Lab Description
Food is an interdisciplinary lab designed to link the latest in food security theory with hands-on, community-based projects in the Himalaya, home to one of the most fragile, important, and bio diverse ecological systems in the world. The Indian state of Sikkim, with its traditional agricultural system and rich genetic pools of biological resources, is an excellent site in which to engage the challenges of and innovative possibilities for nutritional security. Through homestay and village immersive learning, site visits, and facilitated discussions with local and academic experts in the field, all of which are complemented by hands-on projects, students develop new skills and diverse perspectives necessary for analyzing the sustainability of food production and nutritional security. The lab culminates in a collaborative group project related to food security designed by students in conjunction with local communities.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the lab, students will be able to:
- Design and develop a collaborative project focused on food security;
- Demonstrate understanding of traditional and integrated agriculture systems in Sikkim, agro biodiversity conservation and food culture;
- Engage in hands-on activities such as working on farms, food processing and making agro-based products;
- Analyze sustainability of food production, food diversity and nutritional security in Sikkim in the context of government policies, climate change and globalization;
- Analyze the role of gender in conservation and management of local agro biodiversity and food production and nutrition.

Language of Instruction
This lab is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to lab content during meetings, discussions and project engagement with in-country experts and during field visits in different agro-ecosystems across the state.

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from term to term.
Lab Schedule

*Please be aware that the sessions and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our speakers’ availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Sikkim: Traditional and Integrated Agriculture and Food Culture (9 contact hours)
This module introduces lab goals and the eastern Himalayan region’s integrated agricultural system, a system that allows mountain communities to conserve and manage a diverse pool of genetic resources and sustain Sikkim’s unique food culture.

Topics
- Introduction to Lab goals in the eastern Himalayas
- Sikkim: People, Livelihood, culture, and society
- Oral history about the village and its emergence of agricultural systems
- Transect walk to understand traditional and integrated agriculture systems in Sikkim
- Agro biodiversity: Food culture & habits
- Gender and local agro biodiversity

SLS #1
- Student-led synthesis session

Module 2: Traditional and Integrated Agriculture: Field Immersion in Patuk Village (8.5 contact hours)
Patuk, in Sikkim’s east district, is an agricultural village where students observe the effects of globalization and government policies on a traditional integrated agriculture system. Themes integral to this module include in-situ conservation of agricultural biodiversity and the role of gender in food production and processing and in ensuring nutritional security of the family. In addition, students will stay with rural families and actively participate with village families in agricultural work, such as sowing, transplanting, harvesting, making hay mats, and food processing.

Module 3: Climate Change, Globalization and Policy Impacts: Field Excursion to Pendam Village (6 hours/2day & 2 hours debriefing – 7 contact hours)
In Pendam Village, located in the east district, students witness: the direct impact of climate change and government policies on agriculture production; new patterns in cropping and land use; changes in food culture and nutrition as a result of globalization (e.g., the import of packaged foods); and livelihood transitions.

Module 4: Food Production and Nutritional Security in Transition (4.5 contact hours)
This core module explores in depth the dimensions of mountain agriculture and its associated food culture and nutrition in the state of Sikkim. Through the lens of sustainability in rapidly globalizing mountain systems, students analyze various drivers of change, particularly climate change, globalization and conflicting government policies affecting the sustainability of traditional food production systems and food cultures.

Topics
- Globalization and food in mountain communities
- Climate change and food security
- Sustainability: Food and nutrition diversity in the context of globalization, climate change and conflicting government policies

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**SLS #2:**
- Student-led synthesis session

**Module 5: Lab Project - Design, Development, and Presentation (32 contact hours)**
Student groups design and develop a final lab project in collaboration with community members. In addition to detailing the food security-related project’s genesis and purpose, the group provides recommendations for project implementation and long-term sustainability through a final oral presentation. Engagement in this project allows students to understand and analyze changes in local food production, nutritional security, the complexity of food politics, and the potential for community-based action.

**Required Readings**
The following is a preliminary list of lab readings. A selection of the required readings will be assigned prior to the start of the program.


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Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

1. **Active and Meaningful Participation**

   Active and Meaningful Participation includes:
   
   - **Attendance**: prompt arrival to class and positive presence in class. Attendance is required and all excursions are mandatory. An absence must be discussed and approved by the Academic Director in advance.
   
   - **Active Listening**: paying attention during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, engaging in discussion, sharing comments, demonstrating interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), exercising critical thinking, note taking, entertaining contradictory perspectives, engaging and acknowledging hosts’ presence.
   
   - **Involvement in Class Discussions**: either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge and information. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don’t, and allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
   
   - **Group Accountability**: participating positively as a part of a group during all lab activities.
   
   - **Respect**: interacting in a culturally appropriate manner with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT speakers and communities.

2. **Student-Led Synthesis Sessions**

   Each student participates in the organization and facilitation of at least one synthesis discussion (SLS) session to analyze the lab’s key themes and ideas. Students are expected to use SLS sessions as opportunities to critically reflect upon the speakers, readings, and excursions, to articulate personal opinions, and to connect the issues analyzed to the experience of living and studying in India. Students are urged to be creative in approach – they may hold a debate, question and answer session, small group discussion, or develop other creative methods for generating a productive synthesis session.

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3. **Journal and Weekly Reflection Paper: Food Lab Immersive Experience**

Students should maintain a daily journal beginning from the orientation and are expected to integrate and synthesize learning from the home stay immersion, lab project, presentations, readings, excursions and discussions in the journal. The journal is expected to record various observations (objective facts) within the specific focus on the experiential learning, as well as, reflection or reaction on the experience itself. Students should also take notes about the materials discussed in academic session in class and field; homestay learning’s about food, including recording the details of food consumed at home and program centre; observation about food grown in home stay or communities’ farms; and other non-written material related to the daily observation and experiences of the lab. Assessment of the journal takes into consideration the spontaneity in note-taking, the quality of the information noted, as well as the details of notes and its accuracy and relevance of the entries in a given context. This journal will be assessed on a weekly basis. The journal should be provided for evaluation in rough, handwritten format. **Typewritten journals will not be accepted.**

Students along with the journal should also provide three weekly two-page typed written reflection (single spaced) weekly related to the Food lab and should critically reflect on assigned reading materials and their experiential learning to bridge the theory and the ground reality. It is the responsibility of the students to submit the journal and a page of reflection, weekly for three weeks on the time mentioned in the calendar.

4. **Lab Project**

The lab culminates in a collaborative project developed in conjunction with community members. Over the course of the lab, small groups of students will conceptualize, design and complete a food security-related final project. Project specifics grow from observation of and engagement in food production and consumption practices, student understanding of challenges and opportunities for food security in Sikkim, as well as student creativity and insight. Groups of students will work together for 8 days in assigned sites with various ethnic communities.

*Oral Presentation:* Student presentations detail the conceptualization, development, and intended outcomes of the Lab Project. Reflection on the project development process is expected and encouraged.

**Assessment**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>sessions and field excursions</td>
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<td>Student Lead Synthesis Sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal and Weekly Reflection Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lab Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meaningful participation to develop and execute</td>
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<td>the project</td>
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<td>Oral presentation (learning process)</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale**

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<td>90-93%</td>
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<td>64-66%</td>
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<td>below 64%</td>
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Expectations and Policies

- **Show up prepared.** The lab is based on group learning so you must participate fully. Be on time for all sessions, discussions, site visits and excursions. There are many long days so you must be well rested and have a clear head and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

- **Ask questions. Engage speakers and hosts.** It is an honor for us to learn from guest speakers and host communities.

- **Complete assignments on time.** Assignments are due by 5pm unless otherwise instructed. Assignments are docked 5% for each day or part of a day that they are late. Contact the Academic Director in advance if health or other issues prevent you from submitting an assignment on time. All assignments must be completed to get a passing grade.

- **Field Visits.** Eight hours in a day are expected to be spent doing field work and visits. You are expected to act appropriately; taking notes, attention, engaging the host through careful listening, eye contact and asking questions. You should refrain from using cell phones, iPods, internet, etc. You are also not allowed to take photographs during sessions but may do so at the end.

- **Comply with academic integrity policies** (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

- **Respect differences of opinion** (classmates, speakers, 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.

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. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook.

Disability Services: For information about and support from Disability Services (DS) to facilitate an accessible educational experience, please contact Julia Karpicz, Assistant Director of Disability Services for SIT. She can be reached at disabilityservices@sit.edu or +1-802-258-3390. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services can be found on the DS website at: http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices.

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