Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 Credits / 120 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Bolivia: Multiculturalism, Globalization, and Social Change

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

The Independent Study Project (ISP) provides the opportunity to study in greater depth an aspect of particular academic interest relating to the culture and development program theme. Students are required to indicate their proposed area of study as part of the admissions process. In most cases, the topic is then revised once in Bolivia, or a new topic is developed out of the lectures, discussions, and field trips of the thematic seminar. With the assistance of the academic director, a project advisor appropriate to the topic is selected. Advisors are usually host country professors or experienced field professionals. In conducting their projects, students directly utilize the concepts and skills of field-based learning discussed in the Research Methods and Ethics course, language capabilities developed through formal instruction and informal practice, knowledge gained in the thematic seminars, and contacts made in the homestay or larger community setting. In the process, they hone their skills in dealing with, and learning from, the unexpected, while accomplishing a major academic project in a challenging new environment.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should have attained the following:
- Country-specific knowledge about the topic chosen for ISP investigation, including how the phenomenon unfolds and expresses itself in the Bolivian context, how Bolivian people, professionals, and officials respond to this reality and about the challenges and opportunities presented.
- Greater understanding of the complexities of conducting research in a cross-cultural context and the importance of using academic rigor, critical thinking, creativity, ethical considerations and reciprocity in future research endeavors.
- Greater awareness of how small scale field study projects can be an excellent instrument for increasing understanding of a culture, promoting and developing critical thinking and analytical skills, and sharing acquired information with others.

Course Requirements

- A minimum of 120 hours of fieldwork toward the completion of the ISP;
- Demonstration of the implementation of field study techniques learned in the Research Methods and Ethics course;

- Submission and approval of application for the SIT Human Subjects Review Process;
- Adherence to SIT Study Abroad Policy on Ethics;
- Use, above all, of *primary sources* of information as opposed to restricting research to just library resources;
- At the minimum, one initial meeting with the AD to discuss the student's ISP proposal and plans, followed by bi-weekly check-ins during the research period;
- Weekly meetings with ISP advisor;
- An oral presentation to the group and guests;
- A well-documented, well-written, in-depth paper, project, or video presenting field study findings;
- Distribution of paper to interested individuals and agencies;
- Success in meeting the established ISP deadline;
- Demonstration of increased depth of understanding, analytical clarity, and cross-cultural sensitivity.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
Timely completion of all ISP assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.

Quality of the investigation	25%
Depth of analysis and insight	20%
Organization, clarity and coherence	20%
Quality and organization of work journal	20%
Quality of oral presentation	15%

ISP Assignments
Selection of appropriate ISP topic
1. The project should involve synthesizing and analyzing material gathered from primary and, only to a lesser extent, secondary sources.
2. The project should be designed to take advantage of resources in the host culture.
3. The project should be focused enough to be completed within a one-month time frame. (This often means that any sort of comparative topic would constitute too large a scope for an ISP.)
4. The project should be relevant to the program theme.
5. The project may be relevant to the student's major, or explore an issue that the student has been unable to pursue at his/her home institution.

Human Subjects Review Process
All final ISP proposals must reflect a thoughtful and culturally-appropriate consideration of the effects of the inquiry on the participants. To that end, students are required to submit a *Review of Research with Human Subjects* application form that includes questions about any potential harm that might occur as a result of the study; appendices to the form should include interview and survey protocols. If the academic director believes that the concerns of this policy have not been sufficiently addressed, s/he may request a revision of the proposal. Standards for this Human Subjects Review Policy are developed in country and reflect local academic practice. Completion of the *Review of Research with Human Subjects* application occurs during the SIT Study Abroad program and is a standard part of ISP preparation.

If a student's research has been funded by the US government agency or if the plan is to take the research back to the home school or community for further dissemination, then more stringent standards must be followed, i.e. not only those of the host community, but also those

of the Office for Human Resource Protections (with which SIT is registered). Any questions or concerns will be forwarded to SIT's Institutional Review Board for consideration. A student's home school may have its own procedure to follow regarding Human Subjects Review, and SIT recommends checking in with the study abroad office and academic advisor on the home campus prior to the start of the SIT program.

See attached sheets for further information about the Human Subjects Review Process and Policy and for a copy of the *Review of Research with Human Subjects* application form.

Written Paper
See attached sheet for a detailed description of the sections required in the final paper. It should be between approximately 20 and 25 pages - typed, double-spaced, and spiral-bound. Spanish is strongly preferred. All ISPs must be corrected by a native speaker (preferably one of the Spanish instructors) before turning in the final copy. Students should provide their ISP advisor with a draft of their ISP a few days before the final copy is due, so that they can provide the student with feedback or suggestions for modifications. Students are required to submit both a hard copy and a CD of their paper.
Number of copies to turn in:
- One copy for program library;
- One copy for ISP advisor;
- Copies for the community/organization student worked with and any other people copies were promised to;
- Extra copies for student and/or home institution;
- (Optional) One copy with a self-addressed, stamped envelope if student wishes to receive AD comments in addition to the narrative evaluation all students receive on their SIT transcripts.

ISP Summary
Students are required to submit a brief summary of their ISP (both in English and in Spanish). This should be on a separate piece of paper from the bound ISP and should also be included as a separate file on the CD that students are required to turn in.

Oral Presentation
Each student will give an oral presentation of her/his project during the program evaluation. Presentations should be no longer than 20 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for questions. Students should take the time necessary to organize a concise and informative presentation. They should use visuals (PowerPoint, video, photos, charts, maps, etc.) when possible and appropriate. Notes may be used, but students should not read their paper. Creativity is encouraged.

Grading Criteria for Oral Presentation

General organization and use of time	0-4 points
Engaging, interesting	0-4 points
Comprehensive in relating ideas and experiences	0-4 points
Handling of questions	0-3 points
Total	0-15 points

ISP Work Journal
See attached sheet for a detailed description of the sections required in the ISP work journal, which is considered a central part of the student's field research.

ISP in Non-Traditional Formats
See attached sheets for procedures and criteria for nontraditional ISPs.

ISP in Video Format
See attached sheets for procedures, guidelines and grading criterion for ISP in video format.

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

Grading Criteria
The ISP advisor will recommend a given final grade for the written paper or project. This grade will be based on responsibility and organization during the preparation process and the final product. The academic director, after considering the recommendation, will determine the final grade. All grades assigned will take into account the students´ special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. An "A" grade for the ISP entails "excellent" (not just "very good") performance in terms of research methodology, structure, and organization of the project and paper, clarity and coherence of writing, depth of analysis and insight, and contextualization of the topic within Bolivian reality.

Student Expectations
Class Participation
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening, and active engagement in all seminar lectures, discussions, field trips, and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior.

PLEASE NOTE: All classes leave ¼ of the scheduled time for the purpose of class discussion of the lecture and/or readings.

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.

If the research has been funded by a U.S. government agency, or if the student plans to take this research back to the home school or community for further dissemination, then the student may be required to follow standards from their home institutions in addition to the Local Review Board and those of the Office for Human Research Protections, with which SIT is registered. For applications that require a full review, the academic director will forward any questions or concerns that cannot be resolved at the program level (through the Local Review Board) to SIT's Institutional Review Board.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, 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.