Independent Study Project
ISPR 3000 (4 Credits / 120 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
India: Public Health, Gender, and Community Action

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) is an opportunity for in-depth study of a topic related to health and human rights within the Indian context. In conducting the projects, students employ field research, developed through the *Field Method and Ethics in Social Science and Health* (FME) to deepen knowledge gained from the *Public Health: Key Determinants, Gender, and Equity* course and *Health Rights Advocacy in Asia* course as well as from contacts made in the homestay or larger community. Students are encouraged to apply their Hindi language skills in areas such as organizing their daily needs, traveling, or working with a translator to gather data. In the process, students hone their skills in managing and learning from the unexpected, while designing a substantive academic fieldwork project and independently seeing it through to completion, with the support and guidance of an advisor. If appropriate to their undergraduate course of study, the ISP may form the basis for a senior thesis, or it may be a chance to learn formally about a new topic of interest.

In the first month of the program, students submit a substantive fieldwork project proposal, which includes above all a well-focused analytical research question, a review of both primary sources (e.g. government or news reports) and secondary literature (i.e. academic publications) pertaining to this question, and the outline of a feasible methical strategy with which students hope to find answers to their question within the limited framework of the ISP. The proposal also contains a justification of the project's significance and integrates advice from the AD/ISP Supervisor and ISP Advisor. Successive drafts of the proposal are worked on in conjunction with the ISP Advisor and AD, who approves the final proposal before the project begins. It is assumed that most students will be conducting fieldwork on this scale for the first time. Accordingly, evaluation for the ISP includes consideration of the process involved in designing and executing a project of this scale through the ISP Work Journal, which provides a means to assess students' learning over the entire semester.

Course Objectives

The Independent Study Project encompasses 120 hours (4 credits). The main objectives of the ISP are:

- To apply the skills and knowledge gained from other SIT coursework;
- To produce field-based scholarship of superior quality that answers an explicit analytical question by utilizing primary resources available only in India to develop perseverance and self-confidence in field workers/ practitioners as well as sound ethical sense in conducting a cross-cultural and field-based study.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Independent Study project, students will be able to:

- Design a research project with a focus on public health and human rights to be completed in a fixed and limited timeframe.
- Articulate a primary research question or hypothesis and link this to relevant theory.
- Collaborate effectively and in a culturally appropriate manner with research advisors and academic director to accomplish a research project.
- Incorporate specific awareness of ethical issues and understanding of local cultural issues research project.
- Utilize appropriate institutional processes available for the required review and approval of research involving human subjects.

Course Requirements

ISP Fieldwork: Ethics and Location

SIT conforms to US based university standards and federal guidelines for human subject research. Therefore, the ISP topic must conform to the norms of academic ethics and policies related to human subject research. This means, for example, that a student cannot pursue a topic that would put the student or subject in danger, or is illegal, or is a topic that is too culturally sensitive for the student's level of scholarship (certain issues of religion, politics, or gender, may be too volatile for an undergraduate study). **All ISP proposal need to go through Local Review Board (LRB) for approval on human subject and ethics.** The LRB is made up of the Academic Director and two local scholars. If a student wishes to work on a topic that the LRB has rejected, the student may appeal his/her proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at SIT Brattleboro, VT. Be aware that a full review by the IRB could result in significant delays in beginning the research. No research may be done on a topic that has been declined by the IRB.

As our program is based in North India, it is generally expected that research sites be in Hindi-speaking areas of the North, unless a special case is negotiated with the AD/ISP Supervisor. The choice of site for the ISP must also be approved for safety reasons.

Students often significantly revise the ISP sites and topics as originally proposed before the program, or they develop a new topic stemming from the lectures, discussions and field trips of the SIT semester curriculum. This is a normal part of the research process. However, radical changes of site, topic or type of ISP are not permitted after week seven. Research projects and performances hastily cobbled together will lack the sophistication expected of the ISP and may not be considered adequate for a passing grade.

The choice of topic has one very important constraint: students must conduct fieldwork in India that they could not do at their home university. This means that information gained from primary source data should be used as much as possible. <u>Students are expected to use resources</u>

available to them in India, both people and places, including libraries, NGOs and other facilities, such as the American Center Library, British Library, Teen Murty Library in Delhi and AIIS Gurgaon Campus to name a few. Students are not expected to have the skills necessary to conduct primary research in Hindi but are encouraged to integrate Hindi into their projects as much as possible. Students are discouraged from reliance on Internet sources, which are often quirky, inaccurate, or biased. Material on the Internet generally falls under the rubric of "primary sources" (with the exception of online accessible PDFs from academic journals); using internet sources can therefore neither relieve students from the requirement of connecting their argument to *academic* literature nor does the internet fulfill the criteria of a "resource only available in India".

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

The ISP is evaluated on the basis of content organization and development of ideas, and creativity and depth of analysis in both oral and written presentations. Special emphasis is placed on the students' abilities to use local resources in an appropriate manner, and in their ability to weave this empirical material into a wider argument about their research question. Comments and evaluations of the ISP Advisors are integrated into the final evaluation when final ISP grades are assigned by the AD/ISP Supervisor.

ISP Proposal (15%) and Work Journal (15%): Preparation and follow-up for meetings with AD/ISP Supervisor (3), ISP Contact Person (2), Hindi Instructors (2), ISP Advisor (4 meetings of 2 hours); successive versions of the ISP Abstract; Self-evaluation of progress, words learned in Hindi relating to the topic, etc.	**30%**
ISP Final Paper: Approximately 30 pages of written content. It should be footnoted/referenced where appropriate and include a full bibliography. If illustrations are necessary for clarity they must be included with full citation. Correct citation is expected.	**50%**
ISP Final Presentation: 20 Minutes (15 Minutes for Presentation, 5 Minutes for questions)	**20%**

ISP Work Journal (15%)
This is the reservoir of all your fieldwork and the planning for the project. The extent to which you can use the ISP Work Journal is limitless, but as a minimum, it should include records of preparation and follow-up for your formal meetings over the semester and progressively refined versions of your ISP Abstract.

Some other suggestions:
- names and locations of contact persons, especially possible ISP advisors and other ISP resources
- site plans, grids, maps, drawings, photographs, recordings
- notes from interviews conducted in the field relevant to your ISP
- statistical or other hard data, whether gathered in the field or through appropriate readings
- vocabulary items, phrases or excerpts from written or oral works in Hindi relevant for your ISP

Evaluation for the ISP Work Journal emphasizes your attention to process, and degree of preparation for each of your formal meetings. The following points of evaluation are also to be noted:
- Efforts made in meeting all assignment deadlines
- Consistency of entries demonstrating a steady pace of progress

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- Development of project in relationship to your objectives
- Evidence of preparation for and follow-up from your formal meetings over the semester
- Integration of Hindi language learning where appropriate

ISP Final Proposal (15%)
The primary components of the ISP project proposal are:

Abstract
In 150-200 words, the abstract should succinctly state the research question, topic of investigation, the approach unique to your analysis, and its wider significance.

Introduction and Research Question
Here you present the topic to be explored in the ISP and – importantly – the *analytical question* you have about proposed topic. Analytical questions can usually be rephrased into a "why is?" or "how come?" type question – while "what?" questions tend to remain purely descriptive. For instance, "tuberculosis among elderly slum dwellers" might be a relevant topic, and "what is the prevalence of TB among them?" a descriptive research question – but only questions such as "why is TB on the rise there?" or "how come some slum dwellers fare better than others?" qualify as *analytical* questions. Apart from one such main research question, this section should also discuss some of the sub-themes and questions that you expect to investigate, although the ideas you present in this proposal may change once you begin the actual field study.

Literature Review
The literature review should include 4-5 *academic* sources *in addition to* any news or government reports quoted in order to demonstrate appropriate background research into the scholarly discourse about your topic. Ideally, you can demonstrate which other questions have been asked about your topic by scholars before you, which answers they have found (using which methods), and why your own study is important in this context.

Methodology
Your main fieldwork methods should be elaborated as well as the rationale behind them. Demonstrate why the methods chosen would be best suited to find an answer to your analytical question within the overall ISP framework.

Itinerary for the Field Study Period
Please be as specific as possible, including dates and places where you plan to conduct your field study, and any/all contact information that you have for each location and date. If at any time we cannot contact you because you have failed to give us accurate and up-to-date information on your whereabouts, you may be subjected to penalties ranging from probation to dismissal from the program, depending on the severity of the situation (1 page).

Timeline for the Field Study Period
Unlike the itinerary, the timeline should focus on what you plan to do at each stage of your field study. This, again, is likely to change once you begin field study, but you should set specific short-term goals that will lead to the completion of the final project. Make sure to relate and justify your steps in relation to your methodical strategy and research question (1 page).

Budget for the Field Study Period
The budget should include your total projected expenditures for travel, room and board, along with any additional costs associated with hiring translators, material purchases, and typing and binding charges. Each item should have a separate line, and the total projected expenditures must be clearly located at the bottom of your budget (1 page).

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Information about your ISP Advisor
You must have an ISP advisor. ISPs unsupported by the assistance and evaluation of an ISP advisor will not be accepted. If you are unable to finalize your ISP advisor before leaving Delhi, please list as many alternate ISP Advisors in your ISP Proposal as possible, along with notes on contacts for an ISP Advisor to be located in the field (as many pages as necessary).

Note: Several other forms must be submitted to your AD/ISP Supervisor before leaving Delhi - please see ISP Semester Timeline for details.

ISP Final Paper (50%)
The Final Paper should be approximately 30 pages of *analytical written content*, <u>exclusive</u> of secondary material such as photographs, maps, bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. It is expected that the ISP Paper be **rigorously edited** so that it exhibits the following attributes:

- freedom from grammatical errors and typos;
- compliance with a standard format of citation for both primary and secondary sources; and
- most importantly, concise and logical argument, which weaves your empirical findings into a convincing answer for your research question.

Evaluation includes the following criteria:
- Critical analysis of your topic guided by your chosen research question
- Clarity of presentation and argument while answering this question
- Use of primary resources and demonstrated cross-cultural communication skills
- Use of appropriate secondary sources to contextualize information gained from primary sources
- Concise use of language purged of 'filler' phrases/adjectives
- Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation

The primary components for the ISP Final Paper are:
1. **Separate Title Page -** Should include your ISP Title, in capital letters, located just above the middle of the page. In a neat column to the lower left-hand side of the page:
    i. Your Name
    ii. Academic Director/Supervisor
    iii. Project Advisor's Name and Institution (or description)
    iv. SIT Study Abroad
    v. India: Public Health, Gender, and Community Action Program
    vi. Semester and Year
2. **Table of Contents** - Your Table of Contents should contain the main headings and subdivisions in each section, with page numbers. It should provide the reader with an analytical view of the material covered by the study, together with the order of discussion. The Table of Contents should also include your Bibliography (required), Appendices (optional) and Glossary (optional).

3. **Introduction -** Length can vary considerably according to the topic and your style of writing. Aspects of your ISP that might be covered include objectives of the study, research questions, field study methods and a brief statement of findings.

4. **Body of Paper -** In most cases you will want to use section headings, and possibly sub-headings, to maintain a strong sense of the organization of your paper. Make sure you clearly demarcate which insights derive from your own empirical work and which from secondary literature. Also try not to lose track of your overall goal: to formulate – and

support with empirical evidence – an argument / an answer to the main research question you posed about your topic.

5. **Conclusions -** Your conclusions should demonstrate how your ISP fulfilled the objectives outlined in your introduction, and summarize the main answer found in reply to your research question. If your study raises new questions for further research, you should also discuss these points in your Conclusion, too.

6. **References and Endnotes -** You must acknowledge all sources of information other than your own reasoning including quotations, ideas or statements taken from readings, lectures or interviews. You can use either footnote/endnote citation or "Harvard style" inline citation – but make sure to stick to one established academic standard in citing your material.   If in doubt, follow the guidance given at:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

7. **Bibliography -** Include all primary and secondary resources used in your references. Primary resources (usually consisting of personal communications, news reports, government data etc) and secondary (academic) resources should be listed under separate headings. Please follow a manual of citation.

8. **Recommendations for further study** - A short list of recommendations on how your study might be expanded upon or be used as the basis for future ISPs. Please include contact information where possible and appropriate.

Optional sections of your ISP
Acknowledgements
Although acknowledgements are not obligatory, they are always much appreciated by faculty, advisers, supervisors, contacts, family and friends.

Appendices
Appendices should include any information that is relevant to the study, but not part of the main body of the text, such as statistical data and genealogical charts. Make sure to follow the same ethical standards with regards to clear names which you used in the main part of your study (i.e. don't breach anonymity in your appendix if you promised to keep it before that)

Glossary of non-English terms
Non-English terms can be cited in Devanagari however, Romanized transcriptions must also be given. You may alphabetize in either script. Please italicize words of foreign origin.

ISP Final Presentations (20%)
The Final Presentation should not be more than 20 minutes total,and should summarize the contents of the ISP Final Paper and discuss your research process. Students are welcome to use props (themselves included), photographs, images, posters, and so on.

It may be helpful to think of the ISP Final Presentation as though you are teaching a class to a group of semi-specialized listeners. Rather than simply giving a speech keyed to the pages of the ISP Final Paper, try to teach listeners about the topic, include information and background that you may take for granted, and try to convince your audience of *your* answer to the research question posed. You may wish to make a handout with specialized Hindi vocabulary items. Do a dress rehearsal so that your timing is within the 20 minute frame.

Participation is not the same as attendance. All students are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the seminar. This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.

Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining, contradictory perspectives, note-taking.

Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge and information. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't,and allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.

Respect - culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Late papers will be marked down one step (B- to C+, e.g.) for each day they are late. Further following points must be borne in mind by the students:

- **All written assignments are to be typed and handed into your AD/ISP Supervisor's box**.

- A**ll components of the course (see below) must be completed satisfactorily** to receive a passing grade.

- If your chosen ISP site is far away from computing facilities, **please be sure to factor writing, editing and proofreading time into your ISP itinerary**. Three writing days are given as a grace period during week 15, but they are meant for consolidation rather than composition of the ISP Final Paper and Presentation.

- **If documentation of a medical emergency** is produced, **extensions for meetings and written work may be negotiated**. If make-ups granted due to illness are not completed within the agreed upon time, a grade of zero will be recorded for that assignment. Unexcused late assignments will not be accepted.

- Conducting an ISP is also about time management. Allow for serious obstacles or the possibility of illness, and plan accordingly.

Grading Scale
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

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Grading Criteria
An "A" grade for an assignment entails superior (not just "very good") performance - in terms of structure and organization - of both the written paper and oral presentation, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence.

Student Expectations

Responsibilities when conducting fieldwork:
- Students must respect, protect, and promote the rights and welfare of all those contributing to, and affected by, their work by protecting the privacy and dignity of the people and communities with whom they conduct field study.
- The right of those providing information to students to either remain anonymous, or to receive recognition, must be scrupulously defended and respected.
- Students must acknowledge the help and services they receive and must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in culturally appropriate ways.
- Students must record and represent accurately all aspects of the field study. This includes not representing as their own work - either in spoken or written form - materials and ideas directly obtained from other sources.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad 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.