Course Description

“Method” is a misleading word. It suggests a means to attain research findings but not the research itself. But methods are more than mere instrumentalities. If we do not choose the right methods, we will lack meaningful research outcomes. Good methods are synonymous with good research.

And if we do our research in a way that harms people, even if unintentionally so, then we are working against our own efforts to promote a better society and better health. Therefore, any good researcher needs to understand methods and ethics. That is the topic of this course.

We will be discussing and practicing a variety of research methods, including ethnography (also called participant observation, or qualitative research, or naturalistic research), interviewing, surveys, videography and video elicitation, life histories, and more. As has been the case for many years, the field of Public Health has utilized more methodologies from the social sciences as a way to learn about people’s daily lived realities, contextualize peoples’ needs, and promote interventions that more effectively address health concerns.

The central fieldwork component of this course is the Case Study project, a group exercise focused on investigating a research theme across all four country sites. You will also conduct individual Data Collection Exercises in which you will experiment with different data-collection methods on a regular basis. Student research and critiques will culminate in a final Research Proposal at the end of the semester.

Class Format
In each country, students will encounter—and be confronted by—different realities in which human health, understood as disease, illness, and wellbeing, are at stake. To tackle these complex situations, this course will be quite different from those typically taught at a university (or even in a single country!). Instead of exploring various themes stretched out over a whole semester, key topics and methods will be reiterated cyclically within each country site. This means that students will immediately find they learn multiple methods, but have those understandings deepen and complicate as the semester progresses.

Within each country cycle, students will tackle and compare these themes by reflecting on the unique or overlapping questions they pose with respect to: (1) research methodologies, (2) ethics, and (3) techniques for analysing, interpreting, and presenting collected data. The aim of this approach is to provide students with the practical tools with which to research and make sense of these realities in temporal and spatial proximity to their experiences of them. Nevertheless, as the semester progresses, we will together learn to understand and see these spheres in increasingly sophisticated and nuanced ways.

**Learning Outcomes**

The *Community Health Research Methods* course comprises 60 class hours of instruction (4 credits). In this course, students will gain an understanding of community-based health and medical anthropological research, and apply methodological and ethical approaches to investigating Case Study topics in cross-cultural contexts. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Formulate well-crafted research questions, and assess and choose appropriate research methodologies to explore them.
- Apply community-based approaches, principles, designs, and tools to assignments and case study research opportunities in the field in each country.
- Understand key ethical issues and challenges to conducting research with human beings.
- Evaluate key challenges faced by both participants and researchers (individually and in a team) in engaging in community-based research projects.
- Analyze qualitative data thematically and effectively.
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

Note: Where decimal points are used in grading, below 0.5 will be rounded down, while 0.5 and above will be rounded up. For example, 93.4 will be an A-, while 93.5 will be an A.

Expectations and Policies

Class preparation

This program is built upon the conviction that experiences result in deep insights and powerful learning. Course assignments are created to facilitate such first-hand learning opportunities. Dialogue in class about these insights and participation in these activities is critical. For this reason, your participation is required. As a learning community, each one of us influences the learning environment. Please take responsibility for your role in this environment and come to class prepared and ready to engage with others in a positive and thought-provoking manner.

Participation

IHP is an experiential learning program. You have to show up to have the experience. As such, participation is a minimum expectation. Students are expected to attend all classes, guest lectures, and field activities unless they have a medical excuse that has been communicated and approved of by IHP staff, faculty, or Fellow. The Fellow will act as a TA for the class and will keep attendance. Missing one class means a small makeup assignment (as determined by the faculty); missing two classes means a sizable makeup assignment; missing three classes means a grade reduction of 2% of the total course grade. Failure to attend classes or field activities means that a student may not be eligible for credit from their universities, or could result in program dismissal.

Policy on deadlines

Coursework assignments are due on the deadlines indicated in the assignment handouts. Work is due at the start of the day on which it is due, either during the Person
of the Day (POD) announcements, or at the beginning of class. Unexcused late work will result in a lower grade one full level per day (for example, a B will drop to a B-). No exceptions will be permitted; extensions are not given unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exact deadlines for assignments will be confirmed in class.

*Keep an additional copy of all work you turn in*, so as to avoid unexpected disaster and significant inconvenience for all parties involved; this may mean photocopying or scanning any handwritten assignments. Assignments that are not easily legible will be returned ungraded.

**Technology in the classroom**

Electronic devices are critical tools for learning and communication, but our IHP courses prioritize engaged conversations unhindered by personal electronic devices. *Students are expected to keep cell phones, laptop computers, and other devices out of sight, sound, and mind during class sessions*—except under extenuating circumstances that have been discussed in advance with the faculty member or that the electronic device is part of a specific workshop. As is always the case, students with accommodations through SIT are welcome to use technology as is appropriate.

**Academic integrity**

Academic dishonesty is the failure to maintain academic integrity. It includes, but is not limited to, obtaining or giving unauthorized aid on an examination, having unauthorized prior knowledge of the content of an examination, doing work for another student, having work done by another person for the student, and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty can result in severe academic penalty, including failure of the course and/or dismissal from the institution/program.

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person’s ideas or product as one’s own. Examples of plagiarism are: copying verbatim and without attribution all or parts of another’s written work; using phrases, charts, figures, illustrations, computer programs, websites without citing the source; paraphrasing ideas, conclusions or research without citing the course; and using all or part of a literary plot, poem, film, musical score, computer program, websites or other artistic product without attributing the work to its creator.

Students can avoid unintentional plagiarism by carefully following accepted scholarly practices. Notes taken for papers and research projects should accurately record sources of material to cited, quoted, paraphrased or summarized, and research or critical papers should acknowledge these sources in references or by use of footnotes.

Violations of IHP/SIT Study Abroad’s academic integrity policy are handled as violations of the student code of conduct, and will result in disciplinary action. Please discuss this with faculty if you have any questions.
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.

Course Schedule*

*Topics, readings, and assignment details are subject to change, as deemed necessary by faculty.

All course readings will be available in Dropbox in electronic format at the beginning of the semester. Required readings will also be available as a hard copy at the beginning of each respective country stay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Class topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>RME-1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overview and interview methods</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key concepts: qualitative, quantitative, emic/etic, naturalistic research</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>RME-2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>RME</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>RME-6 Video, visual and sensory methods</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Key concepts: multivocal text, elicitation, typicality</td>
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<tr>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>RME-7 Making sense of data</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key concepts: patterns, holism, data</td>
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<tr>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>RME-8 Research debacles</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key concepts: culture shock, language shock, rapport</td>
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<tr>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>RME 9 Anthro methods applied to public health research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key concepts: community based research, lay knowledge, recruitment and retention</td>
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Assignments
Assignments (except for hard copy assignments) should be submitted via the course’s flash drive. The flash drive should contain 4 country folders to classify assignments. Please do not create any subfolders inside the country folders and do not password protect your documents. Students may never use email to submit assignments, per SIT IT Policy.

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL ASSIGNMENTS AS A MICROSOFT WORD FILE to allow for in-document comments. All assignments are to be double spaced with one-inch margins in 12 point Times New Roman font. The American Psychological Association (APA) referencing and citation style is preferred.

When using APA format, follow the author-date method of in-text citation. This means that the author’s last name and the year of publication for the source should appear in the text, for example, (Jones, 1998), and a complete reference should appear in the reference list at the end of the paper. If you are referring to an idea from another work but not directly quoting the material, or making reference to an entire book, article or other work, you only have to make reference to the author and year of publication and not the page number in your in-text reference. All sources that are cited in the text must appear in the reference list at the end of the paper.

The flash drive should be labeled with the student’s code name (tape and sharpies are provided). Code names are set up at the launch in DC. You will keep the same code name throughout the semester. IF FACULTY CANNOT IDENTIFY WHOSE FLASH DRIVE IT IS BEFORE OPENING IT, THEY WILL CONSIDER THE ASSIGNMENT NOT HANDED IN. You may not turn in your work on someone else’s flash drive—be prepared to replace the flash drive provided if it is lost or broken.

Please include your code name on every page of the assignment itself in the header, and the file name should have the following naming convention:

    CodeName_Country_NameOfAssignment.doc
    e.g. Basil_India_CaseStudyReflection.doc

For hard copy assignments, submit the original. KEEP A COPY OF ALL WORK YOU TURN IN ON YOUR COMPUTER, so as to avoid unexpected disaster and significant
inconvenience for all parties involved; this may mean scanning or photographing any hard copy assignments (and keeping a copy in .jpg or .pdf). Assignments that are not easily legible will be returned ungraded. For visual/handwritten assignments, please take clear photographs of these and submit as digital files (.jpg or .pdf).

**Deadlines / Point Breakdown**
*Topics, readings, and assignment details are subject to change, as deemed necessary by faculty. Case study presentations will always take place toward the end of each country stay.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>LENGTH</th>
<th>PTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group work</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Case study: USA</td>
<td>Last week of every country program</td>
<td>10-12 min</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case study: India</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 min</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case study: South Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 min</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study: Brazil</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 min</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individual work</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Case study reflections: Each student will submit a one- or two-paragraph reflection on each case study project, addressing such questions as “What worked well and why?” “What didn’t work and why?” “How might the research be extended?” etc.</td>
<td>Last week of every country program</td>
<td>One or two paragraphs per reflection (total of four reflections)</td>
<td>8 (two points per reflection)</td>
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**Data collection exercises**

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<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<th>PTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>USA case study day</td>
<td>Journal hand-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview schedule</td>
<td>India case study day</td>
<td>10 questions + 1-2 page reflection</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk along (sound or mapping)</td>
<td>South Africa case study day</td>
<td>Map/Sound + 1.5-2 page reflection</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual project</td>
<td>Brazil case study day</td>
<td>6-8 photos + ~300-400 words captions</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom participation. Includes performance on quizzes about readings</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
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Case Study Presentations

1. Group presentations
Case study projects will be completed in groups of 5-6 students, and will be used to apply the methodological concepts and tools covered in readings, lectures, and class exercises to the investigation of real health issues in the communities where we will be located, across the four countries. Case studies are country-specific, and the country coordinators arrange the logistics; therefore, they may be organized differently in the U.S., India, South Africa, and Brazil, respectively. They provide an opportunity to learn about and apply the methods discussed in the course, in addition to learning about a particular health issue in greater depth. Given time constraints and potential language barriers, faculty and country coordinators have pre-determined a number of research themes. Students will be organized into Case Study Teams, with an associated case study research topic, in Washington, D.C. These will be maintained throughout the length of the semester. Country coordinators and local faculty, in addition to me, will consult and coordinate closely with you on an ongoing basis regarding ways in which to integrate the concepts and tools learned in the course into your research projects.

Objective: Learn how to approach your given topic with a clear research question, and a sensible plan for data collection and analysis.

Format:
1. Fieldwork: Depending on local time and logistics, generally four 1/2 days will be dedicated to Case Study fieldwork per country, except in Washington D.C., which will have 1 1/2 day.

2. Preparation: You will be provided dedicated time to work in groups and prepare your presentation. In addition, Country Coordinators and I will be available for questions and issues.
3. **Presentation:** During the final days in each country, your Case Study team will present its findings of the previous month’s work, and fellow students and faculty will have the opportunity to pose questions and offer comments about your research.

**Logistics:** Research sites and participants will be determined by the respective Country Coordinators. In some instances, the actual research agenda will be pre-determined.

**Requirements:** Groups have substantial creative freedom to craft their presentations to best fit their projects. However, this is a methods class and methodological issues should be discussed in some way, and take up at least 25% of your presentation.

The rest of the presentation will be taken up with discussing your group’s findings. If you so choose, and your research experience warrants it, you can devote up to around 60% of your presentation to methodological issues.

**Questions to consider about your research findings in your presentation:**
1. What were your preliminary conclusions?
2. What were the most interesting and or exciting findings? Why do you consider these findings to be significant in this way?
3. What were your specific research question and sub-questions (if any)?

**Questions to consider about your research process in your presentation:**
1. What class readings most inspired your research?
2. What research methods did you use? Please tell in some detail how you carried out your research. That is, do not just say, “I did ethnography” but say what you specifically observed, how you made records of your observations, and why you chose to observe these issues.
3. What methodological problems did you encounter? You might describe, e.g., how you chose to interview informants, but they responded vaguely to your questions. In that case, tell what you did, or what you would do in the future, to overcome this problem.
4. What ethical issues did you negotiate during the course of the research?
5. If you were to extend and deepen this research, what would you do, what would you need to make it happen, and how might you do it differently?
6. In what ways can you connect your own case study work to the other four case studies?

**NB:** For the first Case Study Group Presentations, keep the focus on the particular country. Thereafter, in countries 2-4, Case Study Groups should present on their country module as well as a comparative analysis of their theme across the other country contexts they have experienced. For instance, if you have a 25-minute presentation, 20 minutes should be on the country you are in and 5 minutes should be for comparison.
Data Collection Exercise

**NB:** You will hand in your field notes journal on Case Study Presentation Day in each country. These will be briefly reviewed and returned.

You will conduct an additional individual Data Collection Exercise in each country in which you get to explore a particular research method.

   
   Due: *Will debrief this as a class (No grade)*

   Further details of this will be given at launch, but this will be an ungraded observational assignment aimed at giving you a taste of making ethnographic observations and field notes centring on the urban environment of Washington D.C. This will help familiarize you with your fieldwork journals – a central tool in the skills you will learn throughout the course.

2. **India: Interview Schedule**
   
   Due: *Case Study Presentation Day*

   Asking questions in a way that is appropriate, easily comprehensible and not 'leading' is an acquired skill that develops both through the careful development of questions prior to an interview and a thoughtful awareness during the interview process of how your questions are being received and mis/understood. An interview schedule is a set of themes, topics and questions to be addressed in an interview—a structure for the conversation.

   - Come up with a simple overarching research question – this can be the same as your case study question if you prefer or some other area you would like to explore. Prepare a list of roughly 10 open-ended interview questions. Consider carefully the cultural context and appropriateness of your topic. The questions will be a guide. You can ask additional questions as appropriate during the interview—in fact, do plan to do so.

   - Ask one of your homestay family members, or someone from the India team if you prefer and they have time, if you can interview them. Explain the purpose of the interview, the overarching theme and give them an idea of how long it should take (approx. 30 minutes, up to 45 minutes).

   - During the interview jot down their responses as accurately as possible. You will not be able to take down everything word for word, but if they say something that seems especially important, do take it down as an exact quote. If it is acceptable to them, you may also make a recording (an audio recording) of the interview.
- Write a 1 page (2 maximum) reflection on the process and what you learned about when asking questions. Discuss ways that you learned to ask questions so as to elicit better answers. Be specific and include specific good and less-than-good questions along with the answers they elicited.

3. South Africa: **Walk along ethnography exercise (either mapping or soundscape).**

   **Due:** *Case study presentation day*

   For safety reasons, this exercise should be done in pairs, although the assignment itself is individually written and graded. Think about a small research question you would like to approach having to do with **community and health**. Ask someone, perhaps a homestay family member, if they are willing and interested, to take you on a short walk (maximum around 30 minutes in length) around their local neighbourhood. An idea for research might be for them to show you sites they perceive as positively associated with wellbeing (if any) and those associated negatively with wellbeing (if any) and ask them to expand on why this is.

   Then ask them to take you to, or show you places, that are particularly significant for them, and which are relevant to the research question you are approaching. It will help if you formulate the question *with* your proposed participant!

   Decide before your walk whether you would like to produce a **Map** or a **Soundscape**. The choice will determine your process and what tools you will need during your walk. Make sure you explain and discuss with your participant what you are expecting to produce. More details on the particulars of the assignment and process will be available on the DropBox by the start of the South Africa country program.

   Hand-in your **Map** or **Soundscape** and include a 1.5-2 page reflection on the process, challenges, and what you learned.

4. Brazil: **Visual essay**

   **Due:** *Case study presentation day*

   A Visual Essay is a sequence of pictures depicting or exploring a topic with little text compared to written essays. Taken together, the images provide a critical commentary of some kind on a defined topic, working as a kind of argument, explanation, discussion. The whole purpose of this assignment is not to show your ability to take “good” pictures but your ability to say something compelling using a series of interrelated images.
Process:
1. Over the course of the semester, take pictures WHEN IT IS SAFE AND ETHICAL TO DO SO.
   - Avoid using pictures of recognizable people in the Visual Essays. Pictures of parts of the body (feet, hands, backs, etc.) or of masses of people may be included in the essays after a careful consideration of ethical implications and cultural/social/political context. Blurry/fuzzy or underexposed/overexposed pictures can be excellent ways to signal movement, energy, emotion AND to protect people’s identities!
   - Pictures of text found in public space (street signs, murals and graffiti, advertisements, shop names, etc.) can add layers of meaning and fascinating intertextual propositions to your essays
   - Pictures of pictures or of other types of images (postcards, advertisements, paintings, murals, fridge magnets, etc.) found in public and, to some extent, private space
   - Close-up pictures of textures (peeling wall-paper, rusty car body, tiled floor, dusty road, etc.)

2. Look through the pictures you have taken and choose a thematic topic explored in HCC.

3. Choose 6-8 photographs and decide in which sequence you will organize them. Add text throughout your paper (max 300-400 words): captions, short descriptions, quotations (from readings, interviews, guest speakers, etc.), key words, provocative questions, statements.
Research Proposal

*This assignment is combined with your Health, Culture, and Community final assignment (the assignment outline here is replicated on that syllabus).

Drawing on your experiences and learning on IHP, you will identify a health and or public health-related issue that you feel would warrant further research, based on what you now know about the issue and what you have learned is the current state of knowledge about the issue. You are not expected to be a world-leading expert overnight but to work intelligently with what you have had access to. This is to be presented as a single document even though grade points will be split between the two courses, as indicated below. You may use photographs or any other visual tool you wish to illustrate your proposal but you are not obliged to do so.

Your 20 Health, Culture, and Community grade points will be gained through your conceptual framing of the research question and explanation of why you would like to carry out this research. In 5 pp. provide:

1. The topic and location(s) of your research. Pick one of the locations where we’ve been.
2. Your overall research question
3. A description of why you think this is a worthwhile research topic and how it relates to class readings and classroom discussion topics
4. An explanation of how the topic relates to on-the-ground realities you have learned about on IHP and what, specifically, it was that you learned about or experienced on IHP that suggested this research direction to you.

Your 20 Community Health Research Methods grade points will be gained through your discussion of the practical and ethical dimensions of your proposed research project. In 5 pp. provide details and discussion on:

7. Where and when, and with whom (in terms of research participants) would you carry out your research. Why? [There is likely to be some crossover with the HCC section of your proposal here and this is fine. In this section though focus more on the practical aspect of why you think this is a good research site]. For example, you may choose a location that you feel provides ethical access to people.
8. What kind of research technique or methods do you think would be most useful and appropriate for the research you wish to carry out? Why? Describe with some detail how you will implement your method. Let’s say, e.g., that you want to follow the methods described in Preschool in Three Cultures. Describe what you would
videotape, whom you would show the videotape to, what questions you might ask, etc.

9. What kinds of ethical issues could your proposed research present? How would you address these?

10. To whom would your final report be addressed (policy makers, academic journal readers etc.)? Why?