

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH 3500 (3 credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Switzerland: International Studies and Multilateral Diplomacy

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical 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 Research Methods and Ethics seminar (RME) provides the theoretical, conceptual, and practical tools for conducting field research in a new cultural environment. The main emphasis of the seminar is on the development of interactive research skills involving the collection of primary data. The theoretical part of the seminar includes lectures on qualitative methods of research in social sciences and in particular in international relations, interactive research techniques, and the development of a research proposal. The seminar also includes a number of practical exercises such as the organization and conduct of interviews with experts in Switzerland, France and Belgium, development of a research proposal, preparation of an application for review of research with Human Subjects, a local case study, and the integration of interviews into a research project. The ethical implications of field research will be examined throughout. The seminar helps develop the skills necessary to navigate both the local and international environments of Switzerland. Students undertake a number of field visits to learn the specificities of local and international culture and institutions. The overall aim is to enable students to master 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 class hours of instruction (3 credits). Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of the impact of researcher's positionality on the research projects;
- Develop capability to formulate a clear research problem and question, carry out a literature review, and identify relevant experts for primary data collection;
- Develop networking and organizational skills for interactive research in the local and international environments in Geneva;
- Apply qualitative research techniques such as participant observation and advanced interviewing to collect data;

- Demonstrate capacity to synthesize information gathered from primary and secondary sources and integrate it into the research project;
- Demonstrate awareness of ethical issues in the context of field research in another culture;
- Produce an Independent Study Project proposal and an application for review of ISP research with human subjects to be approved by the Local Review Board/SIT Institutional Review Board.

Language of Instruction

The seminar is taught in English, but students will be simultaneously learning French. Students are expected to read the French press and academic articles in French related to the seminar.

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 and Positionality | Discovering Swiss Culture and International Geneva

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. This module helps students become reflexive researchers who are attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research.

Session 1: A Historical Introduction to the "Geneva Spirit of Peace": Field Visit

This field visit conducted by a professional historian who introduces students to the history of Geneva. It includes the visit of the heritage sites of national and international importance around the old town of Geneva. Students discover the history of the "Geneva Spirit of Peace" and learn about the city's humanitarian tradition.

Required Reading:

Kuntz, Joelle. (2001). *The Religious Rift: Geneva Comes to the Rescue of Europe's Protestants (Chap.1) / The Moral Rift: A Commitment Against War (Chap.2) / After the Catastrophe of 1914-1918: A Light Shines in Geneva? (Chap.3). In Geneva and the Call of Internationalism. A History (pp.11-69) Genève: Editions Zoé.*

Session 2: Studying in a New Environment: Swiss Culture

This session introduces students to the local culture context, Swiss etiquette, and customs. Students will learn about their new environment, most particularly their homestay neighborhood and homestay family.

Session 3: Switzerland: History, Culture, Society, and Identity: Field Visit

To learn more about Swiss culture, students visit the Museum of the Swiss Abroad. Dr. Zurfluh, a leading expert on Swiss history and culture and Director of the Museum, lectures on the historical, cultural, and political specificities of Switzerland. The session concludes with a discussion on the current Swiss issues such as bank secrecy, direct democracy, cultural diversity, and neutrality.

Required Reading:

Kriesi, Hanspeter & Trechsel, Alexander H. (2008). *The development of the modern Swiss nation-state / Neutrality / Federalism / Direct Democracy.* In Kriesi, Hanspeter & Trechsel,

Alexander H, *The politics of Switzerland: continuity and change in a consensus democracy*. (pp. 1-68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended Reading:

The Swiss Confederation – *A Brief Guide 2012*, Swiss Confederation, Federal Chancellery.

Session 4: Field visit to the United Nations

Students visit the site of the “Palace of Nations,” the European Headquarters of the United Nations. They learn about the origins of the UN system, the current structure of the organization, and the issue areas covered by it. Students will also meet the UN librarians to learn how to access the exceptional resources of the UN library.

Required Reading:

Kuntz, Joelle. (2001). Geneva and the United Nations: Serving the Greater Good. In *Geneva and the Call of Internationalism. A History*. (chapter 4, pp.69-88). Genève: Editions Zoé.

Organization Drop-Off: Field Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to visit an organization based in Geneva to learn about its areas of focus and programs. The objectives of this assignment are:

- to become more familiar with Geneva and its international community;
- to learn about the NGOs, think tanks, and international organizations based in Geneva;
- to develop networking strategies in Geneva and get a first experience with interviewing techniques;
- to work effectively in a team;
- to learn to navigate in the city.

Session 5: Reflections on Positionality and Representation

This session builds on students’ field exercise experience. Students reflect on their own positionality and ways in which it can impact their representation of the host culture. Particular attention is given to ways in which positionality shapes the research question, relation with the research subjects, approach in data collection, data processing, and the representation of their research subjects in their final ISP.

Required Reading:

Holmes, Andrew G. (2012). Researcher Positionality: A consideration of its influence and place in research. University of Hull, Centre for Educational Studies.

Session 6: Lausanne, Capital of Canton de Vaud: Field Visit

This field visit to Lausanne, the capital of the Canton de Vaud, where students reside during the program, provides the opportunity to expand the understanding of the local Swiss culture. The city is home to the International Olympic Committee and the historical site of the interwar international peace conferences. The visit includes a tour of the Olympic Museum.

Module 2: Methodology and Ethics

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. The module will also walk the students through the preparation process of their ISP proposal, the LRB (Local Review Board) process, and the application for human subjects review (HSR application).

Session 1: Introduction to Research Methods in Social Sciences and International Relations | Ethics and Research

This session provides a comprehensive introduction to qualitative research methods in social sciences and international relations. The session covers criteria in social research, theoretical, epistemological and ontological considerations in research, and discusses values and positionality of the researcher. It provides an overview of the step by step process in developing a research project from the formulation of a research question, conducting a literature review, and the selection of appropriate research methods to the selection of approaches to data collection and analysis and the formulation of conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The session provides an in-depth introduction to ethical issues in research and obligations to human subjects.

Required Reading:

Bryman, Alan. (2012). The Nature of Qualitative Research (extract, pp.380-409)/ Ethics and Politics in Social Research (pp.130-154). In *Social Research Methods (4th ed.)*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Session 2: Designing a Research Project

This session provides a practical introduction on how to design and develop a research project. It involves the formulation and refinement of the research question(s), the description of the problem, preparation of a literature review with the use of critical and analytical methods, and the integration of interview quotes into the research project. The session also covers the project management basics and the preparation of a work journal and an HSR application. Students choose a topic and rehearse how to develop research questions for their ISP projects.

Required Reading:

Silverman, D. (2005). Writing a research proposal. *Doing Qualitative Research* (pp. 139–146). Retrieved from <http://www.uk.sagepub.com/managementresearch/Easterby-Smith%20Online%20Reading%20Links/Chapter%202/Silverman%20Doing%20Qualitative%20Research%20pp139-146.pdf>

Barakso, M., Schaffner, B. and Sabet, D. (2014). The Research Question / Linking Theory and Inference". In *Understanding Political Science Research Methods* (pp. 36-55; 56-80). Routledge.

Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology

This session, which takes place at the beginning of the ISP period, provides an overview of the requirements of an ISP. It explains the rationale and the sequence of the theoretical and practical sessions which help develop the skills necessary for a successful design and delivery of the ISP. The session also covers the effective strategies of time management, networking strategies, and the ISP evaluation criteria. It also explains the core requirements in relation to the ISP presentations, which take place at the end of the semester.

Required Reading:

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.

Session 4: Individual ISP Advising Sessions

The objective of the individual advising sessions is to allow students to discuss the ISP topic, the research question, and the interactive research strategies with the academic director and advisor, and to guide them in the process of preparation of a coherent ISP final proposal. Further meetings are organized during the ISP period to discuss the research progress.

ISP Final Proposal with Application of Review of ISP Research with Human Subjects

Applying different skills developed throughout this second module, students write an Independent Study Project final proposal (five pages), which includes a title, research question(s), description of research methodology, field research design (including possible interviews), and bibliography (with a minimum of eight sources for the final proposal). Final ISP proposals must be submitted with the application of review of ISP research with human subjects.

Module 3: Doing Field Research on International Relations in Geneva/Paris/Brussels

This module provides a comprehensive overview of field research techniques with a particular focus on interviewing techniques and looks at the practical application of international relations theories in research. It focuses on the case of research in Geneva and the challenges of connecting with diplomats and professionals at international organizations. The module also includes two case studies: Islam in Europe and small states in International Relations.

Session 1: Field Research Techniques

This session provides an overview of the different field research techniques, such as interviews, networking strategies, and the best practices of how to contact experts in the international environment of Geneva as well as in Paris and Brussels. Students are also briefed on the “Short Research Project with the Integration of an Interview” carried out in Brussels or Paris.

Required Reading:

Bryman, Alan. (2012). Interviewing in Qualitative Research. In *Social Research Methods (4th ed.)*. (pp.469-487). New York: Oxford University Press.

Session 2: LCS Individual Meeting

An individual meeting is organized with students to discuss their Local Case Study (LCS) proposal and to identify targeted research settings for this exercise.

Required Reading:

Bryman, Alan. (2012). Ethnography and Participant Observation. In *Social Research Methods (4th ed.)*. (pp-431-453). New York: Oxford University Press.

Session 3: Practical Approaches to the Study of International Relations (Including Interdisciplinary Approaches)

This session first provides a brief overview of the core theories of international relations and theoretical debates. Then it discusses practical ways of applying IR theories in research.

Required Reading:

Sterling-Folker, Jennifer (2013). Making Sense of International Relations Theory / Applying International Relations Theories. In Sterling-Folker, J. (ed.) *Making Sense of International Relations Theory, 2nd ed (pp.1-14; 351-355.)* Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Klotz, Audie (2008). Introduction. In Klotz, A and Prakash, D. (eds) *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide (pp. 1-7)*. Houndmills, Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan.

Session 4: Religion and Politics: Islam in Europe

The objective of this session is to discuss the influence of religion on politics with a focus on Islam in the evolving political context of Europe.

Required Reading:

Nielsen, Jorgen S. (2014). The New Muslim Europe. In Kenney, J.T. and Moosa, E. (eds). *Islam in the Modern World* (pp. 335-350). London: Routledge.

Recommended Reading:

Haynes, Jeffrey (2014). Politics and Religion in a Global Age. In Arnason, J.P. and Pawel Karolewski, I. (eds), *Religion and Politics. European and Global Perspectives* (pp. 37-5). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Triandafyllidou, Anna (2010). Muslims in 21st Century Europe: Conceptual and empirical issues. In Triandafyllidou, A.(ed.). *Muslims in 21st Century Europe: Structural and cultural perspectives* (pp 1-26) London: Routledge.

Session 5: Small States in the International System: The Case of Belgium

This session seeks to examine the role of small states in the international system with a focus on Belgium. It also introduces the political system of the country.

Required Reading:

Deschouwer, Kris (2012). Why Belgium? / A Short Political History / Belgium in the World. In Deschouwer, K. *The politics of Belgium New York [u.a.].* (pp. 1-17; 18-44; 225-60). Palgrave Macmillan.

Witte, E., Craeybeckx, J., Meynen,A.(2009). *Political History of Belgium from 1830 Onwards* (pp.413-455). Brussels Academic and Scientific Publishers ASP.

Session 6: Workshop “Conducting Field Research: Sharing Best Practices”

The objective of this workshop is to allow students to share best practices and to debrief on their individual experiences in field research after the Paris/Brussels interview exercise.

Short Research Project with the Integration of an Interview in Brussels/Paris | Study Trip

Students develop a five-page research project on a topic related to their ISP (or another theme related to the SPS or IRMD seminars) with the integration of at least one interview carried out in Paris or Brussels. Special attention is paid to the identification of the research question, the selection of interview questions, and the integration of quotes in the research paper.

Local Case Study (LCS)

The purpose of this exercise is to document students’ observations, interpretations, and evaluations of a local cultural phenomenon in its sociopolitical context. This final assignment requires students to apply different skills developed in this seminar to write a ten-page research report which includes a minimum of five face-to-face interviews.

Student Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Short Research Project with Integration of an Interview in Brussels/Paris: Students develop a short research project (five pages) on a topic related to their ISP (or another theme related to the SPS or IRMD seminars) with the integration of at least one interview carried out in Paris or Brussels.

ISP final proposal: Applying different skills developed throughout this second module, students write a five-page Independent Study Project final proposal, which includes a title, research question(s), description of research methodology, field research design (possible interviews),

and bibliography (with a minimum of eight sources for the final proposal). Final ISP proposals must be submitted with the application of review of ISP research with human subjects.

Local Case Study Research Report: The purpose of this exercise is to document students' observations, interpretations, and evaluations of a local cultural phenomenon in its sociopolitical context. This final assignment requires students to apply all the different skills developed in this seminar to develop a ten-page research report which includes a minimum of five face-to-face interviews.

Assessment:

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|---|-----|
| Participation | 10% |
| ISP Final Proposal with Application of Review of ISP Research with Human Subjects | 30% |
| Short Research Project with Integration of an Interview in Brussels/Paris | 30% |
| Local Case Study Research Report | 30% |

Grading Scale

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|-----------|----|---------------|
| 94-100% | A | Excellent |
| 90-93% | A- | |
| 87-89% | B+ | |
| 84-86% | B | Above Average |
| 80-83% | B- | |
| 77-79% | C+ | |
| 74-76% | C | Average |
| 70-73% | C- | |
| 67-69% | D+ | |
| 64-66% | D | Below Average |
| below 64% | F | Fail |

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 (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- 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.

Academic Policies: SIT prides itself on providing students with an experientially based program; we hold ourselves, and our students, to the highest of academic standards. Students are asked to refer to the **SIT Study Abroad Handbook** for policies on academic integrity,

ethics, academic 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>.