

Independent Research Project

ISPR 3000 (4 Credits / 120 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Ecuador: Development, Politics, and Languages

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

Conducted in Quito or in another approved location in Ecuador appropriate to the project, the Independent Study Project offers students the opportunity to conduct field research on a topic of their choice within the program's broad concerns with power, politics, language, and development. The project integrates learning from the various components of the program and culminates in a final presentation and formal research paper.

The Independent Study Project (ISP) entails the application of skills learned during the Research Methods and Ethics (RME) course, including proper data registration, documentation, and effective processing. Emphasis is placed on the ethical implications of research, while internalizing reciprocity and *interculturality* as research principles in the Ecuadorian context. While conducting their projects, students also rely on the Spanish and Quichua language skills acquired throughout the semester. Each student is assigned to an ISP Advisor who provides research guidelines and supervises the project. He or she is often an expert on the selected subject of investigation. This facilitates the research process and ensures an adequate written presentation.

Sample topics include: linguistic landscape of Quito; political perspectives on *plurinationality* and *interculturality*; development discourses in Ecuador; *sumak kawsay* and rights of nature; bilingual intercultural education; endangered indigenous languages; social communication, micro-politics, and activism.

Learning Outcomes

- Select, design and conduct an Independent Study Project on any topic related to program courses.
- Formulate coherent conceptual frameworks and select relevant bibliography.
- Identify, distinguish and apply qualitative research methods.
- Develop self-confidence and understanding of field-based experiential learning.

- Comply with research ethical parameters.
- Interpret data accurately and explain findings according to stated conceptual framework.
- Value local knowledge and contribute to local initiatives.

Requirements and Evaluation

The Independent Study Project begins with the presentation of a research proposal which indicates clearly subject of study, conceptual framework, methodology, reciprocity compliance, audience and name of ISP Advisor. It ends with the presentation of a written monograph along with the ISP Work Journal. Additionally, students must prepare an oral presentation which includes main findings and reflections on the fieldwork experience.

Evaluation is based on content, organization and development of perspective, creativity, depth of analysis, effective processing of data gathered from primary and secondary sources, achieved objectives, narrative quality, personal reflections, critical standpoint and commitment to the learning process.

Grading Scale

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

ISP PAPER CRITERIA	
Title / Acknowledgements / Abstract (10%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
The title is succinct, interesting, and engaging.	1
The title clearly explains the project.	3
The acknowledgements are complete and professionally written.	1
The abstract clearly summarizes the paper.	3
The abstract provides specific information about methods.	2
Quality of Study/Research Question and Justification for Project (5%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
The study/research question is relevant, effective, and interesting.	2

The project contributes useful information on a topic relevant to the local community and/or other researchers.	2
The justification for project is clear and contextualized.	1
Argument / Context / Literature Review (10%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
Argument: The argument is well-structured and different sources of information are well-integrated.	2
Context: The content is relevant. Important themes and background information are provided so reader understands study/research question and its place within the field of research.	5
Literature Review: The paper includes an appropriate number of relevant background sources, including several from refereed journals, indicating familiarity with key publications on the topic.	3
Methods (5%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
The explanation of methodology is clear and accurate and supporting materials are included in appendices (if applicable).	3
The methods are appropriate.	2
Presentation of the findings (10%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
The findings are complete.	2
The findings are logically and convincingly presented.	2
The findings are clearly differentiated from discussion or interpretation.	2
The prose discussion of findings is clear, succinct and logical.	2
The tables, graphs, photos and direct quotes are relevant and support the argument.	2
Depth of analysis (15%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
Important implications raised by the findings are included.	4
Patterns in the findings (or a lack of a pattern) were identified and discussed.	4
The author gives logical explanations of what findings mean.	4
The findings are linked to previous research in the field	3
Conclusions (5%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
The main findings are summarized and discussed within the broader implications or concerns of the study	2
The author related their findings to the study/research question clearly and specifically.	1

The author made research-based recommendations, as appropriate.	1
The author made recommendations for future study.	1
ISP effort (10%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
Student effort - criteria determined per program	10
Ethics and Human Subjects Review (10%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
Human Subjects policies and ethical research guidelines adhered to and thoroughly discussed.	10
Technical aspects (20%)	
Criteria	Possible Points
The paper is organized into major sections (and sub-sections, as appropriate) and/or follows guidelines established in accordance with the orientation of the program/discipline.	2
In-text citation.	3
All references are included in reference list or bibliography.	2
References have all important details and correct form.	3
Quality of writing & grammar.	5
Spelling & Punctuation	3
The paper is clean, legible, well-formatted, professional in appearance, and aesthetically pleasing.	2

ISP PRESENTATION CRITERIA	
Criteria	Possible Points
The student articulates a primary study/research question and provides a clear introduction to presentation.	10
The student contextualizes their work.	10
The student addresses methods.	10
The student organizes the presentation of findings and discusses the content of the argument well.	10
Depth of analysis. Important implications of the findings are raised.	10
The student addresses ethics and human subject issues.	10
The student addresses broader implications of the study in the conclusions.	10
The student includes a brief personal reflection.	5
Student effectively manages discussion with audience.	10
Student attends to the aesthetic elements of the delivery.	10
The student delivers the presentation in a respectful and ethical manner.	5

Students should refer to the SIT Study Abroad Student 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>.

This syllabus can be modified by the Academic Director in order to better suit the needs of the course and its participants.

Student research (Independent Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, 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 may archive ISPs 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 my project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP form.