Course Description

This course will support students in developing their own comparative research project to explore the politics of food, water and/or energy in relation to climate change. It will give students an introduction to the qualitative research methods that social scientists have developed for their empirical investigations. Its main goals are first to learn how to use these research methods, and second, to encourage critical thinking about the research design process, including matching methods to research questions, to be aware of and manage our biases and assumptions, and the ethical dilemmas raised by fieldwork. The course will be broad, and not all of the methods covered will necessarily be applied during the semester, but the course encourages students to go beyond familiar approaches. The course focuses on qualitative research methods, but there will discussion of the merits of qualitative versus quantitative approaches.

As part of this course, students will be asked to choose a research topic and to conduct a comparative independent study project, which compares issues across at least two program countries. Classes will develop in a way that will be partly student-driven and guided by the Traveling Faculty. Questions addressed in the classes will vary according to the students’ needs, but will include issues such as ethical considerations in relation to the independent study projects; how to interpret and critically analyze primary and secondary source materials; how to do structured, semi-structured or non-structured interviews; and how to identify political, economic, and social power structures in units of analysis.

Course Objectives

- To introduce students to various research methodologies and tools for field-based research.
- To introduce students to the problematic power dynamics associated with research and provide students with the opportunity to learn about research ethics and weigh their individual roles in field research.
To introduce students to research proposal formulation and writing.

Course Methodology
By the end of the SF/Bay Area launch, students will submit a research proposal stating ideas of the topic that they will want to investigate in the four visited countries. A mid-term review will take place in Morocco where students will present the development of their research project in research teams of 5 or 6 students. By the end of the course, students will submit the report of their independent study project and present it orally to the rest of the group. Students will implement, discuss and reflect on the field research techniques examined throughout the semester.

Assessment and Grading
Research Proposal and Participation (20%): Students must submit a research proposal for the final research paper of 750 words (excluding bibliography) by September 22. The research proposal will compare issues across at least two program countries. The proposal will be assessed in combination with the students’ active participation in sessions, meetings, and related activities. Participation requires active engagement in discussions, curiosity and interest during classes, meetings, guest lectures, and field visits, and a supportive attitude towards other students.

Mid-term presentation (20%): Students will be assigned to research teams of 5 to 6 people to work on and present a specific theme related to their research during Class 8 in Morocco. The goal of this mid-term presentation is for students to discuss how their topics overlap, to share their resources, to encourage each other to think and work collectively and collaboratively in order to give each other feedback and advice.

Final Paper and Presentation (60%): Research paper of 4000 words excluding bibliography. The paper will be evaluated by the traveling faculty and presented by students to the group at the retreat in Bolivia. The paper and presentation should demonstrate original research, clear organization, synthesis and creative use of theoretical and historical readings from classes according to the following requirements:

- The research study is comparative and arguments are based on primary and/or secondary data collected in at least two of the four different countries visited.

- Papers without thematic ideas or arguments that lapse into mere narration, or whose arguments are buried within the text and not presented clearly for the reader, will be graded in accordance with their low-level of organization.

- Ideas are illustrated with first-hand information from field research and put into perspective, with references from the assigned and recommended readings and the student’s own research.

- The paper demonstrates the ability to reflect on the ethical implications of the chosen research topic and methods of fieldwork.

- Students explain and reflect critically upon their own position, cultural values and assumptions within the research process.
• Final presentation of the paper (10 minutes maximum) should demonstrate efficient, engaging and clear oral presentation.

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 questions in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared raises the level of class discussion for everyone. This includes being punctual and prepared for guest lectures and site visits. All students are expected to be present at every program session, with the only exceptions being illness (written note required from a non-IHP adult, e.g. homestay parent, or preferably, health care professional). Unexcused absences and habitual lateness will result in penalties reflected in your participation grade. Please inform the traveling faculty or fellow if tardiness is anticipated.
- **Have assignments completed on schedule and done in accordance to the specified requirements.** This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- **Ask questions in class.** Be attentive, respectful and engaged with the guest lecturers and site visit hosts. These are often very busy professionals and community leaders who are doing us an honor by meeting with us and deserve your full attention and respect.
- **Comply with academic integrity policies** (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical). Any plagiarism or cheating will result in a score of zero for that assignment and could result in additional disciplinary measures as outlined in the Academics section of the IHP Student Handbook.
- **Respect differences of opinion** (classmates, lecturers, site visit hosts, homestay families). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- **Be pro-active and flexible** and take ownership of your learning experience as individuals and as a group. The experiential model of learning requires that you look forward and back across the semester. The logistics of our time in each country means that coursework will not always develop in a strictly linear fashion.
- **Electronic devices:** The use of phones, tablets and laptops are not permitted during site visits and guest lectures. We will discuss the need to use technology during the Methods course sessions.
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.

Course Schedule

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SF/Bay Area

Class 1: Introduction to Fieldwork Ethics

Required Readings:

1.2 SIT Human Subject Research Guidelines and Policy.

1.3 SIT Study Abroad Policy on Ethics, (Adapted from the American Anthropological Association)


Class 2: Interviewing Introduction

Required Readings:

**Recommended Readings:**

**Vietnam**
Class 3: Interviewing Continued

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Reading:**
3.2 Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson. Making Sense of Qualitative Data. (Sage Publications), Ch. 2, 1996.

**Practicum:**
Students will conduct a practice interview with a homestay family member, research contact, fellow student or another source and present their interview experience in Class 5.

**Class 4: Comparative Method Introduction**

**Required Reading:**

**Class 5: Presentation of Students’ Interviews and Experiences**

**No Readings**

**Morocco**
Class 6: Participant Observation

**Required Readings:**


**Class 7: Participant Observation and Thick Description**

**Required Reading:**

**Class 8: Mid-Term Research Presentations**

*No Readings*

**Bolivia**

**Class 9: Case Studies**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Class 10: Qualitative vs. Quantitative**

**Required Readings:**


**Class 11: Ethics and the Research Experience Revisited**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**