



Field Methods and Ethics

ANTH 3500 (3 credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples

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

The *Field Methods and Ethics* course (FME) introduces students to the conceptual and practical tools for gathering primary data. This course also helps students develop the knowledge and skills that are essential to forming constructive relationships with organizations and/or individuals, which are necessary for completing an academic project in the cultural context of Nepal or India. In particular, the course enhances students' skills at building rapport; initiating purposeful dialogue in the cultural context of Nepal or India; gathering, recording, and analyzing primary data; and writing a scholarly academic report. The course also pays particular attention to US higher education ethical considerations that guide primary data collection and how these could be translated within the local cultural context of Nepal or India and the program's Critical Global Issue (CGI): Migration | Identity | Resilience. Broadly, the course introduces students to both qualitative and quantitative approaches of social science field research.

The main emphasis of the course is on the development of empirical tools and ethics of interactive research skills involving the collection of primary data. This experiential learning course includes lectures on qualitative methods of research in social sciences and in particular in the program's Critical Global Issue (CGI): Migration | Identity | Resilience, development of a research proposal or internship proposal, and preparation of an application for review of research with human subjects. All students will participate in an overview of research design and methodological approaches to program themes. Ethical considerations related to conducting research or completing an internship will be discussed. The overall aim is to help students hone their experience-based learning processes and prepare them for the development of an Independent Study Project (ISP) that is largely based on the data gathered from primary sources, or an internship at a local organization.

From the first initiation to field study techniques and throughout, this course is interdependent with the two concurrent courses "Politics of Tibetan and Himalayan Borders" and "Religious Change in Tibet and the Himalayas." The ethics of fieldwork in a variety of Himalayan settings will be addressed, above all in relation to religious traditions and beliefs on the one hand, and, on the other, political circumstances and

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interactions with the regional and local nodes of power. While cultural environments may be “Tibetan” (including “Tibetanoid/Tibetanish”) they will vary much and renewed cultural adaptation is required throughout the semester in diverse settings across Nepal and India.

Learning Outcomes

The Field Methods and Ethics course comprises 45 hours. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Show an acute sense of positionality and perspective and operate independently, using cultural sensitivity, language skills, and local networks of trust built over the course of the semester;
- Demonstrate awareness of appropriate methods and ethics used in field research in the critical global issue of Migration | Identity | Resilience OR demonstrate awareness of the ethics of internship in the context of Nepal or India;
- Analyze and process primary data gathered in the field and draw valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions;
- Produce an Independent Study Project proposal that is in strict observance of ethical academic standards and local values and that includes a research question, sample review of the relevant literature, outline of the field methods, and anticipated ethical challenges and ways of addressing them OR an internship proposal that includes a description of the host organization, an outline of tasks that will be performed, a proposed work timetable, and projected outcomes such as a paper or business plan.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits to 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 I: Experiential Learning and Positionality in Field-Based Research

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in a study abroad context. Students learn how to relate to local communities and individuals. Most particularly, this module allows students to discover the power of experiential learning and use it as a tool to connect to local communities and individuals and develop into reflexive researchers who are attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research or internship.

Session topics

Homestay as a Cultural Experience and Site of Learning
Doing Field-Based Research in a Study Abroad Context
Experiential Learning Philosophy and the Politics of Culture in Nepal and India
Positionality and Outsider/Insider Research
Skills for Networking, Time Management, and Productivity

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Module 2: Field Methods and Ethics in Migration | Identity | Resilience

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting quantitative and/or qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community.

Session topics

Field Methods and Ethics in Migration | Identity | Resilience
Selecting Topics, Formulating Research Questions, and Literature Review
Data Collection: Participant Observation and Interviewing
Mixed Methods Research
Data Analysis, Evaluation, and Interpretation

Module 3: Introduction to the ISP and Internship

This module will describe the ISP and internship processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP or internship. The module will include a review and critique of past ISP and/or internship papers. The module will also walk the students through the Local Review Board (LRB) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the application for Human Subjects Review (HSR application).

Session topics

Critical Review of past ISPs or Internships
Introduction to the LRB/IRB Process and HSR Application
Identifying an ISP Advisor and Securing an Internship Placement
One-on-one Meetings with the Academic Director to Discuss Preliminary ISP or Internship Ideas

Module 4: Project Proposal Development

Based on learning and engagement in the preceding course modules, this module focuses on ISP and internship proposal development and guiding students through the development of the Human Subjects Review (HSR) application for review by the Local Review Board (LRB). This critical phase in the course involves both large student group meetings and individual student meetings with the academic director and the ISP advisor or internship supervisor.

Session topics

Writing an ISP or Internship Proposal
One-on-one Meetings with Academic Director and/or ISP Advisor or Internship Supervisor
Peer review of ISP or Internship Proposal Drafts
Writing the HSR Application
ISP or Internship Proposal Presentation to Peers and Roundtable Discussion

After completing Modules 1-4, students will split into groups by ISP or internship. ISP students will take Module 5a, and internship students will take Module 5b.

Module 5a: ISP in the Context of Nepal or India

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Nepal or India. The module highlights the importance of applied methodology in the ISP experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student.

Session 1: Preparing for the ISP

This introductory session prepares the student for the ISP. The session covers a range of areas that include how to approach and develop rapport with research participants, how to work collaboratively with the

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ISP advisor, and logistics of the ISP period, including travel, materials, and timelines. Students will also review the ISP assessment rubric.

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Nepal or India

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to research in Nepal or India, exploring such issues as how best to describe the ISP to potential research participants and others, gender norms, issues of language, and expectations for behavior while conducting research.

Required Readings:

Readings are assigned to meet the needs of the current term.

Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology

This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving research challenges.

Required Readings:

Bell, Judith. (2010). Planning the Project. In *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science (5th ed.)*. Berkshire England: Open University Press.

Module 5b: Internship in the Context of Nepal or India

This module prepares the student for the internship experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to internships in Nepal or India. The module highlights the importance of ethics in the internship experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student, the host institution, and the program.

Session 1: Preparing for the Internship

This introductory session prepares the students for their internship in country. The session covers a range of areas that include résumé preparation and cover letter, dress, student objectives for the internship, and stages of student growth in the internship. Students will review the internship rubric.

Required Readings:

Readings are assigned to meet the needs of the current term.

Recommended Readings:

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013) *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapters 2 and 3)

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Nepal or India

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to internships and work in Nepal or India, exploring such issues as how best to describe the internship experience and purpose to potential internship hosts and others, gender norms, issues of language, and workplace expectations.

Required Readings:

Readings are assigned to meet the needs of the current term.

Session 3: The Ethics of Participating in an Internship in Nepal or India

This session outlines the responsibilities of the student and the host organization for a productive and significant experience that can serve the objectives of both. The session also reviews best practices for a successful internship and exposes the student's positionality in relation to the organization.

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Recommended Readings

McDonald, Francis (2011) Ethical Use of Interns. Retrieved from:

<http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/ethics/ethicalstandardsadvisories/documents/psa-17.pdf>

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Assignment I: Practice Interview

Students are asked to conduct a practice interview with one of the members of their host family. They are asked to write a small reflection (2-3 pages) about their role and attitude towards their research subjects and the skills they brought to the interview to establish an ethical and safe environment for the interviewee. Students are also encouraged to explore how their own positionality along the lines of gender, sexuality, race, and class affected the set-up and wording of their questionnaire and consequently the outcome of the interview.

Assignment II: “Prisoners of Shangri-la” Position Presentation & Paper

Required Readings:

Lopez, Donald. Jr. “Introduction.” In *Prisoners of Shangri-la*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 1-13.

Shakya, Tsering. “Who Are the Prisoners?” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 69 (2001): 183-190.

Thurman, R.A.F. “Critical Reflections on Donald S. Lopez Jr.’s Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West.” *ibid*: 191-202.

Lopez, Donald Jr. “Jailbreak: Author’s Response.” *ibid*: 203-213.

Lopez, Donald Jr. *7 Things You Didn’t Know About Tibet*. University of Chicago Press.

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/493105.html>.

Objectives

To deconstruct myths about Tibet, both popular and personal.

How it works

You will be assigned one position to present in class, from the set of 4(/5) Lopez pieces. You will read the whole series and then analyze your position in relation to the others.

Furthermore, the same day, you will submit a written list of five “facts” or “beliefs” about Tibet/Tibetans, etc., facts or beliefs which you previously held and/or continue to hold and/or never held but believe others to have held. These five should include at least two which are not in Lopez’s list of “7 things...”. You will be able to name and assess your sources (textual, visual, oral etc.), including whether the source is unknown (folk wisdom, urban legend, etc.). Maximum 500 words.

Assignment III: Boudha[“Buddhism”] Observed (presentation & paper)

Required Readings:

Moran, Peter. “Introduction” and “Chapter 3: Commodities, Identities and the aura of the Other.” In *Buddhism Observed: Travelers, Exiles and Tibetan Dharma in Kathmandu*. New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004. 1–13, 34–57.

Objectives

To deconstruct misconceptions about Tibetan Buddhism, both popular and personal.

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How it works

Having read the Peter Moran text (“Buddhism Observed: Travellers, Exiles and Tibetan Dharma in Kathmandu” (2004), Introduction and Chapter 3, *Commodities, Identities and the aura of the Other*) you will spend a minimum of one hour making observations at Boudha stupa. Your observations can focus on a particular interaction or on a group of people at the stupa. In tandem with describing your observations, please suggest interpretations for what you have observed. You will bring five such pairings (observation/“what?” plus interpretation/“so what?”) to present in class. You will also have one key insight from Moran’s text. You will submit in writing your five pairings

Assignment IV: Critical Concept in Context (seminar paper & presentation)

Objectives

The “critical concepts in context” are designed to demonstrate the wealth of primary resources at hand in experiential education and to deploy those resources in the analysis and synthesis of core thematic concepts.

How it works

You will choose (or be assigned) a keyword central to the “Field methods & ethics” course. You will prepare an engaging ten-minute presentation of your keyword and its significance, especially within the thematic seminar. On the due date, before your presentation, you will submit a 1,000-word write-up of your “critical concept in context”. You will present material from three kinds of sources or evidence: visual, oral/[aural] and written: a textual source, a picture/image, and the fruits of an encounter, i.e. an interview, e.g. a discussion with your homestay family and/or other Tibetan (or Nepali) friends and acquaintances. You do not need to show your visual evidence when we present outside of the program centre, but you must submit it as part of your assignment, and describe the image wherever you make your presentation. You will be able to name and assess your sources. Where appropriate, you will spell your words in Tibetan (in Tibetan script and/or Wylie transliteration).

Grading

Of the total 10% grade for the “critical concept in context”, 5% will be for the written paper and 5% for the seminar presentation.

Assignment V: Facilitation: Synthesis and Debrief

Objectives

- To enable the group to reflect on what we have learnt from various parts of the course, to integrate knowledge gained from a variety of sources, including field trips, and to share insights;
- To provide a forum for discussion of course readings;
- To give you practice at facilitating discussions and making presentations.

How it works

At the end of orientation you will be assigned to one of five groups. Each group will be assigned one group discussion to facilitate during the semester. These discussions will be guided by faculty but run by students. The group discussions will last for 90 minutes and will **foster debate or discussion** about what we have learnt in “Field methods and ethics” (in synthesis with debate and discussion about what we have learnt in “Religion/Change” and “Politics/Borders”) since the previous meeting and will integrate what we have learnt that week in workshops, lectures, **field trips** and **readings** with what we have previously covered in the semester.

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When it is your turn to facilitate a discussion, you need as a group, to identify **the most important topics (check the learning goals) that are suitable for class discussion** (don't pick so many topics that there isn't adequate time to discuss them all). At the meeting, the facilitators should first identify the topics to be covered in the meeting. They should then encourage and direct group discussion of the topics. Facilitators should talk with the relevant faculty member prior to starting their preparation for their meeting in order to review the topics to be discussed, and then again, after you have met, to review the questions you will put to the group. We reserve the right to include critical questions or topics if they are absent from your list. **It is important to allow sufficient time for discussion of the readings.**

Grading

Synthesis and debrief discussions make up 10% of the course grade. The quality of your contribution to the discussions throughout the semester is worth 5% and your facilitation of your session is worth another 5%. As a participant, you should come to group discussions with notes from the readings including a sentence summarizing the author's main message. You should contribute to the discussions but not dominate them, your contributions should **be informed** and you should respect other's opinions but not be afraid to disagree.

The criteria for evaluating the facilitators are:

- Your introduction identifying the topics to be discussed (5%)
- Your identification and framing of the important issues to be discussed from lectures, workshops, fieldtrips, etc., and the quality of the questions and prompts you used to initiate and direct the discussion (40%)
- Your identification of the important issues contained in the readings and your facilitation of the discussion of those readings (35%)
- Your facilitation of the group discussion (did you get everyone involved in and enthused about the discussion? Did you use any innovative approaches? Were you able to control the discussion and get it back on track when it wandered off the topic? Did you manage the time well – so that all topics were covered?) (20%)

Assignments VI & VII: Excursion Study Projects (major & minor)

Objectives

The fieldwork papers are designed to help you to reflect upon, **analyze and synthesize** what you are learning from excursions, field trips, lectures, seminars, readings, formal and informal discussions and your own observations.

How it works

After each of the semester excursions, the major and the minor excursion, you will be asked to reflect in an essay on aspects of the fieldwork you have just carried out and **to relate this to what you have previously learnt and observed** in the "Field Methods and Ethics," "Religion/Change" and "Politics/Borders" courses. There will be two essays in total. They need to be succinct, well organized and to show that you are thinking about what you are experiencing and that you are synthesizing what you learn from disparate sources.

The first paper, resulting from the minor excursion, will be a group study project. This will entail a 1,200 word **minimum** contribution to a paper prepared in collaboration with program peers.

The major excursion study project will be a 1,600 word **minimum**.

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Grading

The essays will comprise **10% and 15% respectively of your Field methods and ethics grade**. Each essay will have a different objective and therefore detailed instructions and grading criteria will be given at the time they are assigned.

Students should note that topics for papers as well as their field study journal are open. Students should not feel they are limited only to topics concerning politics/borders but should feel free to use each paper to explore a variety of topics. To reinforce and emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of these Study Project assignments, the weight given in evaluating the papers will also be split equally with the other two core courses, Politics/Borders and Religion/Change.

Assignment VIII: Final Reflection Paper

Objectives

1. Reflect on your understanding of research field methods and ethics in Tibet and the Himalayas and how your engagement may have changed as a result of your experiences in Nepal and/or India.
2. Reflect on what are the most important things you have learnt from the Politics/Borders course in general.

How it works

Before the end of the program write a 1,000 word (minimum) essay covering the following topics:

Your understanding of the field methods and ethics of the trans-Himalayan region:

How have your experiences in Nepal and/or India affected your personal understanding of research field methods and ethics in Tibet and the Himalayas? If your understanding has not changed, why do you think this is so?

Your general learning experience:

What are the most important things you have learnt from the Politics/Borders course in general. Have you gained insights into US culture as a result of your last four months in Nepal and/or India? If so, please discuss how these insights have shed light on particular aspects of US culture.

Grading

This reflection counts for 5% of your FME grade and is due the final Friday of the semester. You will be graded on the quality of your answers to the above questions.

Passim: Contribution to group learning

In this seminar, great emphasis is placed on the students' active participation in their own education. This element is worth **10% of your Field Methods and Ethics grade**. Your grade is allocated on an assessment of your timely attendance and informed participation in all activities, including field trips; your adherence to codes of conduct and conditions of participation; and your general contribution to the maintenance of a positive learning environment throughout the course.

Field Work Journal

Students are expected to keep a work journal where they will document thoroughly all the activities and assignments carried out during the course. This will also continue during the Independent Study Project or the internship period. The work journal is submitted for review and evaluation 5 times during the course of the semester.

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Research/Internship Proposal

All students must develop a research or internship proposal. The research proposal should address a theme related to the program, include research question and objectives, theoretical framework, methodology, and comply with the ethical standards learned throughout the course.

The internship proposal should include the objectives to be achieved during the internship period, a justification of the work and the organization selected, skills or areas in which the student can contribute to the work of the host organization, and an outline of the work plan to be carried out.

Participation

All students are expected to prepare for classes, attend and participate in all lectures, class discussions, field activities, and carry out all assignments and other activities prepared in the context of the Field Methods and Ethics course.

Assessment and timing of assignments

I	Practice interview	5%	
II	“Prisoners of Shangri-la”	5%	
III	“Buddhism Observed”	5%	
IV	CCC seminar paper & presentation	10%	one session per student
V	Facilitation: synthesis and debrief	10%	one week per student
VI	Minor excursion group study project	10%	1 st Monday after minor excursion
VII	Major excursion study project	15%	1 st Monday after major excursion
VIII	Final reflection paper	5%	final Friday
	Independent study/internship proposal	25%	
	Contribution to group learning	10%	
		(100%)	

Grading Scale

The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

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.

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- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done according 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 (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (those of classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits, etc.). 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 Handbook* for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at: <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.

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