Development and Social Change Seminar

ASIA 3000 (3 Credits/45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nepal: Development and Social Change

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 nine-week course employs a variety of approaches to introduce students to Nepal. Through both classroom and field oriented activities, students will investigate the social, political, cultural, historical, environmental, and economic forces that have shaped the country. The seminar focuses on the interplay of cultural factors – ethnic identities, gender, caste and class—with Nepal’s development efforts. The important elements of development theory, including neo-liberalism, approaches to poverty and governance issues, social entrepreneurship, and the post-development literatures will be considered. The course examines efforts at social change amidst the recent conflict and political renegotiations between citizens and state. Students are encouraged to analyze and question dominant development paradigms as deployed in Nepal. Students will also gain experience themselves as fieldworkers in the cross-cultural context.

The seminar provides students a deep understanding of the broad patterns of development flows, aid interventions, migration, and economic policies. In the seminar, these issues are situated in Nepal’s cultural, political, economic, and social history. Excursions to different parts of Nepal’s diverse regions, from high Himalayan villages, to communities in the tropical foothill Tarai region, provide students with a variety of unique environments in which they can investigate the diverse intersections of development and social change.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will be able to:

• Articulate prevailing and historical development approaches and theory relevant to the Nepal context;
• Analyze historical contexts for current developmental, political, and social changes in Nepal;
• Assess notions of “social change” and “development” from both anthropological and contemporary Nepali political perspectives;
• Integrate information gathered from unique primary resources available in Nepal with information presented by local scholars and professionals and from texts;
• Demonstrate and articulate critical insights on the connections between a modern development agenda, transnational economic realities and notions of culture;
• Analyze the factors that support or interrupt processes of social and political change in Nepal.

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Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of economic change and development through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Course Requirements

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.

Module 1: Introductions to Nepal and Development (12.5 hours)

Topic 1: Geography of Nepal

Topic 2: Locating Nepal in the Region (and Kathmandu’s place in Nepal)

Topic 3: History of Nepal, parts I & II

Required Reading:

Topic 4: Hinduism and Buddhism in Life

Required Readings:

Topic 5: Introduction to International Development Theories

Required Readings:

Topic 6: Excursion to Pashupatinath Temple

Topic 7: Scales of Development in Nepal

Required Readings:

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**Module 2: Diversity and History (10 hours)**

**Topic 1: Caste and Ethnicity in Nepal, parts I & II**

*Required Readings:*


**Topic 2: Inclusion and Exclusion**

*Required Reading:*


**Topic 3: Ethnicity and Nationalism**

*Required Readings:*


**Topic 4: Ethnic Diversities**

*Required Readings:*


**Topic 5: Economic Forces in the Himalayas**

*Required Readings:*


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Topic 6: (Re) Defining Development, Parts I & II

Required Readings:

Module 3: Excursion (15 field hours)

Topics: Community based development media; Community forestry; Scales of development operations; Cooperative-based development projects.

Site Visits, Fall Semester: Community Radio Madanpokhara, Madanpokhara Community Forestry Users Group, District Soil Conservation Office, Dhaka cloth weaving cooperative, Madanpokhara Mothers’ Group, United Mission to Nepal, Brangdi Coffee Producers’ Cooperative.

Required Readings Fall Semester:

Site Visits, Spring Semester: Naari Chetana Womens’ Group, National Trust for Nature Conservation & Natural History Museum, Beekeeping, Jwani Village: Baghmara Community Forest Users Group and Biogas plant, Tharu Village & Tharu Museum

Required Readings Spring Semester:

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**Module 4: Ethnicity, Nationhood, and Social and Political Change (4.5 hours)**

**Topic 1: Ethnicity and Nationalism**

*Required Readings:*


**Topic 2: Political History of Nepal**

*Required Readings:*


**Topic 3: Social Change in Conflict Areas**

*Required Readings:*


**Topic 4: Political Unrest and Conflict Resolution**

*Required Readings:*


**Module 5: Development and the Social (3 hours)**

**Topic 1: Gender Issues in Development**

*Required Readings:*


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**Topic 2: Education and Development**

*Required Reading:*

**Topic 3: In Search of Agency**

*Required Readings:*

**Module 6: Development Redefined (4.5 hours)**

**Topic 1: Social Entrepreneurship**

*Required Reading:*

**Topic 2: Social Capital and Civil Society**

*Required Reading:*

**Topic 3: Thinking from the Bottom Up**

*Required Reading:*

**Module 7-8: Himalayan Excursion (20 field hours)**

*Topics: *Trade, Tourism and Cultural Marketing in the Himalayas
Cultural Ecology of Nepal; Development in the Village: Hopes and Realities; Pilgrimage and Sacred Geography in the Himalayas Discussions Include: Insiders/Outsiders: Being a Tourist the Village after Thirty Years

**Module 9: Governance, Opportunities and Challenges (Final Module Synthesis) (3 hours)**

*Discussion Topics: *“Fixing” Development in Nepal; Development in the 21st Century; Bridging the Non-profit and Business sectors; Under the Governance Umbrella.
Student discussions include: Where Does Nepal Go From Here?, Taking Stock of What We’ve Learned and What We Can Do.

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Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Written Assignments
Written assignments must meet the structural and logistical expectations outlined in the semester syllabi.

Development Theories Reaction Paper
In an effort to make sure that everyone is on the same page from the outset, all students will complete a reaction paper by the end of the 2nd week. Working on this assignment will be a cumulative process ending in a five page (5pp) essay, not including bibliography, appendixes, etc. The goal of the paper is to demonstrate the student understanding of two main development theories (writ large, e.g. modernization, neoliberalism, women and development, development as discourse, etc.) via a critical response to the readings. This paper should be both a summary of the development theories and critical in nature. Critical responses may present questions, rebuttals, syntheses of key ideas, or critical analyses of themes in the readings.

Development in Nepal Paper
Working on this assignment will be a cumulative process ending in six to seven pages (6-7pp) written paper, not including bibliography, appendixes, etc. The goal of the paper is to demonstrate the student understanding of some current development theory (writ large, e.g. modernization, neoliberalism, women and development, development as discourse, etc.) and critiques of such theories in a Nepal specific context. Students are expected to choose a specific topic (health, education, water resources, women, historic preservation, etc.) and gain some first-hand knowledge of the current work in this sector. To do this students are expected to visit at least one organization, NGO, or INGO focusing their efforts in the specific field and complete an interview as part of the assignment. Students should prepare a list of questions in advance based on issues raised in the seminar readings and lectures.

Successful completion of the paper requires a discussion of the specific topic of choice in the larger development arena and the incorporation of concerns specific to Nepal such as the complex social stratification system as they impact efforts at change.

The paper will be due at the end of the seminar and for many students can be usefully combined with advance work on their ISP topic. The paper is an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the very complex and slippery processes of development and social change. Some types of questions to consider when working on this assignment include, but are not limited to:

- How is development defined in the context you are examining?
- Who is defining “development” and what work does this definition do to bound potentialities?
- Who are the “beneficiaries”? Who are the decision makers?
- What are the avenues through which the problems and solutions are designed, evaluated, monitored?
- In what ways are development and these specific projects working to change Nepalese culture, economy, identity, subjectivity, etc.?

These are only examples; you should incorporate your own ideas and insights as part of your analysis of the development situation you are examining. Remember, too, there are rarely black and white answers in this type of work and there are rarely definitive definitions of what development is. Similarly, there are always nuances to pay attention to and analysis of the information you glean needs to be insightful, critical, and attendant to your own non-Nepali perspectives.

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Lectures, Discussions, and Excursions
Students are required to lead at least one discussion session during the course on a pre-assigned topic. They are expected to demonstrate a basic understanding of the material and to facilitate group analysis of the crucial issues – i.e. this is not a regurgitation of the readings but a discussion of the questions and consequences of the readings in relation to learning experiences in-country.

Periodic Debriefings and Current Affairs
Every week and a half, depending on scheduling availability, we will debrief lectures and address current events developments in Nepal. Students will prepare brief annotated bibliographies of readings and review class notes prior to debrief. In addition, every student will take notes on at least one newspaper article (e.g. from The Kathmandu Post, Himalayan Times, Nepali Times, Republica, etc.) that relates to the broad theme of development and social change. Students will prepare to discuss the article and how it relates to the course themes, though not every student will present due to time constraints.

Village Study Project
This assignment will be briefed at the beginning of our excursion. The project integrates fieldwork techniques such as interviewing, participant observation, and possibly even participatory rural appraisal, as part of the process of understanding development in a rural context. It requires students to explore in-depth a specific rural community and usually, one particular ethnic group. Students are given the chance, through rural homestays, to participate directly in village life; this sometimes takes the form of helping with farm work or being part of a village festival. The assignment requires students to make first-hand observations, as well as analysis of the issues of cultural identity and capacity building as they apply to the village, and then to integrate their broader knowledge of Nepal by preparing a presentation with the theme “The Village in Thirty Years.” Students deliver individual oral presentations as part of a group process of exploration and evaluation and turn in field notebooks at the end of the assignment. Grades are based on group effort and organization as a whole, individual oral presentations and quality of the field notebook.

Final Exam
The final exam for the course consists of short and long essay questions given to students one day prior. The goal of the exam is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of development issues both within the macro and micro contexts and to use the analytical skills they have been developing as part of the seminar, in preparation for writing critical independent study project papers.

Assessment:
The Seminar consists of 45 hours of formal classroom lectures and more than 35 hours of field visits, informal talks, and group and individual discussions. Student performance is assessed on the basis of the tests, papers, contributions to group discussions, and enthusiastic initiative in his or her own learning process. The final grade is given by the Academic Director, according to each student’s active reflections and involvement as instantiated in their papers and according to his/her degree of enthusiastic exploration of and authentic insights into the academic and intellectual themes of the program.

- Development Theories Reaction Paper 15%
- Development in Nepal paper 30%
- Village Study Project 15%
- Final exam 30%
- Attendance and Participation 10%

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Refer to the syllabus for grading criteria for all courses.

**Grading Scale**

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<th>Percentage range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>84-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-83%</td>
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<td>77-79%</td>
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<td>67-69%</td>
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<td>64-66%</td>
<td>D</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 at the SIT Nepal schoolhouse in Kathmandu 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 seminar. 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.

*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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