Course Description

The Research Methods and Ethics (RME) seminar teaches skills for analysis and research in order to prepare students to do their Independent Study Projects (ISPs) in the Argentine cultural milieu. The seminar encompasses 45 academic hours (3 credits). A series of RME assignments will allow students to familiarize themselves with research techniques, focusing primarily on qualitative research skills.

RME has three main objectives which are essential to SIT Study Abroad Experiential Learning approach. Firstly, the course aims to facilitate student’s understanding of the new cultural milieu in which they will be interacting. Secondly, the course seeks to expose students to qualitative field research with some of the corresponding most frequently used data collection techniques: (participant) observation and different types of interviewing. Thirdly and strongly related to the previous two objectives, the course prepares students for the Independent Study Project, an essential aspect of SIT Study Abroad experience.

SIT’s approach considers that learning about culture and about field methodology best takes place in context (as opposed to in a vacuum or an abstract general format) and through a constant in and out of class engagement on the side of the student. The course will choose different milieus through which to provide students with an appropriate “laboratory” through which to discuss key challenges faced while at the field: establishing rapport with informants, ethical aspects throughout the whole research process and a variety of other issues that students might encounter while undertaking their own research. The spirit of the course is therefore designed so as to ensure a common ground whereby students and lecturers can engage on critical debates and challenges in...
the conduction of field research within another cultural context to that which the student is familiarized with.

The course themes entail a series of lectures, readings and assignments, carried out individually or in small groups. This seminar will be carried out in Buenos Aires although there will be significant inputs from field excursions outside Buenos Aires.

**Learning Outcomes**

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

- Identify critical ethic issues involved in doing research and interacting with communities in the field.
- Apply knowledge obtained about data collection and analysis techniques (primarily qualitative)
- Criticize discuss relevant ethical concepts in their written work
- Select a relevant and feasible research topic for the ISP.
- Write and secure approval for an ISP proposal.

**Language of Instruction**

This course is taught in Spanish although some reading materials will be provided in English.

**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:

Session 1: RME 1 - Introduction to qualitative field research. The field journal and the ethnographic approach.

In this lecture we will examine key aspects of qualitative research that will be fundamental for your learning process in preparation to the ISP period. Some of the issues we will look into will be:

a) Qualitative and Quantitative methodologies
b) The importance of the field journal and the understanding of the cultural context
c) The importance of observation in qualitative research
d) A brief introduction to the “ethnographic approach”

Finally, we will allocate the reading of ethnographies to each student based on his/her research interests. The reading of an ethnographic piece of work will help students get acquainted with qualitative research data collection and analysis with a particular emphasis on observation.

Required readings:

Recommended Readings:
  - Read A qualitative procedure. Pp. 1 – 19
  - Read La observación. Pp. 191 - 202
  - Read Chapter two: El trabajo de campo: Un marco reflexivo para la interpretación de las técnicas
  - Read: Chapter five El investigador en el campo.
Ethnographies

Option 1:
Students interested in migration, gender, as well as social, cultural and spatial differences related topics are advised to choose this one.

Option 2:
Students interested in economics, poverty, drugs and gender are advised to choose this one.

Option 3:
Students interested in ethnicity, urban spaces, race, working class and gender are advised to choose this one.

Option 4:
Students interested in social class, economic conditions, education and social mobility are advised to choose this one.

Assignment 1

FIELD JOURNAL INITIATION- Mercado 4 field entry
To be submitted personally or in Moodle no later than 9hs

While in Paraguay you will be expected to carry out an individual field entry of our visit to Mercado 4 and a collective written analysis which contains the inputs from different individual entries.
In order to carry out these two exercises you will be divided in two groups and encouraged to concentrate and use all your senses while walking around the market. Aside from doing a general reflection about your visit to the market: what you have seen, heard, smelled and felt while walking around it, you will be asked to pose some questions to some of its merchants.

Group 1: Traditional food & meals
While walking around the market your team members are encouraged to observe and ask about traditional meals. What type of food is being sold, which ingredients, foods or drinks call your attention. You can ask about recipes and dishes that are consumed throughout the year or at special festivities. Finally you can explore about the origins of food sold, prices and many other aspects like who sells what according to gender and other social stratification variables within the market.

Group 2: Traditional medicines
Your team will have to observe and ask around traditional medicines sold at the market. While doing so it would be important to explore the origins and use of each of the medicines, plants and other alike you see in the market. It would also be important you explore and discuss with merchants some of the debates around the selling of traditional medicine and implications in terms of the hegemonic medicine model.

Some tips for your individual entry:
Use the DIG (Describe, Interpret, Gut feeling) method for exposing your entries. For the descriptive section try to focus on all your senses and make notes about them, including native categories used by the informants you interview while walking around the market. You can make use of photographs/maps or any visual material that might help accompany your written descriptions.

Some tips for your collective analysis:
- Personal impressions of what you have seen that are clearly distinguished from those more objective facts/conversations/images you were exposed to
- Potential theoretical concepts that could give meaning to your data.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT TO UPLOAD IN MOODLE
Read the introduction and the first two chapters of your assigned ethnography. After doing so, you should provide the following information in a document of no more than two pages:

- Basic data about the author, the place & time of the ethnography. Explain the basic objective/idea about the ethnography (the theoretical discussions, the hypothesis behind it as presented by the author).
- Provide a summary of the main contents you found in the introduction and in chapter 1 and 2.
Session 2: RME 2 – Observation analysis and preparing for interviewing

In this class we will discuss lessons learnt from working with the field journal and the observation technique. We will also prepare you for an interviewing exercise at the Bachillerato Popular, MST and Quilombo. In this class we will also discuss the interviewing finding process throughout the ISP period and the analysis of interviews.

Required readings:
- Read the Introduction and the first two chapters of your assigned ethnography

Recommended readings:
  - Read La teoría fundamentada: su aplicación en una investigación sobre vida cotidiana con VIH/sida y con hepatitis C by Jones, D.; Manzelli, H. and Pecheny, M. Pp. 47-76.

Assignment 2

(Depending on which group you have been assigned)

Interview and observation analysis of the visits to the Bachillerato Popular, MST and Quilombo

Both exercises to be uploaded in Moodle no later than 12 hours

In groups of four, each group will be expected to hand in an analysis of the observation-interview exercise carried out throughout the visits to the Bachillerato Popular, MST and Quilombo. All groups will have to present their work in a written format which must contain the following elements:

- A dense description of the context of the visit and the visit itself
- Native categories and/or literally cited quotes from the interviews carried out
- Interpretations of the visit that can be linked to existing theoretical concepts consulted prior to the visit or that can be proposed by the group itself.

The exercise must be 4 pages long and must be written in Spanish.

Assignment for Advancing with the reading of the ethnographies
Each student must hand in a two-page summary of the next three chapters of the ethnography he/she has been assigned. The exercise can be presented in English. Special attention must be given to the way in which the author has integrated the **voice** of the informants in their accounts.

**Session 3: RME 3 – Continued skills on interviewing: exploring other forms of interviews (surveys) while also learning how to analyze each different interviewing technique.**

Required readings:
- Read chapter 3, 4 and 5 of your assigned ethnography

Recommended readings:
  - Read *El sondeo*. Pp. 203 - 214

**Session 4: RME 4 – Presentation of ethnographies**

In this session the three different groups will be presenting orally and in a Power Point the ethnography he/she was given at the beginning of the course. The presentation must cover the following aspects:

1. Theme and main question that the author covers in his/her ethnography
2. How, when and where the field data collection process has been done
3. Main arguments and findings of the ethnography, including theoretical questions and empirical analysis
4. Analysis of how the ethnography is organized. Strengths and weaknesses identified.
5. Each students’ suggested research question based on what he/she has seen so far throughout the program and how the ethnography read could help:
   1. Explain how you relate to the ISP question (make an explicit explanation of how you personally relate to the topic) and how you anticipate your personal relationship to the topic might have an impact on the research
   2. Explain also some of the answers or hypothesis you are anticipating to come across the field.
   3. Theoretical concepts that you will explore (international, regional, national or local discussions. Explicit the origins of the discussion in terms of time and discipline
   4. Methodology: where and with whom I will carry out my field work. Specification of methods to be used.

**Session 5: RME 5 – Introduction to the ISP period. Finding a theme, an ISP site, and an ISP question. Logistical preparation towards the ISP period.**
In this lesson we will look at the basic components of an ISP. We will also start discussing how to choose and ISP question. While doing so, we will look at ISPs and ISPs proposals from previous semesters.

Required readings:

Recommended Readings:
  - Read How to conduct the study: designing the research. Pp. 38-77.

Session 6: RME 6 – ISP design. The methodology and the reference framework.
Lecturer: Nuria Pena
In this opportunity we will look in more detail how to design a methodology. We will also present you with different examples of “the reference framework” section, how to develop it. What it should contain and what is should not contain.

Required readings:

Session 7: RME 7 – Ethics in Qualitative Research.
This discussion will be followed by a first acquaintance with ethical issues that must be taken into account while designing a research project.

Required readings:

Recommended Readings:
  - Read But is it ethical? Learning to do right. Pp. 129 - 146.

Session 8: RME 8 – Workshop for working on the Final ISP proposal. ISP retreat day
Each student must submit a written draft of their ISP pre-proposal. In each ISP proposal the student must include:

- The research problem and question
- The proposed methodology
- A short list of aspects to include in the reference framework in the future
- Bibliography consulted and to consult
- The exercise is expected to be between 2 and 4 pages long.

Assignment 4
(In person or in Moodle)
- Present the analysis of an ISP of a previous semester uploaded in Moodle. You can select amongst 5 ISPs available on Moodle.
- While analyzing the quality of the ISP chosen, you can answer the following questions. Does the ISP have a clear research question? Briefly introduce it. Which methodological strategy has been used and is this strategy adequate for the objectives of the research? What do you think of the adequacy of the reference framework the student has developed? Is the analysis section well structured? How effectively has the student used primary and secondary sources? Do you think the student has conducted the research following basic ethical standards? Please advise how the student could have carried out a better ISP.
- Expected length: Approximately 2 to 3 pages

Individual Assignment 5
Deliver the final ISP proposal. It is a revised version of your pre-proposal, where you are supposed to submit a more elaborate proposal containing:
- Research problem and question
- Proposed methodology
- A list of the aspects you would include in your ISP reference framework. You should hereby try to explain each one of them a bit further (theoretical aspects or general concepts you will have included here)
- Proposed ISP residence and forms of contact
- Proposed ISP tutor and Spanish tutor
- Proposed working schedule
- References to be consulted. You should also include as an annex all ethical sections of RME manual that your proposal should include (check annexes of RME manual). Expected length 6 to 8 pages. The proposal can be presented after the last RME class but no later than 21 pm.
Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Brief Description of Assignments

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.

Evaluation and Grade Determination
Timely completion of all RME coursework is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. For details regarding assessment of activities and Journal, please see attached rubric.

Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in class and visits</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group exercises</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual exercises &amp; field journal</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final ISP proposal</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading Scale

All grades assigned will take into account the students’ special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. 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 trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of the students’ participation will be monitored and taken into account.

*All written assignments should be typed and uploaded to Moodle. Texts sent by e-mail will not be accepted. Make sure you have a laptop or computer available and keep back up files so nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.*
94-100%  A  
90-93%    A-  
87-89%    B+  
84-86%    B  
80-83%    B-  
77-79%    C+  
74-76%    C  
70-73%    C-  
67-69%    D+  
64-66%    D  
below 64  F

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.**
- **Respect differences of opinion (classmates’, lecturers, 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.