Course Description

Despite the fact that traditional medicine has been practiced in Madagascar since time immemorial, the existence and practice of traditional medicine in Madagascar was not officially recognized until late 2007. Colonization and its effects have significantly altered local healers and their medicinal practices, diminishing their influence among societies and, in effect, disrupting a natural balance of mind, body and soul. The Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar introduces the cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts of healthcare in Madagascar and Malagasy cultural assumptions and practices as they relate to healthcare. The course also explores the role of post-colonial and contemporary Malagasy politics as applied to healthcare policy and delivery, focusing on major economic activities in the formal and informal sectors as they relate to healthcare and access to health systems. The Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar emphasizes a new theoretical framework and world view focused on the global challenges and opportunities in traditional and allopathic healthcare. Through lectures, discussions, educational excursions, extensive field experiences and assignments, we will explore the course material through a constant interrogation of the theory/practice dynamic. The language of instruction is English and with lecturers from the Faculty of Science and Medical School of the University of Antananarivo, traditional healing specialists, non-governmental organization (NGO) officials and local clinic practitioners.

Learning Outcomes:
The Social and Political Dimensions of Health seminar has an interdisciplinary and critical focus encompassing 45 academic hours (3 credits). By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts of healthcare in Madagascar;
- Describe health care traditions and beliefs of the Malagasy based on Merina cultural assumptions and practices;

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• Analyze Malagasy healthcare policy and delivery as they pertain to post-colonial and contemporary Malagasy politics;
• Assess healthcare and access to health systems in Madagascar vis-à-vis the major economic activities in the formal and informal sectors in the country.

Course Requirements

Readings
You are responsible for all the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear on discussions in class. The readings will help you place the classes in their context, to challenge and engage lecturers, to generate questions for class discussions and to deepen your knowledge of particular aspects discussed in class. They are not necessarily tailor-made for each and every class. As the Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar is simultaneous with and complementary to the Healthcare Practice in Madagascar Seminar, you are expected to complete all assigned readings for both program components.

General Required Readings


Overview on Medicinal Plants and Traditional Medicine in Africa

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Recommended readings on related topics


Please note: Course content, 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

Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar Assignments

You are expected to prepare for, attend and participate fully in all lectures, discussions and field visits. In addition to completing the required readings, you are encouraged to read local newspapers and other media for more local context. The Social and Political Dimensions of Health Seminar assignments are designed to help you study, reflect upon and draw conclusions about particular issues of cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts of healthcare in Madagascar based on lectures, discussions, educational excursions, and extensive field experiences during the duration of the program. Grades are based on preparation and participation in all lectures, discussions and activities; leadership in discussion groups; demonstrated completion of all assigned readings; the accuracy of information, quality of analysis, variety of sources and clarity of expression for the research paper. The academic director assigns all grades.

Evaluation

Seminar Paper 25%
Research Paper 50%
Presentation 15%
Participation 10%

Seminar Paper

The seminar paper provides the time and space to explore the literature on a topic of your choice relevant to issues of Social and Political Dimensions of Health in Madagascar. The seminar paper

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provides the conceptual basis for the Healthcare Research Paper. You are encouraged to discuss your seminar paper topic with the academic director from the start of the program.

**Traditional Medicine Research Paper**
You will use the seminar paper as a platform to launch a research process on a topic related specifically to traditional medicine, and its role in Madagascar. You will work with the AD to design and conduct research relevant to the topic.

**Presentation**
You will prepare a short presentation to share your findings from the Traditional Medicine Research Paper with peers and invited guests.

**Participation**
Assessment of a student’s participation in the program is based on the following criteria:

- Attendance – promptness to all activities and positive presence in all program environments
- Active listening: paying attention in class/during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes
- Involvement in class discussions: either in small or large groups sharing knowledge and information
- Respect – positive and full interaction with host institutions, learners, SIT program affiliates, SIT staff, homestay communities and fellow students

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

<table>
<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>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>70-73%</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 64%</td>
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</tbody>
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**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, attentive listening and active engagement in all academic seminar lectures, discussions, field excursions and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency and quality of your participation will be monitored and taken into account.

*All written assignments should be typed unless permission is given otherwise. Make sure you have a flash drive, laptop or computer available and keep backup files so nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.*
Course Schedule
The Social and Political Dimension of Healthcare Seminar is a two-and-a-half-week lecture series with integrated excursions. The lectures take place mainly at the Pharmacology Department, University of Antananarivo. The seminar has three modules:

Module I: People and Biodiversity – The Health Relationship
You will complete an intensive set of lectures and field trips to explore the relationships between people and biodiversity in Madagascar. Field trips will include visits to local traditional medicine resource markets in Antananarivo and a visit to Parc Botanique et Zoologie de Tsimbazaza. Possible topics of exploration include:

- Principles of Ethnobiology
- Ethnobotany and Health
- Development and sustainability
- Biodiversity conservation and traditional medicine practice
- Sustainability of traditional medicine product use (environmental considerations)

Module II: Traditional Medicine of the Merina
You will complete a series of lectures, discussions, and excursions to explore traditional medicine among the Merina people of Madagascar. Field trips will include visits to traditional healer centers and discussions with members of traditional healer associations. Possible topics of exploration include:

- Traditional medicine and traditional healers in Malagasy society
- Medical and healthcare beliefs of the Merina
- Role of traditional healers in the Merina society (past and present)
- Relations between Merina traditions and traditional medicine in Madagascar

Module III: Political History of Madagascar.
This module focuses on the political history of Madagascar with an emphasis on the development and practice of traditional medicine. The lecture series will look at the political history of Madagascar in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Field excursions include visits to Rovas (palaces of ancient kings and queens of the Merina kingdom) and other places of historical and political importance. Possible topics of exploration include:

- Pre-colonial Period (Prior to 1894):
  - Malagasy ethnic groups and cultural commonalities
  - History of the Merina Ethnic Group
  - Hierarchy and power relations
  - Role and value of traditional medicine and traditional healers in society

- Colonial Period (1894-1960):
  - Structure of the Malagasy society in general and the Merina in particular
  - The fate of traditional medicine and traditional healers

- Post-Colonial Period (1960 till present):
  - General politics in Madagascar
  - Traditional medicine and traditional healers
  - Economic activities in urban and rural settings
  - Poverty and its relation to healthcare

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Student Expectations

Class Participation
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all academic seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior.

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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