

Education Practicum

PRAC-3000 (4 Credits / 60 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
South Africa: Education and Social Change

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 Education Practicum facilitates a number of field-based activities that help to build and infuse “real world” context into the integrated theory/practice dynamic that characterizes the program. From the initial Johannesburg excursions to the Apartheid museum, Pretoria and Soweto, to longer encounters at primary and secondary schools in Durban and rural KwaZulu Natal, each field-based component of the program offers opportunity for practical insight into educational issues in South Africa. Alongside and interwoven with the Education and Social Justice Seminar, in the Education Practicum (EP) students will examine educational issues firsthand through immersion in various experiences. Thus, while the Education Practicum and the Educational and Social Justice Seminar are separate for organizational purposes, the delivery of the courses will be simultaneous, and students will be challenged to think through and articulate the relationships between their seminar and practicum experiences.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain the experiential education cycle and how “real world” impressions and contextual knowledge can be interwoven with traditional classroom activities;
- Practice social analysis utilizing a field-study format in a variety of contexts within and beyond South Africa;
- Demonstrate greater understanding of the methods needed to conduct research in the social sciences in South Africa;
- Comprehend and practice awareness of the values of accepting diversity, social and cultural sensitivity, reflexivity, capacity for analysis and synthesis as well as being able to determine trends and contradictions in the reality studied;
- Show an increased capacity to think critically and creatively, and to integrate and analyze information from a variety of sources, thereby developing self-motivated learning skills of lifelong value;
- Demonstrate intercultural and interpersonal awareness, understanding, and respect.

Course Requirements

Please note that a preliminary schedule of all practicum activities will be distributed in class, and briefings/debriefings will take place regularly during the program.

The course comprises five “types” of practicum experiences:

- **Durban Primary Schools**

In the opening weeks of the program, students will be exposed to two primary schools in Durban. Emphasis will be on observation and discussion of the primary educational context.

- **Rural KwaZulu Natal Secondary Schools**

While on the rural excursion, students will participate in observation exercises in a secondary (high) school context. For this component of the program, SIT students will be participating alongside a small handful of University of KwaZulu Natal postgraduate education students.

- **Non-Formal Education, Adult Context**

Relatively late in the program, students will complete a component on Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), with Educational and Social Justice Seminar lectures on ABET complemented by visits to adult educational institutions.

- **Non-Formal Education, Youth Context**

Over the final weekend of the program, students will work with a local youth outreach organization in the administration of a youth camp for approximately 40 at-risk youth. In this experience, the students will act as “team leaders” or junior counselors for the camp participants.

- **Short-Term Educational Excursion Activities**

During the program, students will make a number of short-term visits to a variety of educational projects and schools, with the aim to reach as wide and diverse a survey of educational initiatives as possible. In addition students may also be afforded the opportunity to attend the Grahamstown Arts Festival in the Eastern Cape.

Readings

You are responsible for all the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear on discussions in class. The readings will help you place the classes in their context, to challenge and engage lecturers, to generate questions for class discussions and to deepen your knowledge of particular aspects discussed in class. They are not necessarily tailor-made for each and every class.

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

Students will be expected to prepare for, attend, and participate in all Education Practicum activities and discussions. The following breakdown of grades will be used to arrive at the final letter grade for the course.

Assignment	Percentage
Primary School Paper	40 percent
Rural Excursion Reflection Paper	40 percent
Participation	20 percent

A note on assignment due dates: please note that students are free to submit their assignments earlier than the due dates noted. *It is the program’s philosophy that students should be ultimately responsible for setting their assignment completion schedules as they see fit.* In other words, **the onus of not leaving**

everything until the last minute is squarely upon the student. Indeed, the ability to prioritize and multitask is central to success on SIT programs, and it can be noted that these are important skills not only for success in school, but in life! As in the Education and Social Change Seminar, there is an opportunity to write an extra-credit paper for the course, due no later than the other essays, as explained below.

Education Practicum Assignments

Timely completion of all Education Practicum assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation and presentation of evidence.

Primary School Practicum Paper

40 percent of the Education Practicum grade

In order to further the process of gaining first-hand field experience in education, students will be placed in smaller groups into two schools in Durban – Manor Gardens Primary and Bonela Primary. The short time involved means that your time in the schools is likely to be less “volunteering” than that of a short-term “participant observation exercise,” though through your diligence it is hoped that you will be able to make some contribution to the school’s work, however small. Students will be divided into two groups (group lists to be distributed in class) and each group will spend one school week in each school.

You will be submitting two shorter papers for this assignment (representing one field report from your Manor Gardens as well as Bonela experiences). In total, the assignment should comprise about 2000 words, or approximately 1000 per school experience. More than this is fine, if extra space is needed. For each school, complete discussion on the following four topics:

- **Introduction and Description**

Utilizing primary data (informal interview, observation, participant observation, etc.) and analysis, provide a description of the school, including history, type of school, mission, and target student body, historical and present. Also discuss your preliminary impressions of the school’s successes as well as its challenges.

- **Methodology and Documentation**

First, offer insight into the overall nature of your observations at the school, how you “entered” or experienced the various components and/or departments, and who the “gatekeepers” of information for you were. Second, provide a daily and hourly log, of some detail, documenting your interaction/work (with additional contextual sentences if needed to help the reader appreciate the nature of your time with the school). Third, discuss your use of primary field-study methods – informal interview, observation, participant observation, grouping and analyzing the data, etc. – and explore the challenges you had in the actual “doing” of this aspect of field study. This section should also contain a summary/documentation of any “lesson plans” that you may have delivered (or attempted to deliver, where logistics fall apart) to the students.

- **Analysis**

This section comprises your analysis and assessment of the data you have collected. You should analyze and report on your findings, *inter alia*, to issues related to perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school. You should also include in this section discussion of personal learning that you have taken away from the experience – how have your experiences in the school changed your way of looking at things, and what have been the meanings/lessons of the experience for you?

- **Conclusions**

Tie the experiences together in this closing section of the paper. Present three or four salient points, discussing both issues related to what you see as the challenges of working in education, generally and/or for this specific school, as well as consideration and discussion of the successes as well as challenges of your engagement with the field study process.

Assignment Objectives

- To gain “hands-on,” if preliminary, experience observing the primary school context.
- To use/practice participant observation as a key field-study methodology.
- To begin to formulate and deepen personal insights about education in South Africa, furthering the experiential learning process.

Rural Practicum Paper

40 percent of the Education Practicum grade

As will be discussed in class, the program will be traveling to Amacambini Tribal Area to work with and observe a “winter school” program that has been developed in some of the local secondary (high) schools to support the students in their upcoming matric examinations. Students will be placed into “clusters” around the schools, living with homestay families. Students will primarily be “working” in only one school; inter-group discussion and debriefing will largely be relied upon to compare experiences in different schools. Please note that the homestay context during this experience is likely to be very different from your Durban homestay. This may be the first time you have stayed without electricity, running water, and/or a “flush” toilet, etc. At the same time, it is in a rural context in which nearly half of South Africans reside, and to which more than half of South Africans refer when they speak of “home.” As such, it is vital that students use the short period of the rural homestay to learn as much as possible about this important aspect of South African society.

Also as will be discussed in class, a number of University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) postgraduate students of education have been recruited to accompany us. The UKZN students have been tasked with the “frontline” of instruction/working directly with the local teachers, and, at least in theory, the SIT students’ role is to observe this process and try to gain insight into rural education through these various experiences. We will brief this thoroughly as this component of the program approaches.

The paper that you are to complete for this experience is similar to that of the primary school practicum, though not exactly the same, as discussed below. The assignment should comprise about 1000 words. More than this is fine, if extra space is needed.

Complete discussion on the following four topics:

- **Introduction and Description**

Utilizing primary (informal interview, observation, participant observation, etc.) data and analysis, provide a (very) brief description of the school, including history, type of school, mission, and target student body, historical and present. Also discuss your preliminary impressions of the school’s successes as well as its challenges. This section should be shorter than in the primary school practicum paper – aim simply to help the reader to develop some context for what you will be discussing in the paper.

- **Methodology and Documentation**

Offer insight into the overall nature of your observations at the school, and provide a daily and hourly log, of some detail, documenting your interactions with key individuals (with additional contextual sentences if needed to help the reader appreciate the nature of your time with the school). If you did complete any actual instruction or teaching assistance, describe this in some detail. If you found yourself working on other projects within the school, discuss these. If your time was spent mainly on observation of the context, then discuss this process.

- **Analysis**

This section comprises your analysis and assessment of the data you have collected. You should analyze and report on your findings, *inter alia*, to issues related to perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school. To accomplish this, utilize: (a) an analysis of how the rural context to which you have been exposed (if in a preliminary way) is related to what you observed in the school (both positive and negative, as you see them); and (b) consideration of how your observations in the rural context differ (or do not differ) from what you observed in the Durban educational context

(albeit a primary school context). Use this section to once again think through the public school contexts to which you have been exposed thus far – Bonela, Manor Gardens, and now the Amacambini Tribal Area.

- **Conclusions**

Tie the overall experience together in this closing section of the paper. Feel free to include or reiterate in closing any significant personal learning that you have taken away from the experience, and how you may now see the public school educational context – successes as well as challenges – somewhat differently.

Assignment Objectives

- To gain “hands-on,” if preliminary, experience observing a rural educational context.
- To use/practice participant observation as a key field-study methodology.
- To begin to formulate and deepen personal insights about rural education in South Africa, furthering the experiential learning process.
- To start to compare the urban and rural educational contexts, for continuing themes as well as potential differences.

Participation/Continuous Assessment

20 percent of final practicum grade

Assessment of a student's participation is based on the following criteria:

- Attendance – promptness to class, and positive presence in class.
- Active listening – paying attention in class/during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Interactions in host culture – respectful with hosts and host culture, getting involved in other cultural activities outside the SIT program and group; spending time beyond English speaking establishments.
- Involvement in class discussions – either in small or large groups sharing knowledge and information, asking questions.
- Group accountability – participates as part of a group during field excursions and classes.
- Respectful interaction with SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

In short, therefore, diligence will be rewarded, and slackness and/or culturally inappropriate behavior will be penalized. Please note that while full, strong, and positive participation on all the above matters will get you relatively close to the full points for this component of your grade, a failure to fully participate in any program activity, as determined by the Academic Director, is grounds not only for failure of the Education Practicum, but also for academic and/or behavioral probation and other disciplinary action, up to and possibly including dismissal from the program.

Related to this point, please note that university classroom behavioral expectations can differ significantly in South Africa when compared to the standards sometimes observed elsewhere. All of the behavioral expectations discussed in the Education and Social Justice Seminar syllabus and elsewhere need to be followed during the Education Practicum experiences as well. Further information on appropriate dress, etc. during these experiences will be discussed in class.

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

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.

**All written assignments should be typed. Texts sent by e-mail will not be accepted. Make sure you have a laptop or computer available and keep back up files so nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.*

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.

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>.

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.