Course Description

In this research methods course designed to prepare students for the Independent Study Project (ISP), students examine the ethical challenges of field research and learn how to prepare a research proposal, how to employ basic ethnographic methods appropriate to a range of themes, as well as more specific methods appropriate to the study of politics, language and discourse. By the end of the course they will have chosen an ISP theme, selected appropriate methods, and have written a solid proposal for an ISP related to the program themes.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the seminar, students will be able to:
- Apply the standards of good research practice to the drafting of an ISP proposal on a topic related to the program’s themes.
- Critically discuss a variety of approaches to the study of culture and political discourse and be able to articulate which methodologies are most appropriate to different topics.
- Employ basic ethnographic and other methods in practice field activities.
- Critically analyze the ethical concerns related to studying language and political themes.
- Explain what a Local Review Board (LRB) process consists of, why this process is necessary, and how their own their proposals comply with the human subjects and ethical standards established in the program.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in Spanish and English
Course Schedule

Module 1: Introduction
This module introduces students to the course.
1. Overview of methodologies: ethnographic, textual and linguistic, participatory, decolonizing. Qualitative versus quantitative methods. The importance, uses and limits of working with qualitative methods.
2. Introduction to theory of culture, genealogy of anthropological and linguistic conceptual frameworks related to conducting fieldwork.
3. Introduction to critical and indigenous methodologies. Postcolonial and decolonial standpoints.

Readings:

Module 2. The ISP Proposal
This module covers the beginning steps in the research process: from choosing a topic to drafting a first research proposal. Students will begin to link their areas of interest to a methodological approach and consider topics related to ethics in the research process.
1. Getting started. How to choose a topic and begin thinking about methods.
2. How to write a proposal, discussions of early ideas. Work through narrowing and defining exercises.

Readings:

Module 3: Ethical questions in field research
This module brings in ethical concerns and the LRB process.
1. Human subjects and ethics questions: the larger context (good intentions, poor practice- unintended problems. Knowing your subjects read what you write and other contemporary concerns.)
2. Ethics in practice. How to orient you proposal, methods, and practice in the field.
3. The LRB process.

Module 4: Working with people
How to work with different sorts of individuals. How to elicit information in an ethical way. How to make sense of what you learn.
1. Ethnographic methods I. (Focused observation / participant observation).
2. Ethnographic methods II: Interviewing in different contexts.

Module 5: Working with texts
Students learn methods appropriate for working with written and spoken texts.
1. Working with written text. Critical discourse analysis I. Students examine newspaper articles on sustainability or extractivism.
2. Working with spoken text. Critical discourse analysis II. Students examine radio programs developed by civil society organizations.
3. Working with observed text in public spaces. Linguistic landscape analysis.

Readings:

Module 6: Writing it all up
In this final module, students will learn how to organize research, how to manage the research process, and how to write the pieces into a final coherent research piece.

Excursions: Eastern Lowland Provinces of Napo and Pastaza: Students will practice each method at sites established by the Academic Director in conjunction with the lecturers. Students will conduct a rural stay and village study in several Quichua-speaking communities. In addition to the implementation of ethnographic fieldwork methods (focused observation, participant observation, and interviews), students will have the opportunity to practice their recently acquired Quicha language skills. Students keep a practice fieldwork journal, divided in different sections according to methodology, data gathering and interpretation, textual analysis, and personal reflection.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
Timely completion of all assignments is expected, and late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality and depth of understanding, reference to readings/coursework as appropriate, and standards of good writing (style, citation, punctuation and grammar, etc.)

Description of Assignments
- 20 Questions Handbook – This is a warm-up paper for the course. Details to be handed out onsite.
- Rural Stay Paper: The paper addresses experiences with applying qualitative research methods during the rural stay (participant-observation, focused observation, and informal and formal interviews.)
• **Critical discourse analysis paper:** this paper asks students to analyze a dominant or official political discourse (space and temporal setting, language use, symbolic traits, intent, meaning, and impact). Compare and contrast with counter-dominant or subaltern political discourse. (more detail to be provided in class)
• **ISP draft proposal and ISP final proposal with revisions.** Details provided onsite.
• **ISP Work Journal** The ISP work journal includes a detailed account of field activities, and use of the methods and techniques of field study.

**Assessment:**
- 20 Questions Handbook 20%
- Critical Discourse Analysis Paper 15%
- Rural Stay Paper 15%
- ISP Proposal (Draft and final) 10%
- ISP Work Journal 30%
- Participation in discussions and LRB process 10%

**Grading Scale**
- 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**
- **Assignments:** Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.
- **Excursions:** Many of the visits will be to underprivileged areas, challenging students to understand how historical oppression and public policies affect the lives of peoples today. Students are expected to be respectful, to engage local community members, and to listen actively to all participants.
- **Readings:** Students are responsible for all of the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear in class. The readings will help place the classes in context, engage lecturers, generate questions for class discussions, and deepen student knowledge of particular issues discussed in class.

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.