

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH 3500 (3 Credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:

Mongolia and Siberia: Nomadism, Geopolitics, and the Environment

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

Through a carefully designed sequence of field projects, workshops and related lectures, the *Research Methods and Ethics* course will prepare students for independent research and/or an internship. Knowledge and experience gained in this course will culminate in each student's successful completion of an individually designed and executed Independent Study Project (ISP) and/or internship at a Mongolian organization at the end of the semester.

The course will begin during orientation in Ulaanbaatar. Here, it will focus on the development of cross-cultural assessment and observational skills as well as on the conceptual foundations vital to conducting fieldwork. This portion of the course will introduce a variety of methodologies for conducting fieldwork. It will demonstrate the value of experience-based learning processes outside an institutional structure and will instill confidence and initiative in learning from experience.

Subsequent sessions will entail discussions of the realities of completing observation and study in a Mongolian context and address methods of navigating and negotiating potential barriers to field study that may differ from past research in students' home institutions. Accompanying assignments will ask students to employ field techniques and integrate language skills, knowledge from other courses, and daily life experience in order to demonstrate and reinforce their knowledge.

Further sections of the course will introduce the Institutional/Local Review Board (IRB/LRB) processes and highlight the ethical issues involved in working with human subjects as informants in Mongolia. This portion will assist students in identifying an ISP topic or an organization for internship and research methodology that are realistic given time and resource constraints and that are ethically appropriate in Mongolia.

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Learning Outcomes

The *Research Methods and Ethics* course comprises 45 hours of instruction (3 credits). Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Engage in basic ethnographic and fieldwork methods such as note-taking and transcription, participant observation, kinship charting, mapping, collection of life histories, formal and informal interviewing, and the use of simple surveys for qualitative data collection;
- Integrate information gathered from primary sources with secondary source material to produce a sound research paper as a material product;
- Navigate the Mongolian cultural landscape, cope with the logistical requirements of functioning independently and apply research and language skills effectively;
- Demonstrate and articulate critical insights and knowledge on a topic related to the thematic seminar or field study results in an oral presentation and/or photo/visual story telling;
- Apply organization specific information and program theme to design a realistic internship proposal;
- Utilize primary sources in the field, such as material gained through observation and interviews, the internship process and work with a foreign language, interpreters and informants.

Course Requirements

Methodology

Students' experiences are integrated into their subsequent preparations for independent study. Our sessions address some of the unique problems and difficulties faced in the process of information gathering and field study in Mongolia. The *Research Methods and Ethics* course will unite and reinforce all other semester course components.

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 in Field-Based Research and Internships

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research and internships 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.

Sample Sessions

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 Mongolia

Positionality and Outsider/Insider Research

Skills for Networking, Time Management, and Productivity

Module 2: Research Methods/Ethics for Nomadism, Geopolitics, and Environment Projects

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting quantitative and/or qualitative field research and internships in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community.

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Sample Sessions

Research Methods and Ethics in Nomadism, Geopolitics, and the Environment Projects
Selecting Topics, Formulating Research Questions, and Literature Review
Data Collection: Participant Observation and Interviewing
Data Collection: Developing Survey Questions and Identifying Survey Participants
Mixed Methods Research
Data Analysis, Evaluation, and Interpretation

Module 3: Project Idea Development and Ethical Considerations

This module will describe the ISP processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP/Internship. The module will include a review and critique of past ISP/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) and the Internship Ethics Review Application.

Sample Sessions

Critical Review of past ISPs / Internship Focus Projects
Introduction to the LRB/IRB Process and HSR Application/Internship Ethics Review Application
Ethics of Research and Participant Engagement in Student Projects
Identifying an ISP Advisor / Internship Supervisor
One-on-one Meetings with the Academic Director to Discuss Preliminary ISP / Internship Learning Agreement Development

Module 4: Project Proposal Development

Based on learning and engagement in the preceding course modules, this module focuses on ISP / Internship proposal development and guiding students through the development of the Human Subjects Review (HSR) Application / Internship Ethics Review 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/Internship supervisor.

Sample Sessions

Writing an ISP Proposal / Internship Proposal and Internship Learning Agreement
One-on-one Meetings with Academic Director and/or ISP Advisor / Internship Supervisor
Peer review of ISP/Internship Proposal Drafts
Writing the HSR Application
ISP/Internship Proposal Presentation to Peers and Roundtable Discussion

Module 5: For ISP Students: ISP in the Context of Mongolia

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

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Mongolia

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

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Required Readings:

Readings specific to the local context.

Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology

This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving research challenges.

Required Readings:

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.

Module 5: For Internship Students: Interning in the Context of Mongolia

This module prepares the student for the Internship experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Mongolia. The module highlights the importance of applied methodology in the internship experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student.

Session 1: Preparing for the Internship

This introductory session prepares the student for the Internship. The session covers a range of areas that include how to approach and develop rapport with the internship supervisor, colleagues, and constituents, how to work collaboratively with the internship supervisor advisor, and how to manage internship logistics, including travel, internship expectations, and check-in, de-briefing, and progress report expectations during the internship. Students will also review the internship assessment rubric.

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Mongolia

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to research in Mongolia, exploring such issues as how best to communicate internship goals, meet workplace expectations, and contribute positively in the workplace, including gender norms, issues of language, and expectations for behavior as an intern. Role plays will be employed to achieve the learning outcomes of this session.

Required Readings:

Readings specific to the local context.

Session 3: Applied Methodology at the Internship Placement

This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving for internship focus project challenges.

Required Readings:

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.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

(1) Participation in Class and Field Activities	15%
(2) Review of Cultural Observation Journal	15%
(3) Review of Fieldwork Journal	15%
(4) Two Interviews & Community Profile Assignments	15%
(5) Photo/visual story telling (Siberia excursion)	10%
(6) ISP/Internship Focus Project Critique	10%
(7) ISP/Internship Proposal	20%

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Evaluation Components

(1) Participation in Class and Field Activities (15%)

Criteria for Assessment of Participation

- Attendance – promptness to and active participation in class
- Active listening – paying attention in class and during field excursions; asking appropriate questions; displaying interest and enthusiasm; note-taking
- 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 also means controlling yourself and allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group accountability – participating in groups during field excursions and classes
- Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities

(2) Review of Cultural Observation Journal (15%)

Introduction: The observation journal should be a compilation of observations from **all** aspects of the program: homestay, excursions, classes, chance meetings, etc. This journal is an essential link between experience and narration of the learning process. It is also a place to develop skills in recording field data and process everyday observations.

Objectives:

- To link experiences in Mongolia to personal learning;
- To establish reference points for the process by which integration into the host country happens;
- To record descriptive and interpretive elements of events; these notes can be a valuable source of information for papers assigned in the thematic seminar (TS) courses;
- To provide a format for processing observations or experiences.

Assignment: Keep a journal of observations from excursions, outings and family stays.

The journal should include **ten entries**. The first entry should be written during Orientation in UB and entries should be maintained through the last week of seminar in UB. At least nine entries should follow the **D.I.E.** format. (Description- Interpretation-Evaluation) and be written in separate sections. **For each entry, log the time, date and location.**

(3) Review of Fieldwork Journal (FWJ) (15%)

Introduction and objectives: One of the main purposes of the Field Methods and Ethics course is to introduce skills needed for both ISP and internship students to carry out effective field study. As any practicing researcher can confirm, the value of a study based on fieldwork depends almost completely on effective use of a fieldwork journal. For the course, we recommend that you begin to keep a fieldwork journal from as early as the Orientation Period as part of the process of learning to use your opportunity for field studies effectively.

(4) Two Interviews and Community Profile Assignments (15%)

Objectives:

- To gain confidence in approaching Mongolians as informants;

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- To conduct first-hand research in the field;
- To utilize and practice methods of cross-cultural learning;
- To practice obtaining and recording information according to different methodologies;
- To arrange and conduct at least two interviews OR design and conduct a simple survey;
- To carry out an interview through the medium of an interpreter;
- To effectively present data both verbally and in writing.

Assignments: There are two interview assignments to be completed while you are living with Mongolian families: the **Life History** assignment during your Nomad Homestay, and the **Information Gathering** assignments during your urban homestays.

(5) Photo/visual story telling (10%)

Introduction and objectives: The value of a study based on fieldwork can be increased by effective use of visuals. This assignment is to be completed during the Siberia excursion. You begin to take pictures as early as the Orientation Period as part of the process of learning to use your opportunity for field studies effectively. But for this assignment you should choose a specific theme you would like to focus highlighting an area of your interest within the academic framework of the program. At the end of the excursion you should present a photo story to the group. SIT Photography Guidelines should be strictly followed.

Objectives:

- To conduct first-hand research in the field effectively following ethics of field work;
- To utilize and practice methods of cross-cultural learning;
- To practice obtaining and recording information according to different methodologies;
- To carry out a short interview through the medium of an interpreter (if required for the story);
- To effectively present data both visually and verbally.

Required Readings:

Michael Emmison and Philip Smith (2000), Researching the Visual, Sage Publication, Page: 27-35

(6) ISP / Internship Focus Project Critique (10%)

Rationale and objective: It is important to be able to recognize what is effective and ineffective in the presentation of the Independent Study Project and the Internship Focus Project. Most of the criteria used in its evaluation mimic those used in the evaluation of a thesis or scholarly paper. Critiques should be thorough, examining all sides of an issue. Likewise, they should be based on sound methodological foundations to logically synthesize and analyze data collected in the field. Finally, critiques should include reasonably formulated conclusions as well as suggestions for further research. Please note, this is *not* a space for assertions that are unsupported by the data presented.

(7) Project Proposal

(7a) ISP proposal (20%)

Objective: To outline your course of action for the independent study period, which has been checked and approved by the AD. This proposal can then function as a guideline for what you do in the field.

Assignment: Follow the outline of a proposal as described below.

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- I. **Title of project** (even if it changes later, give your proposal a title)
- II. **Abstract** – brief (one paragraph) sketch of research questions, methods, relevance of the study. Once the project has been completed this should also include a brief description of your results.
- III. **Introduction** – hypothesis/expectations/theoretical models, definitions of key terms and ideas, advisor.
- IV. **Literature review** – analytical summary of previous work in your field and the connections they have to your project.
- V. **Methods** – how you plan to carry out the study and analyze your findings. Why have you chosen these methods?
- VI. **Discussion** – significance, limitations, relevance to others.
- VII. **Logistics** – budget, workplan/schedule, travel, room & board arrangements, translation, communication.
- VIII. **Resources:** primary and secondary (**Bibliography**). Citations should be in APA format.

OR

(7b) Internship Learning Agreement/Proposal (20%)

Objective: To outline your course of action for the internship period, which has been checked and approved by the AD. This proposal can then function as a guideline for what you do in the field.

Assignment: Using the Internship Learning Agreement as a guide, follow the outline of a proposal as described below:

- **Description of the host institution** with an explanation of the problem, why the NGO or other organization was selected
- **Cover letter**
- **Current Resume**
- **Description of tasks to be performed** during the internship
- **Summary of focus project goals related to the internship**, including focus project question, method of data collection, including sample questions, target interviewees (and other participants in project data collection), and discussion of the project's relevance to the program theme
- **Expected outcomes** of your internship performance, including personal growth objectives

Selected Readings

Bernard, H.R. 1995. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Fourth Edition Edition. Oxford, UK. Alta Mira Press.

Barley, Nigel. 1983. *The Innocent Anthropologist*. Henry Holt. New York

Clift, Elayne. 1993. But Do they have field experience? OGN Publication

Devita, Phil. ed., 1992. *The Naked Anthropologist: Tales from the World*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Fetterman, David M.. 1989. *Ethnography: Step by Step*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications 27-40

Hess, J. Daniel. 1994. *The Whole World Gide to Culture Learning*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press Inc.

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Julia G., Crane Angrosino Michiel V. 1992. *Field projects in anthropology*. Waveland Press INC., Prospect Heights, Illinois

Kolb, David A. 1984. *Selections from Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Storti, Craig. 1990. *The Art of Crossing Cultures*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Wilson, K. Thinking about the Ethics of Fieldwork, in S. Devereux & J. Hoddinott (Eds.) *Fieldwork in Developing Countries*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher. Pp. 142-152

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

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, (Field work journals are handwritten) 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.

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>.

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