaluates personal experience of increasing empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, and flexibility. Develops self-confidence in ability to conduct fieldwork in China. Prepares students for logistical difficulties that may be encountered during future assignments outside the classroom. Students who study intensive language during ISP period are asked to make good use of their FME training skills in their language assignments by communicating with local people in a culturally appropriate way.

Session 1: Introduction to Yunnan Exploration Project
The powerpoint introduction explains the academic purposes and the importance of the Yunnan Exploration Project in our field study seminar and provide basic information of the possible destinations that the students can explore. The project requirements and field study rules are emphasized.

Session 2: Yunnan Exploration Project
After several weeks experiencing Chinese student life on the campus of Yunnan Nationalities University and learning through lectures and guided discussion in the Chinese Culture and Ethnic Minorities Seminar about the myriad wonders of the diverse province of Yunnan, the Yunnan Exploration Project asks students to identify a site or sites that they would like to explore in more depth. Responsible for planning their trip and managing their own logistics, with guided assistance as needed, students obtain their own bus, train or, occasionally, plane tickets to and from their destinations, learning or enhancing the basic “survival skills” for their Independent Study Project later in the semester.

Session 3: Presentation and Debrief on Yunnan Exploration Project
On their return and in the broader context of course readings, lectures and discussion, students give small-group presentations and write individual papers detailing and reflecting on the “critical incidents” during the project that led to greater understanding of some aspect of Chinese and ethnic minority social practices and cultures. Students are encouraged to record their progress made through this activity, in terms of language skill development, ISP development and personal development. In addition, in this exercise students often reflect upon differences between the cultures and societies they observe during this project and the societies from which they themselves are emerging, and explore their own interior journeys and what they learned about themselves along the way.

Reading Assignments:


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Module 3: Cultural Immersion—homestays
An urban and a rural homestay are arranged for our students to integrate the experience of participating in the lives of a Chinese family, frequently associated with the academic community in the case of Kunming, with all other components of the China: Language, Cultures and Ethnic Minorities program, including direct experience of, and the chance to discuss, elements of the thematic seminar and gain first-hand knowledge about how Chinese culture functions within an urban and rural context. Enhances Chinese language acquisition. Engages students in Chinese daily family life. Homestay family members are often chosen as informants for the Life History interview assignment and are valuable resource for students' ISPs.

In Shaxi, students will directly confront the realities of the lives of China’s rural agricultural and ethnic peoples, through 同吃,同住,同劳动 (eating together, living together and working together). The homestay enables recognition of the very different levels of society that exist side-by-side in modern China through the combination of homestays in urban Kunming and rural Shaxi.

Session 1: Introduction to homestays
An introduction to both Urban and rural homestays explains the importance and purpose of homestay activities in the field study seminar, provide the students with cross-cultural tools and remind the students homestay regulations that they need to follow.

Session 2: Kunming Homestay
This ungraded two-week homestay is frequently cited as one of the most valuable experiences of the semester. Integrates the experience of participating in the lives of a Chinese family, frequently associated with the academic community in the case of Kunming, with all other components of the China: Language, Cultures and Ethnic Minorities program, including direct experience of, and the chance to discuss, elements of the thematic seminar and gain first-hand knowledge about how Chinese culture functions within an urban context. Enhances Chinese language acquisition. Engages students in Chinese daily family life. Homestay family members are often chosen as informants for the Life History interview assignment.

Reading Assignments:

Session 3: Shaxi Rural Homestay
A second, four or five night rural homestay in the Bai ethnic nationality community of Shaxi allows students to appreciate the agrarian lifestyle of this primarily farming community. Historically an important trading center on the ancient tea and horse caravan route between southern Yunnan towards Tibet and beyond, Shaxi is equally significant as a stopover on the “southern silk road” between India and China, in the days of the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms (7th-13th centuries) before Yunnan was a part of China, by which Buddhism was transmitted to China. It is now a protected World Monuments site and is home to several ancient buildings, temples and a traditional square and opera stage, meticulously restored by the Swiss-based Shaxi Rehabilitation Project. It is also adjacent to the Shibaoshan forested mountain, replete with ancient temples where students spend one night and visit the Indian influenced stone grottoes of the Nanzhao kingdom. This site is where the Community Study Project is conducted.

Reading Assignment:
Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, (2008), Introduction to Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, Internal document

Session 4: Debrief and Comparison of Urban and Rural Homestay Experiences
At the end of the two homestays, each student is asked to fill out an evaluation form on their homestay experience and to discuss the impact of the experience as well as their thoughts on issues regarding China.
and their understanding of Chinese/minority cultures. Students also share field study skills developed during the homestay with other group members.

**Module 4: Field Study Methods (20 hours)**
This module is an introduction to methods of ethnographic field study, emphasizing qualitative research methods such as participant observation, interviewing, questionnaires and surveys. Emphasis is placed on collecting, interpreting and using information from primary sources. Discussions, field exercises, and work journal assignments focus on observations and interviews, with analysis and insight into the cultures studied emphasized throughout. It also focuses on the development of a research proposal for the students’ subsequent in-depth one-month Independent Study Project (ISP) largely based on information obtained from primary sources. The ISP will employ a methodology that is realistic within the constraints of time and available resources, yield interesting, fresh, and insightful perspectives on the host culture and compare and contrast the significance of primary and secondary resources in fieldwork. Several field study projects are carried out in order to make the link between theoretical study and learning from work in the field.

**Session 1: Field Study Methods introduction**
This lecture covers the anthropological field study methods developed in China, both in theory and in practice. Useful field study skills are introduced. Possible difficulties and challenges that could occur in field study are discussed.

*Reading Assignments:*

**Session 2: Tips from former SIT Students and Fulbright Scholars**
Several Fulbrighters and former SIT students are invited to talk to the new group of students about their experiences of studying in China and provide their suggestions/adivces for current students on conducting field study in China.

**Session 3: Life History Interview**
After readings and discussion on collecting life histories, students choose an informant from any walk of life. Just a few examples include elderly homestay grandparents, who can provide a personal glance into Chinese history during the tumultuous period of their lives in 20th and 21st century China, recently divorced successful female entrepreneurs, street vendors, migrant workers, and Chinese students, to name but a few of the endless possible choices of informants. Acquire the skills to overcome methodological hurdles faced in the interview process, including the use of translators, interviewing in Chinese or in English and the cultural barriers that often crop up in this standard anthropological exercise. The Life History Interview and paper prepare students for their Community Study Project interviews and are of particular importance for those students who choose to pursue an Independent Study Project. Raises awareness of the diversity to be found at all levels of contemporary Chinese society. This exercise equips students with appropriate and successful interviewing techniques and skills. In evaluating this exercise, cultural analysis is emphasized and over simple detail and description.

*Reading Assignments:*

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**Session 4: Debrief on Life History Interview Experience**
A student-led discussion session reflects on their Life History Interviews in order to summarize the field study skills and lessons learned through this activity, such as choosing an informant, question design, formal and informal interviews, organizing and analyzing data and story-telling.

**Session 5: Community Study Projects**
Possible choices for the Community Study Project are virtually endless. They include gender roles in the community, waste water management, the yearly agricultural cycle, the advent of tourism and its effects on Shaxi, religious life. In effect, any subject of relevance and interest to the student and valuable for the group discussion about the community is possible. Provides direct fieldwork experience for those students pursuing an Independent Study Project or any future fieldwork. Compels a focused analysis of some aspects of local Shaxi society. Leads all involved towards a greater comprehension of the intricate dynamics which exist within even small local communities.

*Reading Assignment:*

**Session 6: Presentation of Community Study Project**
Students prepare detailed written outlines of presentations to the group on one aspect of the community in which they conduct their rural homestays, at present the small agrarian Bai nationality township of Shaxi. Through which, students get a whole picture of the village where they live and work with the local minority people and the challenging issues that the farmers are facing.

**Module 5: Field Work Ethics (4 hours)**
This module includes in-depth readings and discussion of the importance of ethics in the context of fieldwork, including the history of ethical guidelines in the social sciences and the processes of Human Subjects Review. It also provides useful information on field work ethics in Chinese context so that our students will be accepted by local communities when conducting their projects in China.

**Session 1: Ethical Fieldwork in the Social Sciences**
This lecture, accompanied by readings on the subject, explores the history and development of the current emphasis, indeed insistence, in academia on ethical fieldwork brought to the fore in the field of bio-medicine by the infamous Tuskegee experiments and in the social sciences by research among the Yanomami of Brazil and even Margaret Mead’s controversial research among young women in Samoa. Current ethical regulations in place today will be detailed and the various forms of “implied consent” discussed, including the situations in which formal consent forms are necessary or unnecessary within the Chinese cultural context. Students come away from this lecture with a greater recognition of the potential effects and repercussions on individuals and communities under study in order to conduct ethical fieldwork within specific cultural contexts and groups. Prepares students to undertake ethical fieldwork according to codes adopted by organizations such as the American Anthropological Association.

*Reading Assignments:*

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**Session 2: Institutional Review Boards**
The rationale and necessity for Institutional Review Boards, as well as the ways in which they function, are discussed. Students break up into small groups which replicate the SIT Institutional Review Board process by examining students’ preliminary independent study proposals in the light of ethical fieldwork and Institutional Review Board policies. Students thus directly confront the issues that such review boards, both at SIT and their sending institutions address and under which circumstances such reviews are necessary. The various levels of review and their ramifications, including expedited review and full institutional review, inform students in the formulation of their final Independent Study Proposals and prepare them for the ethical review process, now in place in colleges, universities and graduate schools throughout the United States, on SIT Study Abroad programs and, increasingly, in other parts of the world. On successful completion of this exercise, those students pursuing an Independent Study Project should be able to draw up a proposal that will pass SIT’s institutional Review Board. This exercise helps prepare students for future research proposals.

Reading Assignments:

**Session 3: Mini-orientation for ISP and Discussion on Field Study Ethics**
Right before ISP starts, a mini-orientation designed for the ISP particularly, focuses on field study ethics, safety and security rules and practical useful information on methodology. Questions and answers related to the field study are encouraged.

Reading Assignments:

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

**Description of Assignments, Assessment and Grading Scale**
Evaluation of student performance for the Field Methods and Ethics course is based on the following components:

**Participation: 10%**
Students are expected to attend all scheduled course activities and demonstrate engagement in lectures, discussions and excursions by active listening, note-taking and asking relevant questions.

**Presentations: 40%**
Group or individual presentations will be required after the Kunming Drop off activity, Beijing Educational Excursion, Yunnan Exploration Project and Community Study Project. Students must prepare and deliver the presentations seriously in a professional manner. The presentations should present the students’ academic findings and demonstrate the usefulness of their ethical field work by explaining key points to their peers.

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Course Papers: 50%
First Impressions paper, Yunnan Exploration paper, Life History Interview paper and Community Study Project outline will be assigned over the course of the seminar, after related activities. These assignments are evaluated on the basis of ethically use of field study methods, correct factual understanding, depth of critical thinking, creative and informed analysis, and correct language use.

First Impressions paper: Assigned at the program orientation period and due at the end of the orientation period.

Yunnan Exploration paper: Assigned at the end of History and Religion Module and due after the Yunnan Exploration Project presentations.

Life History Interview and paper: Assigned at the end of Social Issues/Arts and Humanity Module and due before the group field excursion to NW Yunnan.

Community Study Project outline: Assigned before entering Shaxi rural homestay and due after the Shaxi rural homestay experience.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for this course is as follows:

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<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<td>90-93%</td>
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<td>87-89%</td>
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<td>84-86%</td>
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<td>80-83%</td>
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<td>below 64</td>
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Expectations and Policies
Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.

Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.

Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.

Attendance. All students are required to attend all lectures and to participate in all bi-weekly discussion and analysis sessions. All excursions are mandatory and students must discuss absences with the Academic Director before the planned departure.

Participation. Participation is not the same as attendance. All students are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the course. This means asking pertinent questions to the course’s guest lecturers, engaging in discussion and analysis during lectures, group discussions and on excursions. Students are expected to complete the required reading in a timely fashion, and to demonstrate their understanding of texts through reflection, writing, and discussion.

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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.