



## Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 Credits / 120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:  
Mongolia: Geopolitics and the Environment

### Course Description

The culmination of the program, the four-week independent study period offers the opportunity to pursue in-depth a particular aspect of Mongolian culture. During ISP, you directly apply the concepts and skills of experience-based learning articulated in the FSS Seminar. Orientation, language training, the homestay, and the Geopolitics and Environmental Policy Seminars establish additional skills necessary for the successful completion of the Independent Study Project. The final product provides the material evidence of your capacity to handle methodology and synthesize experiences in the host culture.

### Course Objectives:

- To select, design and implement an individual project that investigates a dimension of Mongolian life and culture.
- To learn and use effective field study techniques as outlined in the FSS Seminar.
- To coherently synthesize your field data into both a written and an oral presentation.
- To develop self-confidence and an understanding of experience-based education.

### ISP Advisor

The Academic Director or student selects an advisor, often with the assistance of local contacts. A host national or long-time foreign resident in the country, who has expertise in the student's field of interest, must be chosen to be an advisor. The project advisor may be a host-country academician, field professional, artisan, or topical informant. The advisor will assist the student (to some extent with the Academic Director) on design, implementation, and evaluation of the study project. The role may be more or less directive or consultative, depending on the student and the need. The Academic Director, in consultation with the in-country advisor, is the final evaluator of the completed project and assigns the grade.

### Student Assessment

Evaluation of the final Independent Study Project is based on three components: the fieldwork

\*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.

journal, the written paper, and the oral presentation. The AD will work in consultation with project advisors in developing assessments.

Fieldwork Journal	(20%)
Written ISP	(60%)
Oral Presentation	(20%)

## Course Requirements

- A minimum of 120 hours of actual fieldwork\* toward completion of the project.
- An oral presentation to the group and guests upon completion of project.
- A well-documented, culturally sensitive and in-depth presentation of field study findings.

\* Fieldwork refers to hours of active data collection and analysis (i.e. interviews, observation, note transcription, reading supplementary materials, writing, etc.) and not merely time spent in the field. You should plan on a minimum of three weeks at your field site(s).

### Field Journal

#### Objectives:

- To document progress on your Independent Study Project.
- To practice effective note taking and transcription techniques.

#### Assignment

A minimum of 3 weeks, Fieldwork Journal should be devoted entirely to recording field experiences, observations, thoughts and musings, vocabulary notes, contact details, interview notes – in short everything that may be of value in composing your ISP.

Periodic interviews with your ISP Advisor will allow you to explore ideas as well as discuss tactics for overcoming any stumbling blocks encountered during the ISP process. It is a good idea to include records of these interviews in your Observation/Work Journal.

Submit your field journal(s) along with your written ISP on the due date.

#### Written Presentations

1. Must be neatly typed and double-spaced. See handbook for computer information.
2. Formatting and submission:
  - Your ISP title should be concise and descriptive; excessively long titles will not appear in their entirety on transcripts according to the SIT Registrar's policy.
  - Required length is 25-50 pages.
  - One clean **double-sided photocopy** of final paper. Use black ink on the original so that it photocopies well. Double check your submitted copies to ensure that the text is readable, in order, and that no pages are missing. Keep the original for yourself. You may want to paste any original photos (if applicable) into your submitted copies.
  - Left and right margins **must** be 1.5" each and the top and bottom margins must be 1" each. (The side margins are important because we bind your ISPs into a hard cover for our library and without enough margin space, the text is lost in the binding).
3. A Resource Contact Form for all your important contacts must be filled out and submitted along with your written ISP.

#### Oral Presentation

1. Presentation length is 20 minutes with additional 10-minutes for questions and answers. The purpose is to convey the important aspects of your study (i.e., what you found out about your topic). If you have too much material, you will need to select the most relevant or interesting findings. Your presentation will be timed.
2. You must attend all the presentations of your colleagues.
3. It is strongly encouraged to use visual aids for your oral presentation.

The student, Academic Director, and project advisor will agree on the specific requirements for project completion. General requirements are:

- Satisfactory completion of the Field Studies Seminar. Even though FSS and ISP are credited and graded discretely and separately, the ISP process should be consistent with the goals set out and the processes established in the FSS.
- A majority of the ISP work conducted in the field (as opposed to in libraries, for example)
- Approximately 120 hours of work
- Periodic progress conferences held with the Academic Director as part of FSS and as needed.
  
- Output in the form of a major paper, several shorter papers, material project (e.g. portfolio of drawings), or possibly special advanced language work, as agreed upon by the Academic Director, project advisor, student, and where required, US home institution advisor.
- A 20 - 30 minute oral report to the group (and perhaps invited host nationals) on the project.

**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.