

## Fieldwork Ethics and Comparative Research Methods

ANTH 3500 (4 credits)

### International Honors Program (IHP) International Relations: *Global Governance, Human Security & Civil Society*

*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

How can fieldwork—which has traditionally been focused on face-to-face interactions—be used and adapted to critically analyze the relations between “macro” and “micro” levels of human experience? How might one study *global* phenomena, especially *global power*, from a localized and “bottom-up” perspective? How might comparative case studies highlight the workings of global governance and international relations? This ethics and methods class is a hybrid seminar/practicum in which students engage in critical conversations while performing fieldwork exercises aimed at instilling an ethical approach that is attuned to the complexities of studying phenomena at the intersections of the local and the global, the social and the political, power and resistance. The central fieldwork component of this course is a comparative case study project, a semester-long, small-scale research exercise focused on investigating a theme across all four country sites.

#### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Practice different methods of field-based data collection, including participant-observation, fieldnotes, interviewing
- Engage with important debates surrounding fieldwork, including reflexivity, positionality, and ethical engagement
- Effectively analyze qualitative data comparatively and thematically
- Communicate findings, individually and collectively, to different types of audiences

#### Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English

#### Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of *a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active*

*experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

## 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*

## SESSIONS' SUMMARY

1. Power and politics: ethnographic opportunities and challenges (USA)
2. Comparative case studies (BZ)
3. Participant-observation and fieldnotes (BZ)
4. Interviewing tools and ethics (BZ)
5. Issues of translation and reflexivity (FR)
6. Translocal/global ethnography in the digital age (FR)
7. Revealing lives : "truth" and ethics (FR)
8. Knowing from the body (Sensory ethnography I) (SN)
9. Listening to the field (Sensory ethnography II) (SN)
10. Leaving the field ? (SN)

## Module 1: Washington D.C., USA

### **SESSION 1 : Power and politics: ethnographic opportunities and challenges**

This session will address the opportunities and challenges of studying the workings of power, politics, and governance using ethnographic methods, including the challenges and perspectives encountered in "studying up."

#### ***Required Reading:***

Nader, L. (1969) "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from 'studying up'," in D. Hymes (ed.) *Reinventing Anthropology*. New York: Random House, pp. 284–311

Brodin, E. Z. (2017) "The ethnographic turn in political science: reflections on the state of the art." In *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 50(01), pp. 131–134

Bayard de Volo, L. and Schatz, E. (2004) "From the inside out: ethnographic methods in political research," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37(2), pp. 267-271

## Module 2: Sao Paulo, Brazil

### **Session 1: Comparative case studies**

A "case study," is an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units. Case studies offer more valuable insights when approached from a comparative perspective. This session will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the comparative case study approach, in particular in political science. The practicum will focus on tools for uncovering patterns and archetypes.

**Required Reading:**

Gerring, John (2004) "What is a case study and what is it good for?" *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2): 341-354  
Lijphart, Arend (1971) "Comparative politics and the comparative method," *The American Political Science Review*, 65(3), pp. 682-693  
Flyvbjerg, Bent (2006) "Five misunderstandings about case-study research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, pp. 219-245

**Session 2: Participant-observation and fieldnotes**

This session will introduce students to the methods of participant-observation and fieldnote-taking. Students will learn about and practice three types of fieldnotes: double-entry, saliency hierarchy and comprehensive note-taking, as well as experiment with coding and organization of fieldnotes.

**Required Reading:**

Emerson, R. et al. 2011. "Fieldnotes in ethnographic research." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-18.  
Emerson, R. et al. 2011. "In the field: Participating, observing and jotting notes." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 21-41.

**Session 3: Interviewing tools and ethics**

This session will explore interviewing tools and ethics, covering unstructured, semi-structured and go-along interviewing, with particular attention paid to language and translation. Students will also be introduced to some ethical considerations surrounding recording and anonymization.

**Required Reading:**

Snyder, L. 2005. "Chapter 9: The question of 'whose truth'? The privileging of participant and researcher voices in qualitative research." In Pawluch, D., Shaffir, W., & Miall, C. (Eds.). *Doing Ethnography: Studying Everyday Life*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. Pp. 128-138.  
Bernard, H. Russell (2006). "Chapter 9. Interviewing: unstructured and semi-structured." In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. Pp. 210-223.

**Module 3: France and Belgium****Session 1: Issues of translation and reflexivity**

This session will go deeper into the art and ethics of working with a translator. Students will learn tools to identify local meanings, and to interrogate so-called "native" or "emic" categories, including their own.

**Required Reading:**

Richter, M. (2005) "More than a two-way traffic: analyzing, translating, and comparing political concepts from other cultures," *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 1(1), pp. 7-20  
Emerson, R. et al. (2011) "Pursuing members' meanings," *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 129-167  
Temple, B. & Edwards, R. (2002) "Interpreters/translators and cross-language research: Reflexivity and border crossings," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1(2) [19 pages]

**Session 2: Revealing lives : "truth" and ethics**

This session will explore the ethical implications of revealing people's lives in depth. Students will reflect on data collected and field experiences, and learn how to apply three different ethical approaches: procedural, situational and relational.

**Required Reading:**

Ellis, Carolyn (2007) "Telling secrets, revealing lives: relational ethics in research with intimate others," *Qualitative Inquiry* 13(1), pp. 3-29  
Ross, Fiona C. (2005) "Codes and dignity: thinking about ethics in relation to research on violence," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 28(3&4), pp. 99-107

**Session 3: Translocal/global ethnography in the digital age**

This session will explore the transformations of ethnographic fieldwork as the "field" expands into a "virtual" realm that is actually less virtual than it might appear. Students will examine what global and translocal ethnography means in an increasingly digitally interconnected world.

**Required Reading:**

Nardi, Bonnie A. 2016. "When fieldnotes seem to write themselves: Ethnography online." In Sanjek R & Tratner S. W. (eds.) *EFieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology in the Digital World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 192-209  
Kraemer, Jordan. 2016. "Doing fieldwork, BRB: Locating the field on and with emerging media." In Sanjek R & Tratner S. W. (eds.) *EFieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology in the Digital World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 113-131.

**Module 4: Senegal**

**Session 1: Knowing from the body (sensory ethnography I)**

This session will address the role of bodily sensations in research, considering how the body (including the researcher's) might be an object and tool of knowledge. Students will practice with the participatory research and interviewing tool of body-mapping.

**Required Reading:**

Gastaldo, D., Magalhães, L., Carrasco, C., and Davy, C. (2012) "Body-map storytelling as research: methodological considerations for telling the stories of undocumented workers through body mapping," pp. 5-47  
Campos-Delgado, A. (2018). "Counter-mapping migration: irregular migrants' stories through cognitive mapping," *Mobilities* 13(4), pp. 488–504  
Pink, Sarah (2015) "Ch 1. Situating sensory ethnography: from academia to intervention," *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, pp. 3-24  
Pink, Sarah (2015) "Ch. 2 Principles for sensory ethnography," *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, pp. 25-32  
Sweet, Elisabeth L. & Sara Ortiz Escalante, (2014) "Bringing bodies into planning: visceral methods, fear and gender violence," *Urban Studies*, pp.1826-1845

**Session 2: Listening to the field (sensory ethnography II)**

This session will expand on the sensory ethnographic approach, by paying close attention to the sonic qualities of the field. Student will explore sound from a social constructivist perspective, and reflect on their auditory experiences. They will interrogate the notion of "noise" in the context of political movements and resistances. The practicum will focus on ethical recording and the method of sound-mapping.

**Required Reading:**

Cardoso, Leonardo (2012) "Listening to São Paulo, Brazil." In *Sounding Out!* [Podcast]  
Novak, Dave (2013) "The sounds of Japan's antinuclear movement." In *Postnotes on modern and contemporary art around the globe* [Podcast]  
Thulin, Samuel (2016) "Sound maps matter: expanding cartophony," *Social & Cultural Geography* 16(2): 192-210

Session 3: Leaving the field?

The final session focuses on endings and transitions from and out of field sites. It will explore the role of the researcher as political agent for bringing about change.

Required Reading:

Coffey, A. 1999. "Romancing the Field." In *The Ethnographic Self Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (pp. 97-113). London: Sage.  
Farmer, Paul. 2009. "Ch. 17 Fighting words." In Waterston Alisse & Maria D. Vesperi (eds.) *Anthropology off the Shelf: Anthropologists on Writing*. London: Wiley-Blackwell. Pp. 182-190

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Assignments should be submitted via flash drive ,unless otherwise instructed, in a Word file to allow for comments. All assignments are to be double spaced with one-inch margins in 11 Times New Roman font (unless otherwise stated). The American Psychological Association (APA) referencing and citation style is preferred.

When using APA format, follow the author-date method of in-text citation. This means that the author's last name and the year of publication for the source should appear in the text, for example, (Jones, 1998), and a complete reference should appear in the reference list at the end of the paper. If you are referring to an idea from another work but not directly quoting the material, or making reference to an entire book, article or other work, you only have to make reference to the author and year of publication and not the page number in your in-text reference. All sources that are cited in the text must appear in the reference list at the end of the paper.

See end of syllabus for late work and make-up assignments policies.

Assignment	Due	Length	Pts
Engagement and participation	Throughout the semester		10
Group presentation USA	Last week of country	10-12 min	5
Group presentation Brazil	Last week of country	20-25 min	10
Group presentation France	Last week of country	20-25 min	10
Group presentation Senegal	Last week of country	40-45 min	20
Case study self-reflection USA	Last week of country	800-900 w.	5
Case study self-reflection Brazil	Last week of country	900-1000 w.	7,5
Case study self-reflection France	Last week of country	900-1000 w.	7,5
Case study self-reflection Senegal	Last week of country	1000-1200 w.	10
Magazine contribution	End of semester	TBD	15
Total			100

### Engagement and participation (10%)

Course assignments are created to facilitate synthesis, but also critical evaluation of ideas. Dialogue in class about these critiques—the strengths and weaknesses of what we know—is essential. For this reason, your engagement and participation are required. As a learning community, please take responsibility for your role in this environment and come to class having read the required texts and ready to engage with others in a positive and thought-provoking manner. IHP is an experiential learning program: You have to show up to have the experience.

Participation includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.

- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the Program Director or Faculty. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and if unexcused, could result in dismissal from the program.

### Comparative Case Study Group Research and Presentations (45%)

Comparative Case Study Projects will be completed in groups and will be used to apply the methodological concepts and tools covered in readings, lectures, and class exercises to the investigation of global governance and civil society as experienced by the communities where we will be located, across the four countries.

While comparative across the span of the semester, case studies are specific to each country, and the country coordinators arrange the logistics; therefore, they may be organized differently in the U.S., Brazil, France, and Senegal, respectively. They provide an opportunity to learn about and apply the methods discussed in the course, in addition to learning about a particular issue in greater depth. Given time constraints and potential language barriers, faculty and country coordinators have pre-determined a number of research themes.

Students will be organized into Case Study Teams, with an associated case study research topic, in Washington, D.C. These will be maintained throughout the length of the semester. Country coordinators and local and traveling faculty, will consult and coordinate closely with students on an ongoing basis regarding ways in which to integrate the concepts and tools learned in the course into the research projects. The objective will be to learn how to approach each given topic with a clear research question, and a sensible plan for data collection and analysis.

Students and staff will together forge research questions that address topics which should:

1. ...be interesting to you.
2. ...be amenable to scientific inquiry; i.e. can we gain reliable knowledge through using social scientific methods to research them?
3. ...be possible to research with the time and resources available on IHP.
4. ...not lead to impossible to resolve ethical problems.

Approximately one full case study day, per country, will be scheduled in the U.S., Brazil, France/Belgium and Senegal. There will be approximately three to four days available for case study work, depending upon local time and logistics. The selection of research sites and interlocutors will be determined by the

respective country coordinators; in some cases the actual research agenda will be pre-determined; in others not so.

During the final days in each country, the Case Study team will present its findings of the previous month's work, and fellow students and faculty will have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments regarding the research.

Groups have substantial creative freedom to craft their presentations to best fit their projects. However, this is a methods class and methodological issues should be discussed, and take up at least 25% of the presentation. The rest of the presentation will be taken up with discussing group's findings.

Questions to consider about your research findings in your presentation:

- What were the preliminary conclusions?
- What were the most interesting and or exciting findings? Why do you consider these findings to be significant in this way?
- What were your specific research question and sub-questions (if any)?

Questions to consider about the research process in the presentation:

- What theoretical concepts did you draw on to approach this research?
- What research methods did you use?
- What did you find most challenging about the research? Why?
- What ethical issues did you negotiate during the course of the research?
- What were the limitations of this research?
- If you were to extend and deepen this research, what would you do, what would you need to make it happen, and how might you do it differently?

See Appendix: *Case Study Presentation Feedback Form*

### Case Study Self-Reflection (30%)

Students will submit an individual self-assessment on each case study presentation day. Please use the reflection to clearly articulate the contributions to your case study group, your intellectual engagement in the research process and the quality of your fieldnotes.

The DC self-assessment is awarded a completion grade and students will receive the full 5 points they hand in fieldnotes, address points 1-3 below, and fill in the rubric. In the other countries this will not be the case and students will be awarding themselves a grade which the traveling faculty will have to sign off on. The idea of this assignment is for students to have a chance to honestly reflect on their progress over the course of the semester in developing skills of working effectively in a research team. Comparing the first self-assessment with the last one will hopefully offer insights into students' progress and areas that still need work.

1. Reflections on your contribution to your case study group could include:

- The challenges and/or opportunities of working as a group.
- Task delegation and role delineation during research.
- Your contribution at planning, execution or analysis stages.



- Your contribution to the presentation.
  - How prepared were you on case study days and how responsive were you to the research process as it unfolded – did you need to improvise or get creative at all? Resolve any difficulties/hiccups?
2. Reflections on your intellectual engagement in the research process could include:
- A description of the research method(s) you employed and insights gained regarding the method/s.
  - Reflections on any issues in gaining access to your site, awkwardness on your part or on the part of the people at your site, anything that might have influenced your data collection
  - Any ethical issues you navigated personally
  - What new research questions this research provoked for you (and how might you answer them)?
3. Field Journal Reflections could include:
- A description of the challenges to taking fieldnotes while you are on the go.
  - Deciding what constitutes relevant details.
  - Developing a shorthand or using keywords
  - deciphering fieldnotes after time has passed
  - Ethical considerations to using fieldnotes
  - *Add an excerpt from your fieldnotes in the reflection*

### ***Case Study Individual Self-Assessment Grading Rubric***

Requirement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Incomplete
I actively contributed to my group, participating in the planning and the execution of the case study days and the case study presentations.	10 – 9	9 – 8.5	8.5 – 7.5	7.5-6	0
I engaged intellectually with the research methodology explored, increasing my understanding of the challenges and opportunities – be these theoretical, ethical or practical - associated with them.	10 – 9	9 – 8.5	8.5 – 7.5	7.5-6	0
My fieldnotes were thorough and relevant. My fieldnote taking skills have advanced.	10 – 9	9 – 8.5	8.5 – 7.5	7.5-6	0
<b>Total÷3= (an average out of 10 over the three areas of effort and growth, above)</b>					<b>/ 10</b>

### Magazine contribution (15%)

At the end of the semester, students will review the work they did for all the courses and select 2 pieces that they would be eager to share with interlocutors outside of the classroom. These can be pieces of written work or visual/graphic/sonic work. The different pieces proposed by each student will then be anonymously peer-reviewed, as it is the case in the research community. A final selection will be made collectively but each student will be contributing at least one piece to the magazine (written or graphic/visual/sonic — depending of the pieces received, the magazine may have an online podcast/soundscape component). The authors of the selected written pieces will then revise their work,

based on the commentaries of the anonymous reviewers. Finally, a copy-editing team will correct spelling and grammar, as well as sentence structure.

In addition to this individual and collective work of reviewing and revising already produced work, students are expected to organize the pieces together in a meaningful structure. They are also asked to collectively write introducing and closing sections of the magazine, such as the editorial, the acknowledgments, and other short sections that will be discussed in class. Students who have enjoyed doing photography over the course of the semester may contribute their pictures.

To facilitate logistics, groups of students will be given specific responsibilities and be held accountable for them: coordination (managing time and logistics), copy-editing (correcting texts), peer-review (reviewing work anonymously, taking into account ethical considerations), visuals (selecting photos as illustrations), etc. This team work will start in the last country.

*Requirements:*

The pieces should be properly filed and named, and submitted digitally. Because of the processes of peer-review and copy-editing, there will be multiple back-and-forths of work. Time constraints for oneself and especially others should always be kept in mind.

## Assessment

Four Case Study Presentations	45%
Four Case Study Self Reflections	30%
Final Magazine Contribution	15%
Engagement and Participation	10%

## Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (comparative projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

## Grading Scale

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

## **Program Expectations**

- 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.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

## SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

## Appendix: Case Study Presentation Feedback Form

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Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Duration: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How was the presentation preparedness, organization and clarity?
2. What content/ideas were strong in this presentation?
3. What content/ideas have room for improvement?
4. Specific comments with reference to research methods and ethics (relationships with community members, creativity with methods, ethics of care & reciprocity, etc.)
5. What opportunities/curricular resources from the field program were used well?
6. What opportunities/curricular resources from the field program were missed?
7. What interesting connections & cross-pollinations were made with other C.S. topics
8. Specific comments with reference to local knowledge and realities (esp. ethnographic accuracy and cultural appropriateness)