



## **Development, Gender, and Social Change in the Himalaya**

DVST 3000 (3 Credits/45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:

### **Nepal: Development, Gender, and Social Change in the Himalaya**

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**

This nine-week course employs a variety of approaches to introduce the aspects of development and social change, focusing on gender issues and the discourse and efforts surrounding gender equality, local development, and social change. Gender equality has emerged as a critical global issue, and in Nepal, the efforts to achieve gender equality are most pronounced today than ever in the past. Students will be able to use Nepal's example to understand how development and social change occurs, the obstacles and challenges, and efforts to pave a path for equality.

Through both classroom and field-oriented activities, students will investigate the role of development in bringing gender issues to the forefront, and its impact on societal change. The course covers aspects of gender equality, improvement in livelihood, food security, human rights, and health; and how these aspects are interlinked with each other. Students will also be exposed to the interplay of different policies, cultural and social structures and economic opportunities to understand the status of women in Nepal, and how social change and development affect the discourse surrounding issues of inequality.

Students are encouraged to analyze the dominant discourse of development and gender, and their broader implications. The reading materials are designed to help students familiarize with broader theories, global efforts to equality and how gender relations have implications to other critical global issues of inequality, food security, environment, resource management, global health and education.

Lectures from field practitioners and visits to various organizations will allow students to understand the efforts to equality and equal rights in Nepal. Such visits and lectures will help students understand different challenges and potential that emerge from social, cultural factors and how these challenges morph and become dynamic with social change. Conversations with activists will also provide an inside view of efforts and resources, mobilization and strategies that the activists and leaders use to make meaningful changes in society. Students will then be able to use this knowledge and relate them to the broader theories that surround development, modernity, and gender. The integration of readings, lectures and field visits are designed to help students make a crucial connection between academia and implementation.

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Two excursions are designed to provide an opportunity for the students to experience their learning, get intimate knowledge about issues related to equality and how it is changing with efforts to development. These visits are crucial for students' learning and positioning local communities and their efforts to improve livelihoods while navigating external forces. During these excursions, students will be able to interact with local communities and observe how social roles and power relations play an important role in determining development and social change, and in return how these changes affect Nepali society.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Articulate and critique prevailing discourses and theories surrounding development, social change and gender issues in Nepal and the world.
- Analyze the efforts to achieve gender equality and its relationship to development in Nepal and how various social, political, cultural and other global factors create opportunities and obstacles to these efforts.
- Examine the interlinkage between gender equality and other global issues of natural resource management, food security, human rights issues, global and household health, education and poverty.
- Understand and how gender roles are changing with social change and evaluate their impact on development efforts.
- Evaluate how global climate change, politics, affect the society in Nepal and relate it to broader world.
- Integrate information gathered from unique primary resources available in Nepal with the information presented by local scholars, field practitioners, and immersive learning and critically analyse their impact on social change.
- Demonstrate and articulate critical insights on the connections between a modern development agenda, changing social structure and construction, and how they relate to the discourse surrounding development, gender issues and equality in Nepal.

## Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of economic change and development through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

## Course Requirements

### Course Schedule

\*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

## Module 1: Development and Gender

Topics covered in this module: Introduction to Nepal, theories of development, institution of patriarchy, implication of gender inequality, analysis of Nepal's constitution, and underlying historical factors that have shaped gender relations in Nepal

This introductory module is designed to give an introduction to Nepal in general, different theories of development, global gender issues and the status of women in Nepal. As a predominantly patriarchal society, Nepal's cultural, social and political fabric and many policies, rights and laws surrounding gender rights are based on specific social construction devoted to the concepts of patriarchy. This module allows students to understand and evaluate the underlying historical factors that have created gender inequality in Nepal and worldwide.

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The weekly (end of the week) debriefing followed by student led discussions are designed to bring together the different components and learnings of the week. These discussions are crucial to providing a sincere approach to contextualizing societal norms, traditions, history and Nepal's law and how they impact social structure.

## **Module 2: Social change and the discourse on gender, rights and sexuality**

Topics covered in this module: Democracy and equality, sexuality and discourse surrounding rights of gender and sexual minorities in Nepal

Although Nepal is a strictly patriarchic society, gender rights and issues surrounding gender quality are rapidly changing. After Nepal opened itself to the outside world in 1951, new ideas of democracy and rights have developed which in turn have changed the discourse on gender, rights and sexuality. Through the lens of gender, students will be able to understand and analyze how the conversation has changed with time. Lectures from rights activists will open new understanding to the work and efforts to gender equality.

Visits to local organization for advocacy and LGBTQ rights are an important part of this module. These visits will provide an opportunity for the students to learn directly from practitioners, gain first-hand knowledge about institutions and the platforms they have created for social change, and build networks with professionals in the field.

The weekly debriefing followed by student led discussion is designed to create a meaningful conversation around activism in Nepal, the efforts and strategies used by the activists and their efforts to social change. These discussions are moderated to allow previous week's learning as a context to understand different challenges and potential to change.

## **Module 3: Development, gender and food security – Excursion to Sikkim or Workshop at Navdanya (Dehradun), India** (conditions permitting)

Topics covered in this module: Sustainable food systems, agroecology, gender and food security and sustainable development

It is accepted knowledge that women worldwide participate in food production, but do not have the opportunities to participate in the discourse and decision-making around food security and production. With modern development, emerging technologies and efforts to increase production, women are further removed from their ability and power in participating in food security. This week's readings are designed to help students understand the paradoxical nature of development in regard to food security, and the relationship between gender rights and food security. Students are encouraged to critically think about equality, sustainability, food security and gender rights.

The minor excursion to India is designed to provide hands-on experience in agroecology and food security. Students will have an opportunity to interact with local farmers' groups, women's groups and learn from them about their own perception of food security, development and change. Students will also participate in experiential learning to understand efforts to sustainable food systems and rights to food production.

To achieve the goal of this module, students will travel to one of two locations in India: to Sikkim, the completely organic state in India, and learn from local community members, or to Dehradun, to participate in a workshop at Navdanya farm:

In Sikkim, conversations with local farmers will help students understand how food systems and the relationship with agriculture is changing in the society. As a part of immersive learning, students will also spend a day working as a farmhand, which will help them understand the tools used for farming, efforts and logistics required, and how local communities are using their local resources to establish

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Sikkim as the organic state. At the end of the excursion, students will also visit a tea garden in Darjeeling and learn about tea production, impacts of climate change, and the society and economy surrounding tea farms.

Or, in Navdanya, near Dehradun, India, students will gain hands-on experience on biodiversity conservation, agroecology and seed saving, and gain deeper understanding of food security and ecology.

Daily debriefing is designed to help students connect their immersive learning with the assigned academic readings.

#### **Module 4: Inequality, poverty, gender and livelihood**

Topics covered in this module: Microcredit and livelihood, economic security, market opportunities, changing gender relations

There are multiple theories that relate economic opportunities among women and their direct impact on livelihood improvement. One of the big examples is Yunus' work on Grameen Bank that was designed to provide women the opportunity and resource to improve their economic status and livelihood. The readings and conversations with practitioners will help students understand how gender is closely tied with economic security, household education and improving livelihood.

Visits and interactions with saving and lending groups will give an opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge about the change in economic status of women. Students will be encouraged to think critically about how such opportunities can have long term impact on gender roles and gendered social relations. Readings aligned to the field visits will help students relate their learning from the examples in Nepal to broader theories of gender and livelihood improvement.

Weekly debriefing followed by student led discussions are designed to help students bring together the learning from previous weeks, develop insights into inequality, poverty, food security and legal rights and how they feed into each other. Interactions with beneficiaries and lending officers will help students understand the mechanisms behind micro-credit lending and savings.

#### **Module 5: Health, environment and natural resources**

The topics covered in this module are: Reproductive rights and health, nutrition, and environment

Health and gender issues are closely connected, not only for reproductive health, but also household and overall societal health. This week's readings and lectures from field practitioners allow students to understand this relationship, and analyze how improving gender equality can have significant impact on household and broader social health. Students are encouraged to relate their learning to broader ideas of gender and health and reflect upon the importance of gender equality to overall health of the society.

Field visit to local organizations working for reproductive and public health will provide an opportunity to the students to understand how development efforts, international aid, and government collaborate to improve health in rural and urban communities in Nepal. The first-hand knowledge about gaps and obstacles in these efforts will help students understand the potential challenges to improving health in Nepal and globally.

Climate change has some significant implications on Nepal's development, food and agriculture, natural resources, and vulnerability to disasters. Students will visit The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)'s knowledge park and learn about simple innovative ways to improve livelihood in the mountain communities of Nepal.

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Student led discussions and debriefs, along with field visits and readings are designed to bring together readings, lectures and field visits to allow students get a more holistic picture of development, gender and social change.

### **Module 6: Rural development and social change – Excursion to rural Nepal**

Topics covered in this module are: Community driven development, rural development, society and culture

This module is designed to understand the interconnectedness of different modules covered previously.

Students will be able to relate various developmental issues and their implications on rights, food security, livelihood improvement, health and resource management, and will be able to analyse and synthesize these aspects in a holistic manner to understand development and social change.

The major excursion will be helpful for students to see for themselves how these aspects are interlinked in rural communities of Nepal. Students will also be able to use different theoretical lenses, previous knowledge about gender issues to understand and complement with their experiential learning in the field. The opportunity to conduct a research during their major excursion will help students exercise their knowledge to develop their own critical thinking about equality, development and changing societal norms and identity.

Students will visit a remote part of Nepal, where they will live with the community at homestays. As a part of the major excursion, students will be required to work with the community on a small community development project. Such project will be determined after the conversations between students and local community. The objective of such project is to give students an opportunity to understand local priorities and needs and help them navigate rural Nepali society.

\*The seminar concludes on return to Kathmandu, with the final development paper and final student led discussions that allow students get a more holistic picture of development, gender and social change prior to the start of the ISP or internship.

#### **Required Readings for this course include (arranged in order by which they are assigned):**

Whelpton, J. (2005). A history of Nepal. Cambridge University Press.

Subedi, M. (2011). Caste system: Theories and practices in Nepal. Himalayan Journal of Sociology and Anthropology, 4, 134-159.

Gellner, D. N. (2016). The idea of Nepal. The Mahesh Chandra Lecture, 11.

Pandey, T. R., Mishra, S., Chemjong, D., Pokhrel, S., & Rawal, N. (2006). Forms and patterns of social discrimination in Nepal: a report.

Doniger, W. 2015. Chapter 1: Working with available light. In Hindus, 17-49. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt. Ltd.

Kim, E. K. (2012). Two perspectives on gender equality discourse in the context of international development The human rights-based approach (HRBA) vs. the economic approach. Gender Studies and Policy Review vol. 5.

Uprety, S. 2018. Patriarchy and the politics of gender identity in Nepal. In Current Dynamics in Transforming Nepal. Dahal et al. ed. 454-465. New Delhi. Adroit Publishers.

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- Nowack, S. (2015). Gender Discrimination in Nepal and How Statelessness Hampers Identity Formation. Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion.
- Mishra, M. 2018. Sexuality in the making: Nepali rural women's experience. In *Current Dynamics in Transforming Nepal*. Dahal et al. ed. 439-453. New Delhi. Adroit Publishers.
- Singh, S., Pant, S. B., Dhakal, S., Pokhrel, S., & Mullany, L. C. (2012). Human rights violations among sexual and gender minorities in Kathmandu, Nepal: a qualitative investigation. *BMC international health and human rights*, 12(1), 7.
- Chaudhary, B. 2017. A comparative study on women empowerment in Nepal: Ethnic perspective. In *Understanding Nepal in contemporary times*. Jaiswal, P ed. 221-244. New Delhi. Synergy Books India.
- Kanel, K. R., & Niraula, D. R. (2017). Can rural livelihood be improved in Nepal through community forestry? *Banko janakari*, 14(1), 19-26.
- Tamang, S., Paudel, K. P., & Shrestha, K. K. (2014). Feminization of agriculture and its implications for food security in rural Nepal. *Journal of Forest and Livelihood*, 12(1), 20-32.
- Chakrabarti, A. (2010). A critical review of agrarian reforms in Sikkim. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23-26.
- Joshi, P. K., Gulati, A., BIRTHAL, P. S., & Tewari, L. (2005). Agricultural diversification in South Asia: Patterns, determinants and policy implications. In *Economic reforms and food security: the impact of trade and technology in South Asia* (pp. 259-287). Haworth Press Inc. New York.
- Hussain, A., Rasul, G., Mahapatra, B., & Tuladhar, S. (2016). Household food security in the face of climate change in the Hindu-Kush Himalayan region. *Food Security*, 8(5), 921-937.
- McDonald, B. A., & Stukenbrock, E. H. (2016). Rapid emergence of pathogens in agro-ecosystems: global threats to agricultural sustainability and food security. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B*, 371(1709), 20160026.
- Eriksen, S. H., Nightingale, A. J., & Eakin, H. (2015). Reframing adaptation: The political nature of climate change adaptation. *Global Environmental Change*, 35, 523-533.
- Shrestha, A. 2018. Perceived impacts of climate change and sociocultural practices for adaptation. In *Current Dynamics in Transforming Nepal*. Dahal et al. ed. 557-569. New Delhi. Adroit Publishers.
- Stark, O., & Stark, O. (1991). The migration of labor.
- Sunam, R. K., & McCarthy, J. F. (2016). Reconsidering the links between poverty, international labour migration, and agrarian change: critical insights from Nepal. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 43(1), 39-63.
- Jaquet, S., Shrestha, G., Kohler, T., & Schwilch, G. (2016). The effects of migration on livelihoods, land management, and vulnerability to natural disasters in the Harpan watershed in western Nepal. *Mountain research and development*, 36(4), 494-505.
- Furuta, M., & Salway, S. (2006). Women's position within the household as a determinant of maternal health care use in Nepal. *International family planning perspectives*, 17-27.
- Esty, K. (2011). Lessons from Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank. *OD Pract*, 43(1), 24-28.

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Qiulin Zhang, M. P. A. (2004). *Grameen Bank: Taking Capitalism to the Poor*.

Kattel, S. 2018. Does Law exist in the informal (stateless) society? A study of community laws and justice system of the Kisan of Eastern Nepal. In *Current Dynamics in Transforming Nepal*. Dahal et al. ed. 122-134. New Delhi. Adroit Publishers.

Kapil Dev Regmi & Pierre Walter (2017) Modernisation theory, ecotourism policy, and sustainable development for poor countries of the global South: perspectives from Nepal, *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 24:1, 1-14

Lama, A. K., & Job, H. (2014). Protected areas and road development: Sustainable development discourses in the Annapurna conservation area, Nepal. *Erdkunde*, 229-250.

*Note: Additional recommended readings are available on Moodle.*

## Evaluation and Grading Criteria

### Assessment:

The Seminar consists of 30 hours of formal classroom lectures and more than 50 hours of field visits, informal talks, and group and individual discussions. Student performance is assessed on the basis of the papers, contributions to group discussions, thoughtful journals, and enthusiastic initiative in his or her own learning process. The final grade is given by the Academic Director, according to each student's active reflections and involvement as instantiated in their papers and according to his/her degree of enthusiastic exploration of and authentic insights into the academic and intellectual themes of the program.

### Description of Assignments:

Students are required to complete seven weekly journals, complete three written essays (development papers) and a village project. Additionally, in conjunction with their *Field Methods and Ethics* course, students are also required to complete one field project during their major excursion village stay. Participation is also an important component of this course.

1. Weekly Journal: Every week, students are required to complete a weekly journal (7 weeks of journal writing in total). Journal entries should be thoughtful and constructive, elaborating student's experiences, self-reflection and ideas. Journals can include reading materials, lectures and field visit on that particular week. The objective of these journals is to help students position themselves in Nepali society, allow self-reflection and understanding of their own biases and perceptions, and help them look at the experience in a more constructive manner.
2. Written Essays (development papers): Students are required to complete three essays during the semester. In an effort to make sure that everyone is on the same page from the outset, all students will complete a reaction paper by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week. The second essay will be due at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> week, and the final paper will be due at the end of 9<sup>th</sup> week. The goal of these papers is to demonstrate students' understanding of development, gender issues, and social change in Nepal. For example, for week 2, students will be required to write a paper analyzing the discourse surrounding patriarchy, gender and sexuality in Nepal. Students can choose general topics, or specific issues pertaining to these topics for their paper. Similarly, for the second paper, students can choose topics related to food security, sustainable development, migration of labour, environment, etc. or any specific issue that is interesting to them. Students are encouraged to write their final paper related to their ISP/internship topic/field.

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Papers should be both a summary of the issues and critical in nature. Critical responses may present questions, rebuttals, syntheses of key ideas, or critical analyses of themes in the readings. The essays should be 4-5 pages, not including bibliography, appendixes, etc.

3. Village Project: This assignment will be briefed at the beginning of our major excursion. The project integrates fieldwork techniques such as interviewing, participant observation, and possibly even participatory rural appraisal, as part of the process. It requires students to communicate and interact with local community members, navigate and understand the priorities and needs of the local community and work on a small community development project with the local youth/community members. This project will be decided through interactions with the community members and upon understanding the needs of the local community. Students are given the chance, through rural homestays, to participate directly in village life; this sometimes takes the form of helping with farm work or being part of a village festival.
4. Participation: Participation is not the same as attendance. All students are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the seminar. This means asking pertinent questions to the course's guest lecturers, engaging in discussion and analysis during lectures, group discussions and on excursions. Students are expected to complete the required reading in a timely fashion, and to demonstrate their understanding of texts through reflection, writing, and discussion.
  - Weekly Journal - 35% (5% each)
  - Essays (Development papers) - 45% (15% each)
  - Village Study Project - 10%
  - Participation - 10%

#### Grading Scale

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

#### **Expectations and Policies**

Show up prepared: Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.

Have assignments completed on schedule and done accordingly to the specified requirements and submit them in Moodle. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.

Ask questions in class and in the field: These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak. Use informal gathering, field visits, visits to organizations as an opportunity to learn, build networks and engage with professionals in Nepal.

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Attendance: All students are required to attend all lectures at the SIT Nepal schoolhouse in Kathmandu and to participate in all discussion and analysis sessions. All excursions are mandatory, and students must discuss absences with the Academic Director before the planned departure.

Participation: Participation is not the same as attendance. All students are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the seminar, like asking pertinent questions, actively participating in the discussions and demonstrate thoughtful analysis and reflection.

**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 Handbook given to you at Orientation.

**Disability Services:** For information about and support from Disability Services (DS) to facilitate an accessible educational experience, please contact [disabilityservices@sit.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@sit.edu) or +1-802-258-3390. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services can be found on the DS website at: <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.

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