Independent Study Project
ISPR 3000 (4 Credits / 120 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Jordan: Geopolitics, International Relations,
and the Future of the Middle East

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 Independent Study Project (ISP) is a self-designed research project offering students the opportunity to undertake a personally significant and independent investigation, which highlights the regional and cultural reality that can only be encountered during a study abroad experience. The ISP is the academic component in which the student most directly applies the concepts, skills, tools, and techniques of experience-based learning articulated through the Research Methods and Ethics and the thematic courses, while enabling students to further integrate their language skills and the contacts they have developed in the homestay and in the broader community. Each student will plan, develop, and independently undertake a research project, with the advice and guidance of the Academic Director and an ISP Advisor - a local academic and/or experienced field professional. The topic of study may be anything of interest to the student, within the scope of the program and the immediate region, and is usually developed out of lectures, discussions, and educational excursions. The final project should provide material evidence of student capability in utilizing appropriate methodologies and in synthesizing experiences in the host culture. Students are expected to complete 120 hours of field-based (non-archival, non-library) research on their topic, submit a substantial written paper, and deliver an accompanying oral presentation. It is not uncommon for ISPs to strongly contribute to the student's choice of subject for graduate studies or professional career.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will:

- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of a particular aspect of modernization and/or social change in Jordan;
- Gain competence in the processes of independent, primary, research – from choosing a viable topic and appropriate methodologies, to final analyses and interpretations of data;
- Develop a greater appreciation of the challenges faced by field researchers;
- Demonstrate independence and self-confidence while functioning in Jordanian daily life;
- Produce an ISP paper with an average length of 25-45 pages in total observance of the norms of ethics shared by the host culture and the international academic community.

Course Requirements
As the ISP is the academic culmination of the learning experience, students are encouraged to start thinking actively about their research topic as early in the program as possible. All components of the program, beginning with orientation and including the Research Methods and Ethics course, the two thematic courses, homestay, educational excursions, intensive Arabic, and associated forms of cultural interaction within the host society, must be used diligently to refine and deepen this thinking.

Ongoing discussion with the Academic Director, while primarily concerning the research topic, must also enable students to identify available resources, including an appropriate research supervisor from among local faculty. Ultimately, the successful completion of the independent study project depends, to no small degree, on the methodological rigor, originality, and sophistication with which a student has attended to the research topic. For their ISP, students may write an essay or express their ideas through other media such as photography, creative writing, visual performance, or any other form approved by the Academic Director.

All ISP topics must receive advanced approval by the Academic Director. Students are required to submit formal research proposals outlining their ISP topic, methodologies, and the plan for implementation to ensure that the project is conducted in an ethical, responsible, and culturally appropriate manner. The ISP must give evidence that the student has mastered the methodological and critical tools, as well as culturally and ethically appropriate techniques, of data generation and analysis.

Readings
While the majority of the ISP work should be conducted in the field, readings for the ISP are strongly encouraged and will be based on the specific topic of study. Reference articles and books are available from local libraries, the program library, and SIT's electronic library databases specifically related to student ISP topics. Students are also expected to consult appropriate course readings applicable to the ISP.

ISP Guidelines and Requirements
The student will spend a minimum of 120 hours on the ISP with a majority of this work conducted in the field (as opposed to library research, for example). This includes time spent reading, developing contacts, interviewing, participating, making field observations, writing, and meeting with the Academic Director and advisor. Students are responsible for scheduling at least 3-5 individual advising meetings to review their ISP proposal and ISP planning. Periodic progress conferences will be held with the Academic Director as needed. Unless approved for an alternative ISP, the final product is a typed and bound 25-45 page academic paper, double-spaced, with 12-point standard font. In addition, students must prepare a 20-30 minute oral presentation highlighting research findings and analyses, which they will deliver to colleagues, community members, program staff, the Academic Director, the project advisors, and other invited guests.

Guidelines for ISP Proposal
Before embarking on your ISP project, you need to submit a one-page proposal in which you explain:
1. Your thesis;
2. The methodology you will use to collect information and analyze it;
3. Where and/or from whom you will collect information;
4. What secondary sources you have consulted or will consult;
5. The kind of ethical issues you face or will face while doing your research;
6. What resource persons (including a possible advisor) you have contacted or will contact.

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Human Subjects Review
All ISP proposals must reflect a thoughtful and culturally appropriate consideration of the effects of the inquiry on the participants in the project. To that end, students are required to submit an "Application for Review of Research with Human Subjects," to include a discussion of any potential harm that might come from the study, and to provide appendices including interview and survey protocols. If the Academic Director or Local Review Board believes that the proposed research insufficiently addresses the concerns of this policy, the student will be asked to revise their proposal. Standards for this review are developed in-country and reflect local academic practice.

If the research has been funded by a U.S. government agency, or if the student plans to take this research back to the home school or community for further dissemination, then the student must follow more stringent standards, i.e., not only those of the host community, but also those of the Office for Human Research Protections, with which SIT is registered. Any questions or concerns that cannot be resolved at the program level (through the Local Review Board) are forwarded to SIT's Institutional Review Board for review.

Possible ISP topic areas include:
- Transition and Transformation: Modernization, Legitimacy, and the Jordanian Political System;
- Jordanian Foreign Policy Under King Abdullah II;
- State Power and the Regulation of Islam: Barrier to Civil Society;
- Manhood and Masculinity: The Social Construction of Gender and its Effects on Sexual Expression and Rites of Passage to Manhood;
- Bone Dry: Jordanian perspectives in the Jordan-Israel water sharing agreements;
- Friends with Benefits? Examining the Relationship between Jordan & the Gulf Corporation Council;
- The Arab Spring: Religious Spring or Nationalist Spring?
- Social Constructs of Sexuality: The Education of Desire amongst Women in Amman, Jordan;
- Breaking Economic Dependency: The Iraq Wars Effects on the Jordanian-Iraqi Trade Relationship.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
At the end of the ISP period, students are expected to present their work to the group and the Academic Advisor. Timely completion of all ISP assignments is expected. Late submissions will be penalized. Assessment of both written work and the oral presentation is based on the accuracy of the information conveyed, the breadth and appropriateness of sources, the depth of analysis and insight, the quality of expression, the level of cultural sensitivity displayed, and adherence to the highest ethical standards. During the process of planning, developing, executing, and presenting the ISP, students are evaluated on their ability to:
- Work independently and respectfully within Jordan and in cooperation with institutions and advisors;
- Develop a logical and coherent framework for the study project, and clearly justify how the chosen topic lies within the scope of the program and region;
- Critically discuss and evaluate available and relevant theories, papers, and published materials on the proposed project;
- Clearly present the main objectives of the project, further developing them when needed;
- Present and justify a reasonable methodological framework to achieve the proposed objectives;
- Critically describe the data collected, analysis performed, and results;

- Present and discuss problems, findings, and conclusions based on the methods used, data and information collected, and/or analysis performed;
- Be able to present all steps of the project clearly and coherently in a written and oral format for an independent audience.

In general, the criteria for ISP evaluation include the student's methods and effectiveness in gathering information, organization, assimilation, accuracy, analysis of the information, the effectiveness of expression and communication in the final form, and clarity and strength of project presentation and defense. The paper is graded as follows:

ISP Final Paper   60%
ISP Project Oral Presentation   20%
ISP Paper Defense   20%

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

I   =   Incomplete
W   =   Withdrawal (Student initiated)
AW   =   Administrative withdrawal

Grading Criteria
An "A" grade for an assignment entails superior (not just "very good") performance - in terms of structure and organization - of both the written paper and oral presentation, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence.

Evaluation criteria for ISPs include

Content
- Substance of work
- Development of project in relation to your objectives
- Degree of accuracy and precision
- Analysis of information
- Use of primary sources (interviews, observations, direct experiments, etc.)
- Utilization of appropriate examples and personal experiences
- Use of intercultural communication skills
- Documentation of information
- Style, spelling and punctuation

Organization and Development
- Project definition and development
- Methodology chosen
- Use of available time and resources
- Understanding of local perspectives and conditions

Evaluation criteria for oral reports include:
• Organization of presentation, with a view to holding audience interest
• Use of appropriate examples and personal experiences
• Clear explanation of ISP strategy and implementation

ISP Mechanics

Getting Started
1. Decide on a topic
This can be easy sometimes, but more often it is difficult. This is where you ask yourself: "What do I want to study?" What do I want to learn from the ISP? Is there a topic I have always wanted to investigate or learn more about?" Think about the ISP as an opportunity for self-fulfillment and growth, or as a stepping-stone to your further studies in a particular area. You must be able to define a distinct and do-able project. As such, the next sentence is critical to keep in mind when deciding upon or refining your ISP topic. If you cannot clearly and completely state your project in one sentence, then your project cannot be completed within the time frame of the ISP period.

2. Find an ISP advisor
You need an advisor for your project. The AD will provide you with possible contacts, but it is YOUR responsibility to make the initial contact and obtain the advisor's consent.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when choosing an advisor:

- The advisor should be someone who has expertise in your field of interest and who is able to work with you to design, implement, and evaluate the ISP. The person may or may not have a doctorate in the relevant field but, nevertheless, should be able to give you the direction and support necessary.
- Find someone who can spend adequate time with you. Most potential advisors are very busy professionals who may not be able to give you as much time as needed - you may need to look elsewhere.
- Once you start your ISP It is required that the advisor meets with the student for at least three sessions to define, discuss, and evaluate the student's progress, i.e., discussing and defining the parameters of the research topic, determining research methods, suggesting resources and contacts, assistance in the organization of information, and reviewing the student's final submission.
- It is YOUR responsibility to find an Advisor and to make (and keep) appointments with him or her. This is one of the key challenges and learning opportunities of the ISP.
- ISPs unsupported by the assistance and evaluation of an ISP advisor will not be accepted.

3. Define your research questions and research methods (ISP draft proposals)
In the process of submitting your ISP draft proposals and meeting with the Academic Director, you will have to clearly define your ISP topic and research questions. Focusing your interest on a clear and precise question will allow you to begin your ISP period with as much clarity as possible, and will help you complete your task in the given period of time.

4. Complete a final ISP proposal
The ISP Proposal should provide a clear description of your topic, research questions and intentions, and expectations of the ISP you have chosen to pursue. The proposal will help you anticipate what you are going to do and what possible problems may arise. The proposal should help you to clearly define and refine your project ideas and focus so that your resulting work is a discrete project that can be accomplished in the given period of time.

5. Complete, sign and hand in SIT forms: site approval form, ethical guidelines, and Institutional Review Board (IRB).
In addition to completing the ISP Proposal, students are also required to submit a Site Approval form that clearly states the whereabouts of the student on each and every day of the ISP - the AD and program staff must be able to reach you during the ISP period in case of an emergency (global or local). Ethical requirements include not only reading and agreeing to adhere to our written ethical policy, but also successful completion of our Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. This will be discussed in detail in Research Methods and Ethics classes. Please note that until items 4 and 5 above (ISP Proposal, Site Approval, and Ethical Guidelines Forms) are satisfactorily completed, students will not be allowed to embark on their ISP.

Important Dates & Deadlines
Week 10, _____ Confirm local ISP Advisor and submit first draft of ISP Proposal
Week 11, _____ ISP final proposal due
Week 11, _____ ISP period officially begins (you may start your research earlier)
Week 14, _____ ISP due – NO EXTENSIONS
Week 15, _____ ISP presentations due

ISP Written Format – Organization and Presentation
I.   Introduction
   a. Explain why you chose this topic
      i.   Points of interest (i.e., Thematic Courses, personal observations, previous research interests, future research interests, personal interests, etc.).
   b. Describe why this topic is relevant to the region/country/culture and program theme.
   c. Define the general parameters of your study, including the scope, depth and expected outcomes (hypothesis).
   d. Define your terms, including the overall theory on which you are basing your work, while situating your work in a scholarly context.

II.   Literature review
   a. This segment is usually a general introduction into the literature and theories relevant to your topic.
   b. Link your topic to the literature currently available on the subject - cite authors, book titles, theories or general perceptions that you may or may not agree with.
   c. Explain why you feel these authors were right or wrong; argue with or against their theories using your own observations or those of other theorists.

III.   Body of Paper/ Methodology
   a. This should be the fun part of the paper, as it allows you the opportunity to describe your overall research experience.
   b. Describe the way you decided to set out on your research (i.e. how you chose the participants that you interviewed or worked with, the locations where you conducted your research, etc.).

c. Describe the methods you used while planning your strategy to obtain the data for your research (i.e. protecting the identity and integrity of your participants, maintaining the integrity of your data, how you planned to avoid any misunderstanding/misinterpretation of your data).
d. Describe the obstacles and problems that arose during the course of your research.
e. If necessary, explain how and why you had to change your original plans (basically a cause/effect section) and how that affected the quality, depth and scope of your data.

IV.　Findings
a. The really fun part! This is where you get to explain what you found out during the research process.
b. It's better to focus on the important points of your hypothesis in this section. Highlight the most important aspects of your data and cite responses or observations that either prove or disprove your original hypothesis (it's okay to be wrong here) using the data you generated during the study.
c. You can include your analysis of the data/interpretation of findings in this section or you can include this discussion in the "Conclusions" section.

V.　Conclusions
a. This is where you get to tie up all the loose ends and bring things together, while proving or disproving your original hypothesis.
b. You can include your analysis/interpretation of findings in this section as the proof you need to argue for or against your original theory.
c. Describe what the implications of your study are (i.e. Why your findings are important. How can this information enhance the existing body of knowledge already available on the topic? What new questions arose out of your findings? How will these findings inform your future research interests?)

VI.　Limitations of the study:
Though optional, this section is highly recommended. Legitimize your study by proactively pointing out its shortcomings and biases (all studies have them, of course).

VII.　Recommendations for further study:
This should consist of a short list of recommendations on how your study might be expanded upon, or be used as the basis for future ISPs.

VIII.　Endnotes:
(Unless you have used page-by-page footnotes).

IX.　Bibliography and List of Sources:
This should include all primary and secondary resources used. Primary resources (usually consisting of personal communications) and secondary (textual) resources should be listed under separate headings. Whatever style you choose to use, be accurate and consistent.

X.　Appendices
a. Include a copy of your questionnaire, survey questions, etc.
b. Include a copy of your written consent form (not the ones signed by participants - those you keep in a safe place). If you do not have written consent, you can state that you have a record of the verbal consent given by the participant.
c. Any documentation you may have picked up along the way from the organizations/ institutions that you visited and met with.

Role of Academic Director and ISP Advisor
The two individuals who work most closely with each student on the project are the Academic Director and the ISP Advisor. The AD advises students on methodology, background reading, and in-country contacts which the students will be encouraged to pursue. The Academic Director, in consultation with the in-country advisor, evaluates the completed project and assigns the grade.

The ISP Advisor's precise role may vary according to particular circumstances. In general, the individual selected for this role should be a host national or long-time foreign resident in the country, who has expertise in the student's field of interest and works with the student (and, to some extent, the Academic Director) on design, implementation, and evaluation of the ISP. The project advisor may be a host-country academician, field professional, artisan, or topical informant. The role may be more or less directive or consultative, depending on the student and the need. Finding an advisor is the responsibility of the student, but the AD will assist and must approve the advisor. Occasionally, a student may have more than one advisor/consultant, one of whom may be from outside the host country. The main purpose of an advisor, beyond providing needed expertise, is to provide students with the experience of working closely with *local* professionals.

Students will generally meet with the ISP advisor several times throughout the semester. The first session is likely to be devoted to an exploration of the student's background in the subject area, his or her topic of study, the preliminary project proposal, and how the project fits into the student's undergraduate curriculum and broader interests. Various methodologies introduced during the Research Methods and Ethics course should also be discussed. Advisor and student will agree on specific requirements (to be submitted to the Academic Director for approval) and on an initial plan of action. The following sessions (which can be conducted in person, over the phone, or by email) should be devoted to a discussion of student progress and resolution of any difficulties. The final session, at the conclusion of the program, will be an evaluation of the final product, which will have been submitted to the advisor beforehand. It is the student's responsibility to secure and keep appointments with the project advisor.

Student Expectations

Responsibilities when conducting fieldwork:
- Students must respect, protect, and promote the rights and welfare of all those contributing to, and affected by, their work by protecting the privacy and dignity of the people and communities with whom they conduct field study.
- The right of those providing information to students to either remain anonymous, or to receive recognition, must be scrupulously defended and respected.
- Students must acknowledge the help and services they receive and must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in culturally appropriate ways.
- Students must record and represent accurately all aspects of the field study. This includes not representing as their own work - either in spoken or written form - materials and ideas directly obtained from other sources.

Student research is a product of fieldwork and, as such, students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical fieldwork, as stipulated in the SIT Statement of Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore, copies of ISPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive, copy, or convert the ISP for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archives the ISP in the permanent collection at the SIT Study Abroad local country program office and/or at any World

Learning office. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad has a non-exclusive, perpetual right to store and make available, including electronic online open access, to the ISP. Students retain all ownership rights of the ISP product and retain the right to use all, or part, of the project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP form.

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.