



## Independent Study Project

ISPR-3000 (4 Credits / 120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:  
Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management

### Course Description

The culmination of the program, the four-week independent study period offers you the opportunity to pursue in-depth a particular aspect of Malagasy environment and/or culture. During ISP, you directly apply the concepts and skills of experience-based learning articulated in the Field Study and Ecology and Conservation Seminars. Orientation, language training, the home stay, and other experiences 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

The Independent Study Project encompasses 120 academic hours (4 credits). Its main objectives:

- To select, design and implement an individual project, which investigates a dimension of Malagasy ecology, resource management or conservation issues.
- To learn and utilize effectively field study techniques as outlined in the Environmental Field Studies 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.

### Expected Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should have attained the following:

- The ability to gather, assimilate and synthesize information through a variety of methodologies.
- The ability to conceptualize, prepare for, and carry out a project through to completion in a given amount of time with available resources.
- The ability to articulate field methods, results, and analysis of findings through written and oral presentations.
- To have gained a critical eye through on-going processes that question widely held views.

\*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.

## Course Requirements

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

\* 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).

**PLEASE NOTE:** COURSE CONTENTS, LECTURERS AND READINGS MAY BE MODIFIED AS NEEDED. SHOULD ANY CHANGE OF CLASS TOPICS OR LECTURERS BE NECESSARY, STUDENTS WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED.

## Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Evaluation of the written report for the Independent Study Project (75% of grade) is based on the following criteria:

1. development of topic and achievement of objectives
2. project definition and focus
3. methodology
4. accuracy of information
5. critical analysis and thought
6. use of information from participation, observations, interviews, and other techniques
7. use of cross-cultural communication skills
8. style and expression
9. grammar and documentation

Students should note that the written ISP report must be submitted with the cover note included on page 69 accompanied by an electronic copy on CD, completed advisors evaluation form, ISP information sheet and ISP Copyright declaration.

Evaluation of Oral Presentations (25% of grade) is based on the following criteria:

1. Timing (adhering to time limit).
2. Rhythm/speed of delivery.
3. Structure of presentation (introduction, question, methods, results, conclusions).
4. Clarity of presentation including diction and ability to communicate key issues.
5. Appropriate presentation of background information (pitching at the correct level).
6. Quality of visual aids/props/PowerPoint.
7. Appropriate use of Maps, tables, graphs, photographs.
8. Accuracy of information presented.
9. Adequate justification for conclusions/recommendations presented.
10. Quality of responses to questions.

**Grading Scale:** The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| 94-100% | A  |
| 90-93%  | A- |
| 87-89%  | B+ |
| 84-86%  | B  |

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|          |    |
|----------|----|
| 80-83%   | B- |
| 77-79%   | C+ |
| 74-76%   | C  |
| 70-73%   | C- |
| 67-69%   | D+ |
| 64-66%   | D  |
| below 64 | F  |

### **Grading Criteria**

All grades assigned will take into account the students' special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. An "A" grade for an assignment entails superior (not just "very good") performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence. In terms of Class Participation, an "A" grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all Academic Seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of the students' participation will be monitored and taken into account.

### **Student Expectations**

#### **Class Participation**

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

***PLEASE NOTE: All classes leave 1/4 of the scheduled time for the purpose of class discussion of the lecture and/or readings.***

**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. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.

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