

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH 3500 (3 credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nicaragua: Youth Culture, Literacy, and Media

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Description

The Research Methods and Ethics seminar (RMES) introduces students to the conceptual and practical tools for gathering primary data and 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 Nicaragua. In particular, the course enhances students' skills at building rapport; initiating purposeful dialogue in the cultural context of Nicaragua; 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 Nicaragua and youth culture, literacy, and media. Broadly, the seminar introduces students to both qualitative and quantitative approaches of social science field research.

The main emphasis of the seminar is on the development of empirical tools and ethics of interactive research skills involving the collection of primary data. The seminar includes lectures on qualitative methods of research in social sciences and in particular in youth culture, literacy, media, the development of a research 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 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), which is largely based on the data gathered from primary sources.

Learning Outcomes

The Research 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 youth culture, literacy, and media;
- 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 research methods, and anticipated ethical challenges and ways of addressing them.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English and Spanish 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.

Readings

Most of the course readings will be provided for you in your course reader. These readings will also be made available on the website: benjaminjameswaddell.com. Any additional readings will be available in the SIT Study Center. Students are responsible for reading the texts prior to each module.

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: Experiential Learning in Field-Based Research

This introductory module will discuss 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.

- C. Wright Mills. "The Promise." (Website.)
- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "What is Qualitative Research?" Pg. 3-22. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "Six Common Qualitative Research Designs." Pg. 22-42. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Gelles, Richard J. and Mary M. Cavanaugh. "Association is Not Causation." (Website.)
- Lancaster, Rodger. "Part I. Life." Pg. 1-33. In, *Life is Hard*.

Module 2: Interviews and Observations in Qualitative Research

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. There will be discussions on approaches to interviewing and students will begin working with *StoryCorps*, which is the application that will be used to conduct interviews in *el campo*. Field observations will also be discussed.

- Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." (Website.)
- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "Conducting Effective Interviews." Pg. 107-136 and "Being a Careful Observer." Pg. 137-161. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Lancaster, Rodger. "Part I. Life." Pg. 33-68. In, *Life is Hard*.
- Watch: ["5 Tips for Conducting an Interview with Someone you Care About."](#)
- Explore: [StoryCorps](#) (Download.)

Module 3: Introduction to Art-Based Research

This module is designed to help students think about alternative approaches to research. Discussions will center on mixed-methods, action, critical, and arts-based research.

- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "Expanding the Qualitative Paradigm." Pg. 43-72. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Lancaster, Rodger. "Part I. Life." Pg. 68-106. In, *Life is Hard*.
- Art's Based Research Presentation: Gabriel Perez Setright (In class.)
- Watch: ["The Birth of a Word."](#)
- Watch: ["Turning Powerful Stats into Art."](#)

Module 4: Research with a Camera

This module focuses on conducting fieldwork through the lens of a camera. Discussions concern the ways in which research and film complement one another. Ethical concerns regarding conducting research with a camera in hand will also be discussed. Students will also be introduced to Splice, which is a smartphone app that facilitates editing videos on phones or laptops. Students will be introduced to Splice, which they will use for their homework on the Caribbean Coast.

- Germano, Roy. "Analytical Filmmaking." (Website.)
- Gould, Jeffery L. "Analytic Filmmaking as Social Scientific Research." (Website.)
- Watch: *The Otherside of Immigration*. (In class.)
- Watch: My Village, My Lobster. (Noche de Cine.)
- Explore: [Splice](#) (Download.)

Module 5: ISP in the Context of Nicaragua

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Nicaragua. The module highlights the importance of applied methodology in the ISP experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student. This module will describe the ISP processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP. The module will include a review and critique of past ISP 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). This critical phase in the course involves both large student group meetings and individual student meetings with the academic director.

- Review: ISP paperwork. (Website.)
- Dorris, Michael. "Shining Agate." (Website.)
- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "Dealing with Validity, Reliability, and Ethics" Pg. 237-266. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Watch: [The Frightening Legacy of US Syphilis Experiments in Guatemala](#)
- Share Analytic Films from the Caribbean Coast (Noche de Cine.)

Module 6: Mining Data and Qualitative Data Analysis

This module hones in on the art of analyzing data. Students will read several articles regarding different approaches to qualitative data analysis. Students will also be introduced to their homework assignments for Cuba, where students will begin to bring together different research techniques discussed throughout the semester.

- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "Qualitative Data Analysis" Pg. 191-236. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Blue, Sarah. "The Social Cost of Remittances: Race and Income Inequality in Contemporary Cuba." (Website.)
- Watch: Chevelution (Noche de Cine.)

Module 7: Writing Up Qualitative Research and a Word on Ethics

This module is designed to introduce students to the arduous task of writing up qualitative research. Students will discuss different examples of qualitative writing. In addition, we will discuss ethical concerns related to conducting research with human subjects. In particular, we will discuss the power dynamics involved with conducting research in foreign countries as well as the cultural barriers that face outsiders. In preparation for our discussion students will complete an online ethics course.

- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "The Methodology Section of a Qualitative Research Study." Pg. 293-300. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. "Writing Up Qualitative Research." Pg. 267-292. In, *Qualitative Research*.
- Human Subjects Ethics Certificate (Print and turn in.)

Module 8: Bringing it All Together

In the final module of research methods students will formally present their research proposals to the rest of the group and meet individually with the academic director and student coordinator. This module will focus on final preparations for the ISP. The class will discuss their updates of *Life is Hard* as well as reciprocity within the context of qualitative research.

- Watch: *Why Curiosity is the Key to Science and Medicine*.
- Thompson, William E. "Hanging Tongues: A Social Encounter with the Assembly Line." (Website.)
- Waddell, Benjamin and Pauline Martinez. "The Political Economy of Discriminatory Lending in the San Luis Valley." (Website.)

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments and Assessment:

Evaluation is based upon a series of practice activities for each method presented and the submission of an ISP proposal, which includes undergoing the Local Review Board (LRB) process. Most of your assignments will be uploaded to Moodle, which will serve as our digital homework platform.

- Leon:
- Campo:
- Costa:
- Cuba:
- La Maximo:
- ISP Proposal

Assessment:

Assignment	Percentage
León write up (in work journal)	5%
Homestay comparisons (e-mail)	5%
Campo field notes (in work journal)	20%
Costa field notes (in work journal)	20%
Cuba field notes (in work journal)	20%
IRB Proposal Package (email)	10%
Participation/Attendance	20%
	100%

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

- 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 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>.