Description
The Research Methods and Ethics course is a 3-credit course aimed at enabling students to learn effectively from their intercultural experience, to learn and practice core research methodologies, and to critically assess the ethical dimension of field-based research in the context of South Africa. It also prepares students for the rigors of interning with an NGO in SA, and to write a paper that describes, assesses, and analyses their learning during the four-week internship.

This course underlies and reinforces all other program components. In particular, this course facilitates the development and realization of an in-depth Independent Study Project (ISP) or internship paper based substantially on information obtained from primary sources or during the internship period. The course introduces students to resources, and deals with the cultural and logistical considerations involved in doing an Independent Study Project or internship in South Africa. As the components of the program constitute an integrated whole, it may not always be obvious which aspects are related to the Research Methods and Ethics course and which to other parts of the program; the results will be clear by the quality of the student’s cultural immersion and internship paper or Independent Study Project.

Learning Outcomes
By the end 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 development, economy, and inequality OR demonstrate awareness of the ethics of internship in the context of South Africa;
• 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 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 and methods of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to local vocabularies related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales. The field is a central component of the course, with half the course comprised of field assignments and activities and the other half of lectures, assigned reading, and discussion sessions.

Assigned readings are listed in the course schedule section below. Students are responsible for all required readings and should be prepared to bring them to bear on class discussions. The readings help students to engage lecturers, generate questions for class discussions, and deepen student knowledge and skills of particular aspects discussed in class.

Assignments will be assessed on organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, presentation of evidence, citation, and formatting where this is required.

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: Introduction, experiential learning and cultural adjustment

First, this module introduces unique aspects of SIT’s experiential learning pedagogy and how it shapes SIT South Africa’s program structure, student and faculty roles. 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.

Lecture Topics
Cultural Adjustment Cycle
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 South Africa
Positionality and Outsider/Insider Research
Skills for Networking, Time Management, and Productivity

Assigned Reading:
Kohls, Robert. “The Values Americans Live By.”


Recommended Reading:


Module 2: Research Methods and Ethics in Development, Economy, and Inequality
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.

Lecture Topics

Research Methods and Ethics in Development, Economy, and Inequality
Selecting Topics, Formulating Research Questions, and Literature Review
Data Collection: Participant Observation and Interviewing
Mixed Methods Research
Data Analysis, Evaluation, and Interpretation
SPSS Practical Session

Assigned Reading:


Recommended Reading:
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).

Lecture 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

Assigned Reading:


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.

Lecture 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

Assigned Reading:


Orwell, George. (1946) “Politics and the English Language” https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm

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 South Africa

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in South Africa. 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 ISP advisor, and logistics of the ISP period, including travel, materials, and timelines. Students will also review the ISP assessment rubric.

Assigned Reading:


Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in South Africa

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to research in South Africa, 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.

Assigned Reading:


Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology
This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving research challenges.

Assigned Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Module 5b: Internship in the Context of South Africa
This module prepares the student for the internship experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to internships in South Africa. 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.

Assigned Readings:


Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in South Africa
This session explores work-based norms and practices related to internships and work in South Africa, 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.

Assigned Readings:

World Bank Social Capital Assessment Tool, Annex 1B
Session 3: The Ethics of Participating in an Internship in South Africa

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.

Assigned Reading:


Assignments, Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Students participate in discussions and exercises intended to break down stereotypes and sensitize students to the values they assign to behaviors or customs based on their cultural heritage. Emphasis is placed on grappling with cultural differences and on recording, interpreting, and analyzing information from primary sources. Student performance will be evaluated in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical incident</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural study and presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP Proposal</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Critical Incident Paper

Objectives

- To deliberately and thoughtfully analyze a real-life situation that challenged your cross-cultural skills and understanding.
- To provide practice in documenting an important learning experience by separating out your description, interpretation, and evaluation of it.
- To notice one’s learned cultural biases.
- To begin to understand the sometimes subtle differences between South African and American culture.
- To examine a particular experience and apply lessons learned to your learning in the future.

Assignment

A critical incident is a situation in which you are personally affected by what has occurred. Closely examine an event or incident you have experienced thus far in South Africa that caused a shift in your understanding of the culture or of yourself in relation to the culture. The incident may be a positive experience, a traumatic experience, a misunderstanding, or any moment when you made a “breakthrough” in your learning or understanding of South African culture. It may be something that didn’t seem very important at the time, but later you realized it was significant in some way. There is no
maximum or minimum length, but please be descriptive. Please make sure that your description is about one specific incident and not a general condition. Use the D-I-E methodology (explained below) to describe and analyze the situation.

Requirements

Describe the event or incident as objectively as possible. What happened? Who was involved? Mention the people involved, including their ages, sex, occupation, attitudes, nature of involvement in the incident, relationships to you, to each other, etc. Provide any background information necessary for fully understanding the incident. This may include place, occasion, social contexts, time of day, weather, etc. Please limit description to the facts - what you heard, saw, smelled, tasted, or touched. Also, describe as specifically as possible what you did in the situation. Describe how you reacted; your role in the situation in terms of what you felt and how you behaved. List your emotions or reactions chronologically.

Interpret the incident; put it in context. Why do you think it happened? Why did you feel or act in such a way (what triggered these emotions or reactions)? Hypothesize how and why your cultural understanding is different from a South African’s. What assumptions did you make and/or what differing values may have been involved? What were the cultural norms under which you or others operated? (The emotions are used as a tool for acknowledging a cultural difference.) Try to explain the event based on what you believe transpired.

Then: Share your hypothesis with at least two different South African people to gather their perspectives on their own culture. It is often easiest to ask someone who was not directly involved in the situation. They may laugh, become angry, click their tongue – this is what you want!!!! Then listen to their interpretation of the event/interaction. Take notes and direct quotes from conversations and use them in your written assignment.

Evaluate your experience. What intercultural skills did you use and/or learn? What would you do differently if you could? Why? How will you apply your learning in the future, for your stay in South Africa and/or when you return to the U.S.? Consider those questions that have been raised for you as you have written this assignment and reflected on the incident, including any insights you may now have concerning cross-cultural skills you may need or want to develop. Do not limit yourself to those skills listed here, but below are some ideas:

Important Skills for Cross Cultural Learning and Adaptation

Successfully adjusting to life in a foreign culture requires that you develop and use a variety of cross-cultural skills. Some of these may be skills you have already developed in other situations; some of them may be new to you. They include the following:

- **Information source development** - the ability to use many information-gathering skills such as observation, questioning associates and chance acquaintances, and listening with care.
- **Cultural understanding** - awareness and understanding of the structure and the values, feelings, and attitudes of people and the ways these influence behavior.
- **Interpersonal communication** - in addition to listening well and speaking clearly, one must also be sensitive to non-verbal communication, i.e. the messages available from physical movements and gestures, facial expressions and the quality of face-to-face contact.
- **Commitment to persons and relationships** - the ability to become deeply involved with people, to be able to give and inspire confidence, to care and take action with and for them in accordance with one’s concerns.
• **Decision-making** - the ability to come to conclusions and take action in spite of inadequate, unreliable and/or conflicting information. In making decisions in a cross-cultural setting a person must learn to trust feelings, searching for the best possible course of action or most valuable alternative.

• **Self-understanding** - awareness of and insight into one's own learning processes, strengths, weaknesses, failures, prejudices, values, emotions, and goals.

• **Self-reliance** - independence, autonomy, resiliency, willingness to accept responsibility for one's own actions and education; receptiveness to new experiences and ideas, confidence in one's self and the ability to function independently and interdependently.

**Assessment**

The paper will be assessed in relation to:

1. Selection of an appropriate cross-cultural incident.
2. Content and depth of Description (with emphasis on objectivity).
3. Content and depth of Interpretation/Analysis.
4. Content and depth of Evaluation/Reflection.
5. Cross-check with two South Africans (use of direct quotes).
6. Quality of writing (grammar, syntax, spelling and a clear, concise, and engaging writing style).

**Rural Study:**

Participatory techniques are “a growing family of approaches, methods, attitudes, and behaviors to enable and empower people to share, analyze and enhance their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor, evaluate and reflect”. While in Amacambini we will use a number of these techniques, including kinship charts, life histories, and seasonal calendars to gain hands-on experience in and knowledge of a community. We will pay specific attention to people, activities, resources, environmental features, etc.

**Objectives**

- To deliberately and thoughtfully analyze a real life situation that challenged your cross-cultural skills and understanding.
- To encourage an appreciation for the realities of rural life, and how this differs from urban life.
- To provide more situations to practice language and communication skills.
- To practice a research method of your choice (mapmaking, interviewing, kinship charting, participant observation, etc.).
- To enable you to tailor an assignment to suit your own interests and learning style.
- To gain insight into obstacles encountered when doing fieldwork.
- To practice objective note-taking and data analysis.

**Assignment**

The rural excursion is your first extended experience in the field. Among other things it is an opportunity for you to put into practice all that you have learned, so far, about primary research. This assignment has been designed to focus your efforts on one aspect of this work: **methodology**. You need only choose one method to practice. Although you may gather some supplementary information by other means, try to focus on practicing one.

Once in Amacambini you will determine a question to be answered using your chosen technique. Try to use many different sources and consider not only “facts”, but also people’s viewpoints and attitudes.
Suggestions for exploration

1. Physical Environment -
   - Layout of the area, relationship of buildings and housing, significance of this
   - Vegetation
   - Geography – principal physical features: rivers, roads, fields, sacred sites, tombs, etc.

2. Cultural Environment
   - Name of the community and meaning of the name
   - Important people
   - Places of interest
   - Taboos, rituals, spirituality, religion

3. People
   - Family structure
   - Population: age breakdown, gender representations, ethnic groups, etc.
   - Gender roles
   - Migration patterns
   - Traditional and modern values

4. Economy
   - Primary occupations
   - Economic indicators (expressions of wealth)
   - Organization of economic system: types of markets, goods available, external trade
   - Unpaid jobs/labor; sources of labor
   - Available technologies

5. Ecology
   - Waste disposal (water, household trash, sewage)
   - Natural resources of the area
   - Water sources and value
   - Relationship of villagers to the environment

6. Communication and transportation
   - Information dissemination in the community
   - Access to outside information
   - Primary transportation means, frequency of use, value placed on transportation means

7. Social
   - Community groups and organizations
• Special events or activities - what, when, who, where, why
• Leisure activities, sports, concept of “fun”
• Children’s activities

Requirements

You will present a short (10-minute) oral report to a small group of your classmates so that we can all learn something about the topic you chose to study. In this forum you will present your methodology, your data and your conclusions (albeit after a brief and cursory analysis.) However, only your methodology section (2 pages) will be turned in for a grade. Remember, your goal is to experiment with a technique that you have learned in class. In your write-up, answer the following questions:

1. What methodology/methodologies did you use to conduct your research?
2. Why did you want to practice this particular methodology?
3. Briefly explain how you carried out your method.
4. What questions were you attempting to answer?
5. Who were your primary informants?
6. What ethical challenges did you encounter? How did you address them?
7. Did you use a translator? How did that work? What challenges did you encounter?
8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing this project? Were you able to resolve these, and if so, how?
9. Given what you know now, would you undertake the same project again, or a different one?
10. If you were to do this same study again, how would you do it differently?
11. Did you learn anything else about doing field study?

Finally, using your answers to the above questions, evaluate your overall learning. Give yourself a letter grade. Think primarily about your efficiency in practicing the technique (Appropriate? Ethical? Effective? Did you do it right? Did you get good results?). But also factor in the possibility that even if you were a failure at carrying out that particular technique, in this particular instance, perhaps you learned a great deal from the experience.

Assessment

The methodology paper will be assessed in relation to: content and depth of answers to the above questions; your self-evaluation; and your quality of writing (grammar, syntax, spelling and a clear, concise, and engaging writing style).

Participation:
Criteria for assessment of participation is as follows:
• Attendance: promptness to class, and positive presence in class.
• Active listening: paying attention in class/during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
• *Involvement in class discussions:* either in small or large groups sharing knowledge and information, asking questions.

• *Group accountability:* participates as part of a group during field excursions and classes.

• *Respect:* culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers, and communities.

Attendance at all seminars and field activities is mandatory unless indicated as optional on the schedule. Failure to attend, or repeated late arrival, will lower your grade substantially, if not jeopardize your standing in the program.

Please note that while strong participation on all the above matters will get you close to the full twenty points for this component of your grade, a failure to fully participate in any program activity, as determined by the academic director, is grounds not only for failure of the Research Methods and Ethics course, but also for academic and/or behavioral probation and other disciplinary action, up to and possibly including dismissal from the program.

**Grading Scale:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-83%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>74-76%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73%</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 64%</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**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.