



Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 Credits/120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nicaragua: Youth Culture, Literacy, and Media

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 (ISP) is designed to be the culmination of the seminar on Research Methods and Ethics, the Thematic Seminars (TS) on Rewriting Nicaragua: Literacies, Rights and Social Change and Re-imaging Nicaragua: Youth Culture, Media and Expression and the Spanish class Experiments in Writing. All aspects of the program are considered during the selection and investigation of the ISP topic. During the semester, before the ISP, the students must research potential topics of interest. The ISP requires a high level of responsibility and commitment on the students' part. This study is a unique opportunity in which the students can head up an original independent investigation. The ISP is a process and a product and both aspects are valuable. The ISP must include a synthesis and analysis of information gathered through primary and secondary sources. In developing the project, the student develops his/her use of human and material resources available in Nicaragua. At the end of the semester each student will make an oral presentation of his/her project and thus share the research completed.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the seminar, students will be able to:

- Apply Qualitative Field Research/Study Methods and Arts-Based Inquiry required for critical thinking and analysis of primary and secondary information sources.
- Conduct original independent research with greater appreciation for the human resources in Nicaragua.
- Demonstrate independent thinking and academic responsibility with the goal of presenting research in a way that is accessible to audiences outside academia.
- Complete research that generates an interest to expand and deepen knowledge of the country's historical and cultural reality and of the topic researched.
- Apply and share the information acquired and the results achieved.

Course Requirements

The students will have a minimum of 120 hours to conduct their research during one complete month. They will draft their ISP topic individually with consultation from an adviser (approved or assigned by the academic director).

Each student must maintain a Work Journal or Digital Record to facilitate the final organization of his/her ISP. Its content will attempt to be reflective and analytical about the daily research/work. Each Work Journal must contain: the activities conducted each day, codification by themes that come up during the research, daily observations, participatory observations and interviews (codified), methods and research techniques, meetings with the ISP advisor, personal reflections, and an outline of the final essay.

The final product of the ISP is normally a 25-30 page essay but, given the arts-based inquiry approach, more creative visual or theatrical projects are encouraged, in consultation with the academic director. All projects must be accompanied by some written work where methodology, theoretical frameworks, analysis, etc. are expressed. These may be in English or Spanish. An abstract or synthesis of the essay in Spanish **and** English must also be submitted and digital abstracts for creative projects are encouraged.

Course Schedule

***Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.**

1. Submission of ISP documents in draft form:
 - Proposal
 - SIT Site Approval Form
 - Human Subjects Review Application
 - Calendar
2. Final submission of documents
3. ISP begins
4. Outline (in Work Journal)
5. Project Title for the Presentations Program
6. Review of the Resumen by the Spanish professors.
7. Submission of Final Project and Abstracts (hard copy and electronically on Moodle.)
8. Oral presentations

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

The Independent Study Project evaluation will be based on the following criteria (this may vary if an academic director approved creative Independent Study Project is carried out):

Description of Assignments:

Independent Study Project. Evaluation of the Project is based on:

- Title / Acknowledgements / Abstract (and *Resumen*)
- Research Question / Objectives / Justification
- Context and Literature Review
- Methods
- Ethics
- Presentation of results / findings

- Depth of analysis
- Conclusions
- Technical aspects

Independent Study Project Oral Presentation. Evaluation of the Oral Presentation is based on:

- Articulation of the primary study/research question
- Clear introduction to presentation
- Contextualization of the research
- Explanation of methods and ethical considerations
- Inclusion of a brief personal reflection
- Responses to questions from the audience
- Presentation that is well organized, stays within the designated time, and is well articulated
- Delivery of a creative, respectful and professional presentation

Independent Study Project Work Journal/Process. Evaluation of the Work Journal and Process is based on:

- ISP Proposal
- Organized and well labeled work journal entries
- References to secondary research material
- Personal and critical reflections
- Meetings with ISP advisors
- Paper outline
- Creative entries, as applicable
- Effort

Assessment:

Independent Study Project	60%
Independent Study Project Oral Presentation	20%
Independent Study Project Work Journal/Process	20%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A	Excellent
90-93% A-		
87-89% B+		
84-86% B	Above Average	
80-83% B-		
77-79% C+		
74-76% C	Average	
70-73% C-		
67-69% D+		
64-66% D	Below Average	
below 64	F	Fail

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.
- Comply with academic integrity policies. No plagiarism or cheating; nothing unethical.
- Respect differences of opinion, including classmates', lecturers, and local constituents engaged with on the 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 Student Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process.

Student research (Independent 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 ISPs 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 for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive ISPs 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. Students retain all ownership rights of the ISP 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 form.