Community Development Seminar: Urban & Rural Perspectives

DVST 3000 (3 credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Madagascar: Urbanization and Rural Development

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 factors that induce rural dwellers to move to urban areas are varied and the consequences for human settlement are many. Despite a strong sense of Malagasy attachment to their (rural) lands, the population of Madagascar's cities is rapidly expanding. While current population distributions are estimated at 80% rural and 20% urban, within the next ten years the population of Madagascar's cities is predicted to increase to over 50% due, mainly, to an emergent rural exodus. This shift is happening amid an ever-expanding birth rate, with the overall population of Madagascar projected to double within the next twenty years. Though population densities remain low in some regions, the island nation's resource base already shows signs of strain and acute environmental crisis. A lack of transparency and good governance further complicate conditions.

In spite of many challenges, Malagasy are remarkably resilient. Whether in urban or rural areas, most Malagasy rely on some form of subsistence strategy for survival. In rural areas, the majority depends on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. Access to employment other than farming, as well as to education and health care, tends to be quite limited. For recent rural migrants, cities and towns in Madagascar have long surpassed their capacity to accommodate newcomers, who often arrive with little in the way of marketable skills and few prospects for employment. Decent housing and access to even the most basic needs are often in short supply. In urban, as well as rural, areas, community development initiatives at the local level are beginning to address needs that surpass what can be met by individuals or by a national government mired in chronic crisis. This seminar focuses on this community work – in urban and rural spaces – to gain insight into strategies of adaptability and resilience, while understanding urban and rural relationships as necessarily commingled and mutually constitutive.

Classroom lectures, readings, seminar discussions, critical reflection sessions, and field-based activities are designed to be complimentary and, taken together, constitute an experiential approach to learning. Sample classroom lectures include “Social Geography of Madagascar,” “Sustained Local Development,” and “Malagasy Culture & Global Influences.” Examples of field-based activities include visits to outdoor markets, schools, hospitals, government offices, local NGOs, a women’s weaving cooperative, a microfinance institution, farms, a commercial port, new housing developments, and national parks.
Learning Outcomes
The Community Development Seminar (CDS) has an interdisciplinary, integrative, and critical focus encompassing 45 academic hours (3 credits). Upon completion of the seminar, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of Malagasy cultures, geography, economy, politics and history;
- Explain the forces driving migration to- and from- urban and rural areas of Madagascar, and back again;
- Identify the factors that influence movements in urban and rural settlement in Madagascar and the subsistence strategies developed in both rural and urban communities;
- Evaluate the consequences of rapid urbanization and environmental degradation on Malagasy culture and society; and
- Analyze the role of community development organizations and initiatives in rural and urban settings in Madagascar.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English and French. Throughout the seminar, students will be exposed to French language vocabulary in the Malagasy context as relates to course content, including social and economic change, community development, urbanization, and rural outmigration, through lectures, discussions, readings, and field visits. Required readings will be in English, with recommended readings in French and English.

Course Schedule
*All written assignments should be typed unless permission is given otherwise. Texts sent by e-mail will not be accepted. Make sure you have a flash drive, laptop or computer available and keep back up files so nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.*

The Community Development Seminar is structured as four interrelated modules focused on the study of community development in Madagascar from urban and rural perspectives. Within each module, students explore inter-related contemporary issues tied to four overlapping thematic areas: 1) social and economic development; 2) culture and identity; 3) governance and politics; 4) environment and natural resources.

The following section contains more detailed information about the four modules. Each module includes a series of lectures, educational excursions, assignments, discussions and readings. A detailed list of activities, utilizing the most up-to-date opportunities in a variety of field settings, will be handed out at the beginning of each module.

Community Development Seminar Modules

1. Community Development: Origins and Impacts
2. Antananarivo: Perspectives from the Capital City
3. Betafo: Perspectives from a Farming Community in the Central Highlands
4. One Eye on the Past, One Eye on the Future: Traditions and Transitions

Module 1 - Community Development: Origins and Impacts
This module begins in the capital Antananarivo (Tana) and moves to the coastal city of Majunga, to partner with Malagasy Mahomby, a community-based association. The majority of scheduled activities in Module 1 comprise field-based visits to schools, public health facilities, NGOs, government offices and private industry. This module encourages students to explore social complexity and policy issues from the perspective of a diverse and rapidly changing urban coastal community outside the capital city. As many homestay families in Majunga are members of Malagasy Mahomby, you will be able to build on your cultural and linguistic immersion in the community with a focus on the personal community development experiences of your families in Majunga.

As part of this module, we will also include two brief excursions:
• a visit to Ankarafantsika National Park, managed by a partnership between the Madagascar National Parks and the local population; and
• a visit to farming communities in the Marovoay district.

The following topics will be covered through field-based activities, lectures, discussions, and readings in Module 1:

- Urban-Rural Interface
- Colonial Legacy
- Urban Planning / Settlement Mapping
- Public Health & Education
- Gender & Development
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Assets-based Community Development
- Kinship, Ethnicity & Social Structure
- Public Administration & Decentralization
- Resource Access & Management
- Water & Sanitation
- Local NGOs & Associations
- Tourism & Protected Areas
- Sustainable Development in Context

Sample session:

Session 1: Social Geography of Madagascar with Prof. Razafimahefa

Field-based Activities / Educational Excursions: Majunga school, public hospital, fokontany office, public sanitation administration, commercial port, local NGO, women’s weaving cooperative.

Assignments: Current Events Paper and Majunga Study Project

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

Module 2 - Antananarivo: Perspectives from the Capital City
Returning to Tana, a homestay in the capital city of Antananarivo provides students with opportunities to interrogate issues related to rapid urbanization in the Malagasy context. Tana is our program base; a vibrant city at the center of the country’s political, commercial and artistic activity; and the epicenter of urban Madagascar’s pitfalls and possibilities.

The following topics will be covered through field-based activities, lectures, and readings:

- Urban Geography
- Informal & Formal Economies
- Rural Exodus
- Housing & Informal Settlements
- Waste Management
- Public Infrastructures and Transport
- Social Spaces in the Urban Setting
- Human Security
- Architecture
- Energy: Current Sources & Alternatives

Sample session
**Session 1:** Urban Geography with Prof. Raharinjanahary

**Field-based Activities / Educational Excursions:** neighborhood visits, urban markets, architectural walking tour, informal settlements, power company.

**Assignment:** Antananarivo Community Study Project

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Module 3 - Betafo: Perspectives from a Farming Community in the Central Highlands**

The rural stay in the Betafo area associated with this module allows students a unique perspective on life in rural Madagascar. This module centers on the Vakinankaratra region where we will be based in the town of Antsirabe, a regional capital which also has a significant industrial base. The highlight is the rural homestay in the vicinity of the commune of Betafo. Each student is placed with a host family by our local partner, a private primary and secondary school called Les Trois Pins. Most of the host families send their children to the school and are members of the local parent-teacher association.

Although population pressures and economic factors have led to migration in many parts of the country, attachment to one’s ancestral homeland or tanin-drazana is an essential element of Malagasy cultural identity. Despite the recent growth of urban populations, most Malagasy maintain a connection to a rural homeland, the tanin-drazana, where the family tomb is usually located. A majority of the population still practices some form of subsistence agriculture on which the entire population depends. Thus, spending some time in a rural setting is essential to our understanding of the ways in which the urban and the rural co-articulate.

The following areas of focus will be covered through field-based activities, lectures, discussions, and readings in Module 3:

- Community Organization
- Agricultural Practices & Technology
- Land Tenure
- Literacy
- Rural to Rural Migrations
- Infrastructures and Access
- Food Security
- Microfinance
- *Dahalo*: Rural Insecurity
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
Sample Session

Session 1: Sustained Local Development with Programme Matoy

Field-based Activities / Educational Excursions: This module is based on a week-long immersion with a host family that practices farming and livestock breeding for their livelihood. Other visits may include: primary schools, public health clinics, local authorities, microfinance institutions, and community-based development projects.

Assignment: Betafo Community Study Project

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Module 4 - One Eye on the Past, One Eye on the Future: Traditions and Transitions
Some Malagasy revere the island’s many endemic species of chameleon for their independently rotating eyes which are thought to be able to see the past and the future at the same time. Accordingly, prior to the start of the Independent Study Project (ISP), we endeavor to draw together a synthesis of current issues founded on a nuanced understanding of Madagascar’s past and with an eye toward its future. Starting from the community level that we explore in various settings over the course of two months, an effort is made to place local issues into a broader national and international context.

This module takes place primarily in Antananarivo but also includes brief excursions to Moramanga, Andasibe, and the port city of Tamatave, located on the east coast.

The following specific topics will be covered through field-based activities, discussions, lectures, and readings:

- Traditions and Social Change
- Social Mobility & Exclusion
- Political & Economic Crises
- Foreign Aid and Investment
- Human Capital & Capabilities
- Demographic Pressures and Resources
- Conservation vs. Poverty Alleviation
- Afrobarometer: Democracy in Context
- Global Influences on Malagasy Culture
Sample Session
Session 1: Malagasy Culture & Global Influences with Prof. Ramanbimbilahatra

Field-based Activities / Educational Excursions: Students choose from a menu of contents and contacts related to their interests for the Thematic Explorations assignment.

Assignment: Thematic Explorations Paper

Pre-Departure Required Reading


Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Optional Course Readings


Urban Issues


Rural Issues


**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

**Community Development Seminar (CDS) Assignments**

All assignments may be submitted in either English or French. Timely completion of all CDS assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, and depth of understanding, argumentation and presentation of evidence. Additional information for each of the assignments, below, will be provided during orientation.

**Assessment:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Events Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Study Projects (3 @ 10% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Explorations Paper / Presentation</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Description of Assignments:**

**Current Events Paper:** Select a current event or news story that pertains to Madagascar. Learn enough about the story so that you can discuss it with some understanding of local perspectives. Why is the story relevant? What are the issues involved? What is at stake? What does the information that you have gathered tell you about what is important to the Malagasy? What differing opinions or bias might exist?

**Community Study Projects:** Over the course of the semester we are interested in learning more not only about each of your host families but also about the communities where they live. In what ways are these communities distinct from the others and what do they share in common? The assignment includes a settlement map, family profile and life story as well as a brief analysis of some aspect of the neighborhood where the host family lives.

**Thematic Explorations Paper/Presentation:** Choose a topic related to the thematic seminar as the basis for a more in-depth study. Your explorations should result in an academic paper with a specific focus relevant to the program theme. You may use secondary sources, but the paper should
also contain information from primary sources, as well as your own observations. Be sure to include a thorough analysis of any data included.

**Class Attendance and Participation:** Participation takes attendance, punctuality, attention in class and active participation in all of the seminar activities - classes, trips, debates, among others - into consideration. It also refers to friendly and respectful behavior by the students. The level, frequency, and quality of participation will be monitored and taken into consideration when grading the student’s overall performance.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>70-73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 64</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Criteria**
An “A” grade for an 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. In terms of class participation, an “A” grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, evidence of having completed assigned readings, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, field visits and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of the students’ participation will be monitored and taken into account.

Assignments/exercises will require submission of a written document and/or an oral presentation in English or in French. Evaluation and grading will take into consideration both content and mechanics. The specific assignments for each module will be included in the program materials given to you at the start of the semester.

Generally, the content grade includes an assessment of the following:

- Relevance and integration of topic(s) & finding(s)
- Conciseness & clarity of thesis/main idea
- Organization & focus
- Depth of inquiry & analysis
- Thoroughness of considerations
- Creativity & original ideas
- Appropriate use of a variety of sources of information (data) in support of thesis
- Documentation of sources
- Conclusion that is well-supported by body of paper

*All written assignments should be typed unless permission is given otherwise. Texts sent by e-mail will not be accepted. Make sure you have a flash drive, laptop or computer available and keep back up files so nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.*
Expectations and Policies

Class Participation
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. In addition, the following are expectations of all participants:

- **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 according 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.
- **Comply with academic integrity policies.** No plagiarism or cheating; nothing unethical.
- **Respect differences of opinion** (classmates, lecturers, local constituents, community leaders, and program partners engaged with on field visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

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.