

## **Research Methods and Ethics**

ANTH 3500 (3 credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:  
**Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo: Peace and Conflict Studies in the  
Balkans**

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.

### **Description**

The Research Methods and Ethics seminar (RME) introduces students to the conceptual and practical tools for conducting a four-week field research or internship in the Balkans. The course provides students with methodological tools for learning how to gather primary data while learning how to define a research topic and a research question to carry out an independent study project (ISP). For internship students, the course will provide the knowledge and skills that are essential to forming constructive relationships with organizations and/or individuals, which are necessary for completing an internship in the cultural context of Serbia.

In particular, the seminar enhances students' skills at qualitative data collection, ethical challenges in conducting field research or an internship in post-conflict societies and grappling with sensitive issues emerging in societies in transition. The seminar prepares students to the various stages of research or an internship from building rapport to initiating purposeful dialogue in the cultural context of Serbia/Bosnia-Herzegovina/Kosovo; gathering, recording, and analyzing primary data; and writing a scholarly academic report.

The main emphasis of the seminar is on the development of empirical tools and ethics of interactive research skills involving the collection of primary data on themes discussed during the semester. The seminar includes lectures and in-class exercises on qualitative methods of research in social sciences and in particular in peace research, conflict studies and conflict transformation; development of a research proposal or internship proposal, and preparation of an application for review of research with human subjects. Internship students will be introduced more in-depth to the position and the role of civil society in the Western Balkans since the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia until the present. All students will participate in an overview of research design and methodological approaches to program

themes. Ethical considerations related to conducting research or completing an internship will be discussed. The overall aim is to guide and help students hone their experience-based learning processes and prepare them for the development of an Independent Study Project (ISP), which is largely based on the data gathered from primary sources, or an internship at a local organization.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The Research Methods and Ethics course comprises 45 hours. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Show an acute sense of positionality and perspective and operate independently, using cultural sensitivity, language skills, and local networks of trust built over the course of the semester;
- Demonstrate awareness of appropriate methods and ethics used in field research in the critical global issue of Peace, Human Rights, and Social Movements OR demonstrate awareness of the ethics of interning in the context of Serbia;
- Analyze and process primary data gathered in the field and draw valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions;
- Produce an Independent Study Project proposal that is in strict observance of ethical academic standards and local values and that includes a research question, sample review of the relevant literature, outline of the research methods, and anticipated ethical challenges and ways of addressing them OR an internship proposal that includes a description of the host organization, an outline of tasks that will be performed, a proposed internship timetable, and projected outcomes such as a paper or business plan.

### **Language of Instruction**

This course is taught in English but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits to a wide range of venues and regional locales.

### **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: Undergraduate Qualitative Research in the Western Balkans**

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in the context of post-conflict societies. Most particularly, this module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. Students also discover the power and become attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research or internship.

### **Session 1: Conducting Research in the Context of Post-Conflict Societies**

Course Introduction: conducting undergraduate research in the context of societies in transitions with focus on post-war, post-Yugoslavia and post-socialism dynamics.

*Required Reading:*

Brown, Graham, Langer, Arnim and Stewart, Frances (2011) A Typology of Post-Conflict Environments. Leuven: University of Leuven Centre for research on Peace and Development. Accessed: <https://soc.kuleuven.be/crpd/files/working-papers/wp01.pdf>

Session 2: Social Sciences and Peace Research in the Balkans

This session provides an introduction to the way in which political and social environments following the disintegrating Yugoslavia shaped and influenced research agendas in academia (locally and internationally), research funding, academic research and conferences, discourses, production of knowledge about the post-Yugoslav wars of the 1990s/the post-Yugoslav state and policy-making. The session also addresses the current state of affairs in academic research about the successor states of Yugoslavia and provides an overview of undergraduate academic research on the SIT Balkans program and which includes:

- Conducting field-based research, as opposed to desk-based research conducted at home institution
- Learning about methods for conducting qualitative research through comprehensive data collection (literature, interviews and observations, followed by data analysis)
- Exploring research methods as related to Peace Research
- Discussing outsider/insider positionality
- Discussing ethics and challenges in choosing research topic/location and in conducting the research
- Use of APA style for citation and referencing

*Required Reading:*

Hoglund, K. and Oberg, M. (2011). "Doing Empirical Peace Research." In Kristine Hoglund and M. Oberg (Eds). *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenge* (pp. 3-13). London: Routledge.

Session 3: Research Design and Development

This session is devoted to the discussion of the stages of a research process in the social sciences and the development of a research proposal. The focus is on pre-Independent Study Project (ISP) period phase and during the ISP. In particular, the students get an overview of:

Pre ISP period:

- Identify and define your research topic
- Specifically define your research question
- Define your research population
- Literature review: identify and select the literature that will support your study

During ISP period:

- Data Collection
- Data Analysis

- Present your research outcomes in your final paper and ISP oral presentation

*Required Readings:*

The Research Process hand-out

Flick, U. (2009). Qualitative research: Why and how to do it. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (pp. 12-17). London: Sage.

Session 4: Choosing and Forming a Research Question

This session addresses the importance of articulating concise and clear research questions. The focus is on the formulation of research question(s) as an ongoing process in each of the stages of research and discussing ethical challenges and limitations in asking certain questions. The session includes an in-class handout and exercise in which students choose a topic and practice how to develop their research question.

*Required Readings:*

Choosing and forming your ISP topic and Research Question Handout

Flick, U. (2009). Chapter 9. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (pp. 98-104). London: Sage.

**Module 2: Ethics of Research and Internship in Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina**

This module is attended by students from the three tracks (ISP, ISPJ, and Internship). The focus is on the mechanics of literature review, data collection and analysis, and positionality. The module also integrates the program's excursions to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Students learn to reflect on their positionality as outsider/insider researcher and develop a network of contacts and resources for their ISP project, or Internship placement.

Session 1: Balkanism and Orientalism: Standpoint and Positionality

This session discusses contemporary academic and journalistic research produced about the break-up of Yugoslavia. The focus is on the reflexivity of the researcher, positionality and the ways it shapes research topics/questions, data analysis and interpretation. The session also addresses the definitions and implications of the use of terms such as "Southeast Europe," "Balkans," "Western Balkans," "Orientalism," "balkanization," "othering" and "Westernization."

*Required Reading:*

Goldsworthy, V. (2002). "Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization." In Bjelić D., & O. Savić (Eds). *Balkan as Metaphor*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Session 2: Literature Review

This session is devoted to the mechanics of doing literature review. Areas of discussion include the importance of having a strong literature review and the role of literature review in the research design. Students also learn about how to develop their review literature and discuss the literature of the 'Memories of NATO Bombing' as an in-class exercise.

*Required Readings:*

Literature Review Hand-Out

Flick, U. (2009). Chapter 5. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (pp. 48-55). London: Sage.

Fridman, O. (2016). Memories of the 1999 NATO Bombings in Belgrade, Serbia. *Südosteuropa. Journal for Policy and Society*. Thematic Section: The 1999 NATO Bombing. Memories, Narratives and Histories (Guest Editors: Orli Fridman and Krisztina Rácz). Vol. 64 No. 4, pp. 438-443.

Session 3: Mapping Fieldwork in Kosovo

Upon arrival in Prishtina, students go on a mapping tour of the city. During this field session, students are introduced to the different layers of today's Prishtina, from its Ottoman past, to the remains (and erasure) of Socialist Yugoslavia, to the present day with the erection of new monuments as the Ibrahim Rugova monument to the Newborn one and monuments to the KLA fighters. The session allows students to learn and practice the use of critical observation as a data collection method.

Session 4: Data Collection: Interviewing, Data Analysis

This session is focused on the skills of interviewing as a method for data collection, ethical considerations regarding the protection of participants' privacy, and the IRB process. Students learn how to develop interview questions and establish contacts for potential interviews, and discuss data collection and analysis for the 'Memories of the NATO Bombing' text.

*Required Readings:*

Interview handout

Fridman, O. (2016). Memories of the 1999 NATO Bombings in Belgrade, Serbia. *Südosteuropa. Journal for Policy and Society*. Thematic Section: The 1999 NATO Bombing. Memories, Narratives and Histories (Guest Editors: Orli Fridman and Krisztina Rácz). Vol. 64 No. 4, pp. 443-459.

*Recommended Reading:*

Flick, U. (2009). Chapter 13. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (pp. 150-173). London: Sage.

Session 5: Mapping Fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Upon arrival to Banja Luka, students go on a mapping walk of the city. During this field session, students are introduced to the changes that took place in the city after the war: from the construction of the Orthodox Church in the city center, to the removal of the old Yugoslav monuments. Students are also introduced to the demographic changes that took place in the city (that used to be a rather mixed city turning into a homogenous Serbian city) and visit the Ferhadija mosque recently rebuilt (after its full destruction during the war). The session allows students to learn and practice the use of observation using critical lenses, as a data collection method.

In Sarajevo, students go on a mapping walk of the city. During this field session, students are introduced to the consequences of life under siege that lasted more than 3 years and paralyzed the city and the life of its citizens. Students visit monuments in the city such as the WW2 monument of the eternal flame or the monuments for the children killed in the 1992-95 war. Students visit the historical museum and the exhibition,

*Sarajevo under Siege*. The session allows students to learn and practice the use of observation as a data collection method.

### Session 6: Ethical Concerns in Conducting Research or Doing Internship in Post-War Societies

This session focuses on the impact of outsider/insider position in field research. Students watch the film “For Those Who Can Tell No Tales” (Jasmila Zbanic, 2013) and discuss outsider/insider position, the ethics of conducting research in post-war societies, followed by a group discussion and reflection session. Students also discuss the “expertee syndrome” and the “zoo effect.”

#### *Required Readings:*

Marku, H. (2016). An Awkward Conversation about Foreigners in Kosovo. *Prishtina Insight*. August 16. <http://prishtinainsight.com/awkward-conversation-foreigners-kosovo/>

Armakolas, I. (2000). “A Fieldtrip to Bosnia: the Dilemmas of the First-Time Researcher.” In M. Smyth & G. Robinson (Eds.) *Researching Violently Divided Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues* (pp. 165-183). London: Pluto Press.

***After completing Modules 1-2, students will split into groups by ISP or internship. ISP students will take Module 3a, and internship students will take Module 3b.***

### **Module 3a: ISP in the Context of Serbia/Kosovo/Bosnia-Herzegovina**

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines field work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Serbia. The module highlights the importance of applied methodology in the ISP experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student. 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). One-on-one meetings with the Academic Director to discuss preliminary ISP ideas.

### Session 1: Data Collection and analysis: Observation and Field Notes

This session focuses on observation as a method for data collection in a field-based empirical research. Students also learn about the importance of keeping field journal and notes.

#### *Required Readings:*

Flick, U. (2009). Chapter 17. *An introduction to qualitative research* (pp. 222-238). London: Sage.

Text by assigned group, TBA.

### Session 2: Developing the ISP Research Proposal: Guidelines and Requirements

This session walks the students through the steps of developing their ISP proposal. The focus is on structure and requirements, the research question and introduction, and the approval process. Students are also introduced to the LRB/IRB process and learn about the roles and responsibilities of ISP advisors, documentation of data, and review ISP proposals from past semesters.

#### *Required Reading:*

Please come to class prepared having read the ISP proposal three stages requirements.

*Recommended reading:*

Flick, U. (2009). Chapter 22. *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Session 3: Final ISP Structure

This 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 logistics of the ISP period, including travel, materials, and timelines. Students will also review the ISP assessment rubric. The session also provides safety and security guidelines for travel during the ISP.

**Module 3b: Internship in the Context of Serbia**

This module prepares the student for the internship experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to internships in Serbia. The module highlights the importance of ethics in the internship experience, and the expectations and responsibilities of the student, the host institution, and the program.

Session 1: Preparing for the Internship

This introductory session prepares the students for their internship in country. The session covers a range of areas that include résumé preparation and cover letter, dress, student objectives for the internship, and stages of student growth in the internship. Students will review the internship rubric.

*Recommended Readings:*

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013) *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapters 1 and 2).

Session 2: Civil Society in the Context of the Western Balkans

This session provides an overview of the creation of civil society in Serbia, in the context of the break-up of Yugoslavia, the wars of the 1990s and the post-war current reality. Students learn about civic and un-civic civil society in Serbia and discuss the development from a state of no civil society organizations in Socialist Yugoslavia through the creation of NGOs in the process of transition from socialism through war to what came after in the successor states of the former Yugoslavia.

*Required Reading:*

Kopecky, P. and Mudde, C. (2003). Rethinking civil society. *Democratization* 10(3): 1–14.

Session 3: Civil Society and the Future of the Western Balkans

This session will focus on mapping out the civil sector in Serbia and in particular the organizations dealing with themes related to post-conflict transformation, human rights, and social justice. Students learn about the challenges faced by members of civil society, the contested issues between the civic sector and the state and the recent changes of those relations (especially as related to dealing with the past issues), in the context of EU accession processes (bringing state and civil society organizations to shared platforms of cooperation and consultation).

*Required Reading:*

Kostovicova, D. (2010). Civil society in the Western Balkans: vehicle for or obstacle to transitional justice. In: Petritsch W and Džihic V (eds) *Conflict and Memory*:

*Bridging Past and Future in (South East) Europe*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 287–294.

*Recommended Readings:*

- Kostovicova, D. (2006). Civil society and post-communist democratization: Facing a double challenge in post-Milošević Serbia. *Journal of Civil Society* 2(1): 21–37.
- Fridman, O. (2016). Memory Activism in Serbia after 2000: Alternative Calendars and Alternative Commemorative Events. A paper presented at the International Workshop: Shared Memories, Contested Memories and Historical Silences, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, 13-14 November.

Session 4: The Ethics of Participating in an Internship in Serbia

This session outlines the responsibilities of the student and the host organization for a productive and significant experience that can serve the objectives of both. The session also reviews best practices for a successful internship and exposes the student's positionality in relation to the organization.

*Recommended Reading:*

- McDonald, Francis. (2011). Ethical Use of Interns. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/ethics/ethicalstandardsadvisories/documents/psa-17.pdf>

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

Description of Assignments:

Assignment 1: Literature Review Assignment

Student chooses one research question they are interested in exploring for the purpose of this assignment. The topic defined for this assignment is the 1999 NATO Bombing of Belgrade.

The research question should be defined on one of the following topics:

- Memories of the 1999 NATO bombing;
- Commemorative events and practices in Belgrade, as related to the bombing;
- Belgrade Monuments related to the bombing;
- Visible relics of the bombed buildings in Belgrade and their effect on the memories and narratives of the event.

Students then identify two secondary resources on the topic of their choice and produce up to three pages long literature review.

Assignment 2: Data Collection Assignment: Interview

Based on the topic and researched question defined in the literature review assignment, the student will then define his/her target population of their study and complete the following steps:

- Prepare your interview questions (at least 8 interview questions related to the topic of your choice);
- Choose **one** person to interview;
- Use a tape recorder and notes, employing semi-structured interviewing methods discussed in the class and read about.



Students submit a paper in the following structure: background, discussion of the data collected, interpretative comments/data analysis, reflection on methodology, and positionality.

### Assignment 3:

ISP Track: Observation as a method for data collection

Students will be divided into 3 small groups; with each group exploring one site related to the 1999 NATO bombings of Serbia in Belgrade. In each location, students need to observe the site and/or the monument erected while taking field notes. They need to write a description of the site, the dynamics on site, citizens' interactions with the monument etc. For each site, students will also receive an academic text with the analysis of memory dynamics in Serbia, as related to the site. Upon return to class, students will write down their data they have collected by observation, and share with the rest of the class, followed by feedback and discussion.

The following 3 locations were identified as sites for observation:

1. Bombed Generalštab buildings in Kneza Miloša street
2. Eternal Flame monument, situated at Ušće
3. Monument to the victims of the wars of 1990s, opposite to the Railway Station

### Internship Track: Mapping out Civil Society organizations in Serbia: challenges and dilemmas

Students map out the main leading civil society organizations in Serbia, with an analysis of the themes these groups are engaged with. Students reflect on the challenges of these groups and their work, in the context of societies in transition. Students then define the topic of their interest for an internship and briefly discuss the reasons for their interest, their positionality and ethical dilemmas.

### Assignment 4: Research/Internship Proposal

All students must develop a research or internship proposal. The research proposal should address a theme related to the program, include research question and objectives, theoretical framework, Introduction to literature review, methodology, and comply with the ethical standards learned throughout the course.

The internship proposal should include the objectives to be achieved during the internship period, a justification of the internship responsibilities and the organization selected, skills or areas in which the student can contribute to the mission and vision of the host organization, and an outline of the responsibilities to be carried out. Students identify literature written about the organization where they will intern, and will reflect on their positionality and ethical dilemmas prior to starting their month long internship.

### Participation

All students are expected to prepare for classes, attend and participate in all lectures, class discussions, field activities, and carry out all assignments and other activities prepared in the context of the Research Methods and Ethics course.

### Assessment:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| ISP Proposal (stage I, II, and final proposal) | 40% |
|  | 10% |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Observation Assignment/mapping out civil society in Serbia assignment |     |
| Data Collection Assignment: Interview                                 | 20% |
| Literature Review Assignment  | 20% |
| Class Participation   | 10% |

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  |

**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, and done according 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 (those of classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits, etc.). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

**Academic Policies:** SIT prides itself on providing students with an experientially based program; we hold ourselves, and our students, to the highest of academic standards. Students are asked to refer to the **SIT Study Abroad 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 <mailto: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>.