



Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 Credits/120 Class Hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nepal: Development and Social Change

Course Description:

The culmination of the program, the four-week independent study period offers the student an opportunity to pursue in-depth a particular aspect of Nepal's development or changing social landscape. During ISP, you directly apply the concepts and skills of experience-based learning articulated in the FME Seminar. Orientation, language training, the homestay, and the Seminar establish additional skills necessary for the successful completion of the Independent Study Project. The final product provides the material evidence of your capacity to handle methodology and synthesize experiences in the host culture.

Course Objectives:

The Independent Study Project encompasses 120 academic hours (4 credits). The main objectives of the ISP are:

- To select, design and implement an individual project that investigates a dimension of Nepali life and culture;
- To learn and use effective field study techniques as outlined in the FME Seminar;
- To coherently synthesize your field data into both a written and an oral presentation;
- To develop self-confidence and an understanding of experience-based education;
- To produce written and oral presentations of the project that display all of the above.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Select, design and implement an individual project that investigates a particular social, political, or developmental issue relevant to Nepal
- Articulate the relevance of a personal interest and resultant research question(s)
- Analyze personal pre-conceptions (positionality) and approaches towards gathering primary information and interacting with local informants
- Execute ethically and technically appropriate field study methodologies and techniques to gather data
- Exercise critical thinking and caution in the interpretation and systematic analysis of study results
- Communicate a field study in a coherent academically appropriate written presentation
- Communicate a field study in a coherent academically appropriate oral presentation

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Course Requirements

- 1) Three interviews with the AD and/or your ISP advisor prior to the beginning of your ISP in order to discuss your topic and your research approach. **Students must have their ISP journals with them for each meeting in order to take notes.**
- 2) Approval of the 5-6 page proposal and accompanying paperwork developed as part of the Field Methods and Ethics class.
- 3) Approval by the AD and the LRB (Local Review Board) of the project proposal (i.e. proposal and accompanying paperwork) regarding ethical issues, legal compliance, and human subject protections.
- 4) A minimum of 120 hours of fieldwork¹ towards completion of the project in well documented tabular form.
- 5) A minimum of 10 academic bibliographical sources.
- 6) A mid-ISP report to be sent in two weeks into the ISP period. The report should be a continuation of your proposal and should include your new ideas on the project, new sources being used, etc. Specific date TBA.
- 7) Three (3) clean hard copies, and one electronic copy emailed to the AD, of the final paper. Double check the submitted copies to ensure that the text is readable, in order, and that no pages are missing. One copy remains in the SIT library (this copy must include original photos and/or color photocopies), another goes to Tribhuvan University, and the last one is for grading. If an ISP advisor has been appointed then a further copy will have to be printed for the ISP advisor, making a total of four (4).
- 8) A twenty-minute oral presentation upon completion of the project. The presentation should include:
 - a. An abstract that should be handed in together with your ISP.
 - b. The use, as much as possible, of audio-visuals materials to enhance the presentation (powerpoint, transparencies, pictures, maps). This will contribute to a better grade for the presentation.
- 9) A well-documented, sensitive presentation of field study findings following standard academic protocols. The ISP should be 20-40 pages of text, excluding appendixes, bibliography, any photos, etc.
- 10) Contacting the Academic Director twice a week during the ISP period (Tuesdays and Fridays). If a student misses one of the contacting dates s/he will get a warning, if s/he misses another day of checking in during the remaining time of ISP, s/he will be put on probation. Probation automatically lowers your ISP by 1/3 of a grade. A student on probation who again omits to contact the AD will again have his/her grade lowered further and such omission could be a cause for dismissal from the program.
- 11) Sign the copyright release form.

Failure to follow any of these requirements will result in the final grade being diminished by a third or a half a grade, depending on the circumstances. Failure to contact as stipulated during the ISP period will also result in the final grade being diminished by a third or a half each time there is a failure to contact as required and can also result in probation or academic separation.

If a student were to deviate from the expected cultural and behavioral expectations during the semester and were to be put on probation as a result, the student would be at risk for a grade reduction in both the FME and ISP courses (this could range from the reduction of the final grade by 1/3 to failure in one or both courses, depending on the severity of the infraction). Culturally appropriate behavior is an important component of both of these courses.

¹ Fieldwork refers to hours of active data collection and analysis (i.e. interviews, observation, note transcription, reading supplementary materials, writing, etc.) and not merely time spent in the field. You should plan on a minimum of three weeks at your field site(s).

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ISP: Written Presentations

1. Must be neatly typed and double-spaced. See handbook for computer information.
2. Formatting and submission:
 - Refer to the syllabi introduction for policies regarding formatting of all written work.
 - Your ISP title should be concise and descriptive; excessively long titles will not appear in their entirety on transcripts according to SIT Registrar's policy
 - Required length is 20-40 pages, excluding appendices, bibliography, etc.
 - Use of Arial or Times New Roman fonts in 12 point
 - Use of Chicago Style of Citation 15th b or Annals of the Association of American Geographers citation style.
 - One electronic copy in MS Word or Adobe .pdf format. Title as "ISP_NPR_semester_your last name"
 - Three (3) clean **double-sided hard copies** of final paper. Use black ink on the original so that it photocopies well. Double check your submitted copies to ensure that the text is readable, in order, and that no pages are missing. One copy remains in our library and the other copy goes to Tribhuvan University. The third is a reading copy. If you want a copy for yourself, you may want to retain the original.
 - Left and right margins must be 1.5" each and the top and bottom margins must be 1" each. (The side margins are important because we bind your ISPs into a hard cover for our library and without enough margin space, the text is lost in the binding).
3. Outline
 - a. Title page:
 - i. Title
 - ii. Author Name
 - iii. AD's name
 - iv. Project Advisor's Name
 - v. Sending School
 - vi. Major
 - vii. Location of research (South Asia, Nepal, Region, Town)
 - viii. The following statement "Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Nepal: Development and Social Change, SIT Study Abroad" and semester.
 - b. Abstract, single spaced, 250 words. Include three ISP topic keywords at the end of your abstract.
 - c. Dedication (optional)
 - d. Acknowledgments (required) - please remember to acknowledge your project advisor and others who have helped make your ISP successful.
 - e. Table of contents and page numbers
 - f. Text:
 - introduction (including statement of intent, location of study, objectives of the paper, etc.)
 - literature review (to thorough place your project within the academic context)
 - a discussion of research methodology (methodology used, obstacles and strategies, reasons, biases, resources, etc.)
 - research findings (a written and visual presentation of your data)
 - analysis

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- conclusion
 - g. Appendix: relevant information or data that does not belong in the body of the text (maps, charts, extra illustrations and photos, etc.). Please observe margin requirements in this section, as well as in the text.
 - h. Glossary of terms, especially if using technical terms or many Nepali words
 - i. Bibliography (see FME reader for format requirements)
 - j. Signed Consent to Use form in all copies of ISP
4. A Resource Contact Form for all your important contacts must be filled out and submitted along with your written ISP

ISP: Oral Presentation

Presentation length is 20 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for questions and answers. The purpose is to convey the important aspects of your study (i.e., what you found out about your topic). If you have too much material, you will need to select the most relevant or interesting findings. Your presentation will be timed. You will be given a five-minute warning and a two-minute warning, then you will be stopped after 20 minutes.

You must attend all the presentations of your colleagues.

Evaluation of presentations includes the following criteria:

- Comportment
- Organization, clarity, and accessibility of presentation (including use of audio/visual aids or demonstrations)
- Clear explanation of ISP objectives and research questions
- Clear explanation of field strategy and implementation
- Ability to field questions and comments from the audience

Some suggestions for a good oral presentation:

- Be clean, well-groomed, and presentable – you never know who will be attending.
- Use visual/audio aids or demonstrations where appropriate: charts, posters, a whiteboard, slides/photos, tapes, cultural artifacts, samples, handouts, etc. Maps are almost always appropriate. Talk to the AD well in advance if you need assistance with your presentation needs.
- Time your talk in private or practice with a friend before you give your public presentation.
- Use note cards, outlines, whatever. Don't read your paper to the audience.
- Introduce yourself, and then begin your presentation by stating your topic and the location of your study. Outline your talk for the audience as well.
- Try to keep the audience's attention focused on your talk. Passing around too many objects during the course of your presentation may be distracting.
- Do not end your presentation with statements such as "And that's about all." Finish with a summary statement or with a quote. Be creative. Inform you audience of your closure, i.e., "I'd like to finish up with a quote from..." or "In conclusion I'd like to..." End with "Thank you" and "Are there any questions?"

ISP: Fieldwork Journal

Objectives:

- To document progress on your Independent Study Project

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- To practice effective note-taking and transcription techniques

During the ISP period the student should keep a specific journal devoted entirely to recording field experiences, observations, thoughts and musings, vocabulary notes, contact details – in short everything that may be valuable in composing an ISP. You are aiming for quantity *and* quality. For a project of this kind nothing short of 50 pages written during the semester reflects serious field research. Some (though not all) uses of the ISP Work Journal are as follows:

- Recording names and locations of contacts persons, especially possible ISP advisors and other ISP resources.
- Recording thoughts about how the student wants the ISP to develop, the progress of the ISP and changes or developments in plans.
- Recording interviews conducted in the field relevant to the ISP.
- Recording observations and inferences made relating to the ISP.
- Recording statistical or other hard data useful to the ISP, whether gathered in the field or through appropriate readings.
- Recording vocabulary items, whole phrases or excerpts from written or oral works in Tibetan or other relevant language that may be useful for the ISP.
- Recording notes taken from secondary sources in preparation for the ISP.
- REMEMBER TO DATE ALL ENTRIES!!!!

Submit your field journal(s) along with your written ISP on the due date.

Human Subjects Review

The SIT Local Review Boards (LRB) function as committees on the use of human subjects in research to partially fulfill the institution's ethical responsibilities within its stated mission and to, when indicated, satisfy requirements of the Code Of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, Protection Of Human Subjects, Public Welfare, Department Of Health And Human Services, National Institutes Of Health, Office For Protection From Research Risks.

Students are required to submit, along with their ISP proposal, an "Application for Review of Research with Human Subjects," to include a discussion of any potential harm that might come from the study, and to provide appendices including interview and survey protocols. If the Academic Director or the Local Review Board believes that the proposed research insufficiently addresses the concerns of this policy, the student will be asked to revise their proposal. Standards for this review are developed in-country and reflect local academic practice and cultural values.

Evaluation

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Evaluation is based on content, organization and development of perspective, effective processing of data gathered from primary and secondary sources, achieved objectives, narrative quality and commitment to the learning process. The evaluation of the **written monograph** portion of the ISP will be based on the following:

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| a) Content: precise and accurate information, analytical and critical thought, methodological application | 25% |
| b) Organization and development: familiarity with and reference to background published material (use of articles and bibliographic resources) | 25% |
| c) Written presentation: style and expression, documentation, spelling and grammar, format | 50% |

The final grade for the Independent Study Project is based on three components:

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Field Work Journal	15%
Written Monograph	60%
Oral Presentation	25%

Please refer to the NPR Student Handbook for grading criteria

ISP Schedule

Each student's ISP time will be quite self-regulated, basically scheduling one's own. Each student will have to consult with AD and advisor about how to make the most of the month by efficiently scheduling interviews or other field research. Some of the things students will be required to do though during the ISP period are:

Week 1-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact AD upon arrival at ISP site and twice a week from then on (Monday and Friday) • Establish contacts with local community (advisor, possible interviewees) • Undertake interviews and other field work research. Make sure to keep accurate notes and transcriptions of interviews in ISP journal
Week 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Mid ISP report (details TBA)
Week 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISP writing • Final consultations with advisor or/and AD • Submit ISP abstract

Student Expectations

Responsibilities when conducting fieldwork:

- Students must respect, protect, and promote the rights and welfare of all those contributing to, and affected by, their work by protecting the privacy and dignity of the people and communities with whom they conduct field study.
- The right of those providing information to students to either remain anonymous, or to receive recognition, must be scrupulously defended and respected.
- Students must acknowledge the help and services they receive and must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in culturally appropriate ways.
- Students must record and represent accurately all aspects of the field study. This includes not representing as their own work - either in spoken or written form - materials and ideas directly obtained from other sources.

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 material given to you at Orientation.

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