

**Research Methods and Ethics**  
ANTH-3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:  
**Uganda: Global Development Studies**

**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 Research Methods and Ethics course is designed to prepare students to undertake independent field-based research or an internship experience in a development organization within Uganda's cultural setting. Readings and field-based activities are designed to build skills in qualitative research methods, project selection, and conceptualization in Uganda. Students consider the norms and expectations of ethical field engagement and reciprocity, while reflecting critically on their role as outsiders in the research process.

In addition, the course provides the theoretical and practical frameworks to facilitate successful adjustment to life in Uganda and to enhance student capacity to accomplish challenging tasks in a new and unfamiliar setting while conducting independent field-based research or an internship at an organization that is ethically, methodologically and analytically sound.

The course integrates lectures, readings, and related discussions, including those associated with the development studies seminar and Luganda language instruction. The course includes discussions related to coping with life in Uganda and students' reactions to the overall cultural environment. The course includes a focus on the structures for community work, entry points and methods of entry, change agents, and community participation. Field visits to communities in western and/or eastern Uganda provide students with opportunities to practice skills in ethnographic research approaches.

Students have individual sessions with the academic director to brainstorm possibilities and to obtain guidance as their ISP plans or internship ideas evolve.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to function effectively and comfortably in a range of social, cultural, and institutional contexts within Uganda;
- Apply knowledge of different research approaches and research tools needed for development studies in Uganda, with an emphasis on qualitative and participatory approaches;
- Exhibit awareness of the practical considerations and challenges inherent in development policy research work in the Ugandan context;
- Develop a culturally-appropriate and intellectually-rigorous ISP proposal grounded in current debates and relevant literature; and
- Engage in an Independent Study Project (ISP) or conduct an internship in Uganda using appropriate methods in an ethical manner.

## Course Schedule

Each module consists of a set of field activities, assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. Readings help students generate questions and deepen student's knowledge of particular aspects of Uganda's culture. Additional readings are available at the SIT resource center and may be assigned based on individual student ISP or internship needs.

## Module I: Cultural adjustment: challenges and coping Strategies

In pairs, students are assigned a drop-off exercise with a view to prepare them on how to navigate the urban centers. The topics assigned are premised on the key aspects of life that students engage with. The topics include but are not limited to; transport, banking, forex bureaus, markets, communications, restaurants/eating, the media (broadcast and print), clinics and hospitals, and entertainment. This field activity is intended to provide you with hands-on experience with the adjustment process and cross-cultural coping skills. It is also designed in a way that helps students gauge or test their data collection methodologies in a new urban setting in Kampala. You are expected to be creative (using a combination of data collection tools) in gathering all the necessary information on the assigned topic. As you investigate your topics, pay close attention to behaviors, communication styles, and details about the environment. You will report the details of your observations to the rest of the group at the end of each exercise. Your grade will be based on the level of description, detailed information, evidence of engagement, and depth of cultural analysis of your topic as evidenced by the oral presentation.

During the homestay, students continue to navigate their cultural adjustment and learn strategies that help them to overcome these challenges.

### Assigned Reading:

- K. Oberg, (2006). "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environment" in *Practical Anthropology*, 7: 177-182
- L. Robert Kohls, (1984). From *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Intercultural press
- Kohls R. (1988) *The Values American Live By*

## **Module II: Exploring and examining the dominant research paradigms**

This module begins with class discussions of the assumptions and nature of dominant research paradigms. This is followed by examining alternative discourses on what is presumed the best research approach in the study of development studies. The articles provided (see required readings) are the premise of the discussion of the methodological critiques of the dominant research paradigm.

Field sessions in this module are organized to examine the different development themes with a view to encourage students to think of their own ISP or internship options. They learn rapport building, time management, and initial design of research questions on critical development issues. In one exercise, they critique the data collection tools used by the World Bank. This allows them to also question their own notions and perceptions.

Field sessions:

- i) Visit to The Aids Support Organization (TASO)
- ii) Visit to a Child Malnutrition Treatment Centre
- iii) Visit to Parliament to assess the role of Parliamentarians in the design of national development policies.

*Assigned Reading:*

Ferguson, J. (1990). *The anti-politics machine: "development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. Cambridge University Press. Preface, Introduction and

Ch 2, pp 3-73 Easterly, W. (2014). *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor*, New York: Basic Books

Instrument of the Social Capital Assessment Tool (excerpt; sections 3 & 4; pages 19-23)  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOCIALCAPITAL/Resources/Social-Capital-Assessment-Tool--SOCAT--annexI.pdf>

Cornwell, A. (...). "Towards Participatory Practice: Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and the Participatory Process" in *Participatory Research in Health: Issues and Experiences* Koning, K and Martin, M pp 94-129

*Assignment: Family Tree and Village Map (see below for additional details)*

## **Module III: Participant observation and thick description**

This module picks up from the previous module to explore the ways in which ethnography and participant observation addresses some of the criticism of the dominant research paradigm. We will discuss and practice some of the practical joys and challenges of conducting ethnography in a Ugandan cultural setting. Reflection is conducted on what data collection works and how else data can be gathered. Self-critiques of cultural adjustment are further processed. We delve deeper into participant observation as a method, introduce Clifford Geertz's thick description/taking ethnographic notes, and

brainstorm ideas regarding how to use this method effectively in a rural Ugandan setting in preparation for the rural homestay.

Field Sessions:

- i) Visit Nakivale Refugee Settlement where students conduct focus group discussions and practice participant observation.
- ii) Visit the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) village projects where students shadow community health workers, visit rural health centers, model farmers, environmental projects and entrepreneurship initiatives.
- iii) In Rwanda comparative visits to the MDG village projects are conducted.
- iv) Visits to genocide memorial sites are also undertaken with a view to further exercise participant observation and thick description.

Assigned Reading:

- Bernard, H. R. (2006). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. Chapter 7: —Participant Observation.
- Scott J. C. (1990). *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Preface and Chapter I
- Yin, R. (2016) *Qualitative Research from the Start to Finish*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: Guilford Press Chapter 6-8
- Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture in Geertz Clifford (1973) “The Interpretation of Cultures Selected Essays”*. Basic Books Inc,
- O’Donoghue, T. (2006). *Planning Your Qualitative Research Project: An Introduction to Interpretivist Research in Education*, Taylor and Francis. Chapter 1-4 and Chapter 7.

**Module IV: Interviewing and conducting focus groups discussions**

This module will cover ways of conducting interviews effectively in a Uganda cultural setting. Topics to be covered include communicating and building rapport effectively and in culturally appropriate ways and employing research assistance. How to navigate language and cultural barriers. In this module, students are introduced to research ethics and designing of data collection tools such as interview schedules, questionnaires/surveys, and observation check lists.

Assigned Reading

- Lyn Carson and Kath Fisher. (2006). “Raising the Bar on Criticality: Student’s Critical Reflection in an Internship Program” in the *Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 30 no. 5 pp 700-723
- Glesne, C. (2005). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Chapter 4: —Making Words Fly: Development Understanding through Interviewing and Chapter 6: —But Is It Ethical? Learning to Do Right
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Sage Chapter 4
- Rossman, G. and Rallis, S. (2003). *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **Module V: Constructing data collection tools, collecting and managing data**

This module explores the processes of constructing quantitative and qualitative data collection tools and the preliminary steps of managing and analyzing primary data. During the field visits, students generate their own interview schedules and observation checklists, and design data analysis tools which may include computer aided data analysis tools, Participatory Rural Appraisal and Rapid Rural Appraisal tools, narrative analysis, content analysis or in some cases quantitative data analysis packages. Students primarily practice and hone these skills during the rural homestay.

#### *Assigned Reading:*

Yin, R. (2015). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Guilford (read Chapter 2 pp 27-52, “Getting Ready to Do Qualitative Research”)

Riessman, C. (2010) in “Doing Narrative Analysis” in Atkinson, P etal. *Qualitative Research Methods*, London: Sage pp 201-211 (Chapter 52)

### **Module VI: Internship/ISP Design and Planning**

This module provides students with the opportunity to identify a respective institution, partner, or NGO he/she will work with during the internship or ISP. Preliminary documentary analysis and literature review will be undertaken with a view to locating the internship or organizational partner within the development paradigm they select. NGO drop-off for rapport building, design of delegation plans, critical reflection, and aspects of cross-cultural negotiations in a Ugandan setting are discussed. Office etiquette, confidentiality, code of conduct, and execution of duties will also be discussed.

*Assigned readings as determined by the academic director and student according to project/internship.*

### **Module VII: Research ethics and ethical challenges and internship**

This module introduces students to SIT research ethics policy and the ethics of research in Uganda. Brief capstone exercises on practical field-based ethical dilemmas in rural areas are conducted. Students review past ISP or internship reports in their specific areas of interest with a view to identify the way consent forms are used as opposed to verbal consent from respondents. Students review ethics policies related to protection of human subjects and informed consent.

#### *Assigned Reading:*

SIT/World Learning, Human Subjects Review Policies and Procedure.

Uganda National Council for Science and Technology research application requirements.

### **Module VIII: Conducting Field Work and Writing the ISP or Internship Report**

In this final module, discussions on how to finally engage with the field are done. Dealing with field work blues, managing time and triangulating data collection methods for optimal

results is done. This module draws on all previous modules in addressing rapport building, cultural adjustments and how to navigate communities.

*Assigned reading:*

Reference to any ISP or Internship report that is instructive to the student's work (the AD may advise on which reports to read).

Yin, R. (2015). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Guilford (read Chapter 2 Part II pp 118-135, "Working in the Field")

Fine, G.A. (2010). "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research" in Atkinson, P et al. *Qualitative Research Methods*, London: Sage pp 251-271 (Chapter 33)

**Assignments (see program schedule for due dates):**

Family tree	10%
Village map	10%
Participant observation and Thick Description Paper (methods section)	20%
Participatory rural appraisal rapid rural appraisal paper	20%
ISP proposal	30%
Participation	20%

**Family Tree:**

Initiate a conversation with adult family members about their family tree. Through this conversation you will get introduced to your homestay family and you will explore Uganda's family structure. Beyond this however you begin to gain insights into social relations and how they both shape and are shaped by non-capitalist relations of production. In addition you begin to practice and gain insights into cultural norms regarding communication: breaking the ice, use of silence and pauses, vocabulary and other communication barriers. The experience of this assignment will inform conversation in the thematic seminar and in the RME seminar. Your paper should be written in two sections. Section one describes the family structure; section two you will reflect on the process of conducting this assignment: what worked well and what did not; strategies that you employed to ensure you were successful.

**Village Map:**

Find a village leader in your homestay area and explore with them the important social and economic infrastructure in their village; when it was established, what purposes it serves, who owns/manages it and how it is financed and maintained. This assignment helps students to practice further interviewing skills, and the process of collecting data in a semi urban setting. It builds upon some of the principles and methods of data collection that we cover in the RME seminar. In addition it helps students to explore the social infrastructure and physical surrounding of their homestay setting. Your paper should have a map of the area and a two-page typed reflection of the process through which you gathered your data. Consider what worked and what did not work and why. *Font 12, double spaced.*

**Participant Observation and Thick Description paper (methods section):**

Compose an analytical reflection of participant observation and thick description as methods of data collection in a rural setting such as Uganda. What potential does participant observation and thick description have over and above conventional/dominant research methods? What challenges did you encounter and how did you mitigate/overcome them? *Typed, five pages, double spaced, font 12, one-inch margins.*

**PRA/RRA****ISP proposal:**

Finding a topic for your ISP or internship organization may be a very challenging and a very enriching, learning experience. Students are encouraged to begin thinking through their ISP ideas from the beginning of the semester and to utilize all available resources: homestay family members, lecturers, development practitioners, and program staff. Time slots will be available for one-on-one meetings with the academic director to discuss the possibilities and the process of finalizing your topic or placement. Students will keep an ISP planning journal for this purpose to record ideas, leads, contacts, and details of developing their practicum. This is to help you, and will not be for submission. The outcome of this journal will be a detailed 3-5 page ISP proposal. For practicum-based ISPs, the proposal indicates the organization you will work with, their mission, what your role will be throughout the ISP, information about your practicum advisor, what you hope to accomplish, why, and your proposed itinerary.

**Processing sessions:**

These are student-led discussion sessions, about 1 ½ hours long. Students gauge the key issues in the group since the previous processing session and facilitate a discussion around these issues. Examples include group dynamics, cultural adjustment, homestay issues, health and safety, site visits, readings, lectures etc. It may even be a single issue, if it should be one of much importance within the group. You could use games, activities of the like that you have used before in summer camp or in school. You could break up into smaller groups to facilitate discussion. The choice of what and how you do it is entirely yours. The processing session is a safe, open space for students to do what they think is important to the group. *10%, see below for the detailed due dates.*

**Attendance & Participation**

This class draws heavily upon student participation. Students are expected to be well prepared to share with colleagues and the instructor! At a minimum, you are expected to be on time for attendance at all classes, be prepared to discuss readings, actively engage in field assignments, and meet all deadlines. You are also expected to show initiative in meeting with the academic director to discuss your practicum and any concerns you may have (be prepared in advance for these meetings), establish and keep meetings with your ISP advisor and/or members of the organization with which you will work, and be professional, culturally appropriate, and respectful in your work.

**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

### **Grading Criteria**

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.

Your name, date, name of the assignment, and the title of the paper (if applicable) are required always. All assignments should be submitted on standard size paper (A4 or US letter size), free from fraying or tears, and typed or written neatly in ink (when applicable for the latter). Remember to proofread all assignments for clarity, organization, spelling, grammar, etc., as these are taken into account for the final grade. Assignments can be written in French or English, unless specified. Grammatical errors in French will not affect students’ grades as long as ideas can be clearly understood.

### **Class Participation**

Students are expected to participate fully in all program components. This includes participating in classroom discussions, all outside of class activities, and all group assignments.

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.

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.

**Disability Services:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [disabilityservices@sit.edu](mailto: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>.