

Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 (4 credits / 120 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Czech Republic: Arts and Social Change

Course Objectives

The Independent Study Project (ISP) provides an opportunity for students to engage in significant, original field-based research in the Czech Republic. This may comprise a standard field-based research project or a creative project or community-based study based upon daily interaction with their Czech counterparts in Czech art studios or non-profit organizations. Upon completion of the ISP, students should have advanced their personal understanding of a particular topic, contributed to both an academic and practical debate about that issue, improved specific field-based research skills, and developed an increased self-confidence and understanding.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcome for this course include:

- Country-specific knowledge about the topic selected for investigation, including how the phenomenon unfolds and expresses itself in the Czech cultural context; how the Czech artists, academics, specialists, or other study participants respond to the reality; and the challenges and opportunities it presents to Czech society.
- Greater understanding of the complexity of conducting qualitative research and arts-based research projects in a cross-cultural context with respect to the importance of solid project design, data collecting, analysis, ethical considerations, and credibility and reliability controls to reduce bias.
- Practical and substantive experience with the challenges and benefits of conducting field-based research in the cross-cultural context and, specifically, enhanced awareness of how qualitative research projects of this kind may be an instrument for increasing understanding of a culture, strengthening critical-thinking and analytical skills, and sharing acquired knowledge with the host culture in line with the reciprocity that underlines the ISP and other semester work.

Course Content

Students will work with the academic director as well as with individual project advisors to develop an appropriate thesis and methodology for their ISP research. Once the ISP period begins, students will conduct their research, focusing on field-based research methodologies

with the option of utilizing arts-based research methodologies, and prepare their final ISP projects, which may comprise a 30-page paper or a creative project (performance, visual arts, creative writing, etc.) with a supporting 15-page paper. A minimum of 120 hours of academic field-based work is expected for completion of the project. Students are required to make a final professional oral presentation summarizing the results of their research.

Course Policies

ISPs and accompanying field journal must be handed in by the semester deadline. Students are expected to be self-motivated and diligent in their research, and they are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and professional manner.

Student Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Evaluation of the ISP is based upon written study itself which in the case of arts ISPs may include a final performance or exhibition of creative work (70%), a field journal (15%), and the final oral presentation(15%). Successful ISPs demonstrate significant, original research into an issue or creative work completed in the Czech Republic that relates directly to the main program themes. Additionally, they employ appropriate methodologies of field-based research, focusing on data collected from primary sources.

Grading Scales and Criteria

Grades are given both fairly and rigorously and in accordance with the system below. They will reflect a combination of absolute quality of performance, progress made, the ability to take into account and assimilate the academic director's and the teachers' advice in assessing the work done. An "A" letter grade reflects exceptional work and perfect combination of academic competences and personal research and analysis. It shows great ability to integrate field-based investigation and personal reflection into a structured and well-argued paper. A "B" letter grade reflects serious and methodical work as well as a substantial effort at analyzing and understanding cross-cultural issues. A "C" letter grade shows the work meets the requirements but needs more in-depth reflection and personal involvement. A "D" letter grade is insufficient and clearly reflects lack of work or serious deficiencies.

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

Please note: the syllabus, course content, lecturers, and readings may modified by the academic director in order to better suit the needs of the course and its participants. Should any change of class topics or lecturers may be necessary, student will be promptly notified.

Student research is a product of fieldwork and, as such, students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical fieldwork, 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 archives the ISP 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 the project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP form.

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 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>.