

Internship and Seminar

ITRN 3000 (4 credits / 120 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:

Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management

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

SIT will use its extensive network to place students in biodiversity and natural resource management organizations. These may include organizations at the cutting edge of captive breeding, environmental education and environmental restoration. From time to time SIT internship placements may also take place at a private park, zoo, NGO, or other association working in conservation fundraising in Madagascar. In addition, students may petition SIT for approval of internship placements that they find on their own initiative. However, in all cases, the organization and the student's internship placement must be approved by SIT's academic director, and SIT will maintain oversight over internship placements in line with SIT academic policies and student health and security guidelines. Ultimately, each student takes responsibility for making optimal use of resources available at the organization and must be proactive in engaging with local experts to achieve internship objectives.

Students complete an internship and submit a paper in which they describe, assess and analyze their learning in the area of biodiversity and natural resource management in Madagascar. The paper also outlines the tasks that the student completed through the internship, reporting relationships, challenges encountered and how the student overcame them.

Learning Outcomes

The internship course comprises 120 hours, equal to 4 academic credits.

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

- Demonstrate awareness of the ways in which local cultural practices shape natural resource management outcomes in a tropical context such as Madagascar's;
- Show understanding of the dynamics that shape successes and/or failure of a natural resource management project in a tropical context such as Madagascar's;
- Assess and articulate the benefits, challenges and obstacles that the internship organization encounters in their work;

- Describe, analyze, and synthesize their learning experience in the internship in the form of an internship paper and oral presentation; and
- Gain meaningful and practical work experience in their chosen field.

Language of Instruction

Malagasy is the official language in Madagascar and students should expect that Malagasy will be widely spoken in work and in most field settings of the internship. Nevertheless, if the internship institution is located in a big city such as Antananarivo, a mixture of French and Malagasy will be the everyday used languages at the work place. The Internship and Seminar comprises 30 hours/week of internships, and 8 hours of seminar discussions with the academic director. The pre-internship part of the course, Research Methods and Ethics, prepares students by introducing them to the work norms, practices and ethics in the Madagascar context, and is taught in English by the academic director, assisted by local experts. Further, pre-internship preparations include a 3 credit intensive Malagasy language course, and a thematic seminar course that exposes students to the broader local and global aspects and dynamics of biodiversity and natural resource management.

Course Schedule

Module I: Making the Most of Your Internship

During this module, students will be introduced to doing an internship in Madagascar as a foreign student by the academic director. They will also prepare for the internship and the writing of the internship paper, have regular meetings with the academic director, reflect on the internship experience, and learn how to use their experience for future professional growth. Complementary reading will be assigned by the academic director. Sample questions/issues:

- Does the student get enough work to do?
- Does the student get an opportunity to observe, participate in meetings or shadow the organization's employees?
- How relevant is their experience to their career goal?
- What skills are the students hoping to gain?

Session 1: Setting the Stage

This session reviews objectives for the internship. Students meet with the academic director, following confirmation of their internship placement, and discuss expectations, timeframes and other logistics, structural components of the final internship paper, content, layout, and general guidelines.

Suggested reading:

Individual reading: K. Oberg. (2006). "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments" in Practical Anthropology; Vol. 7 pp177-182

A. Cynthia. (1996). "Using Student Journals to Improve the Academic Quality of Internships" in the Journal of Education for Business, Vol. 72 Issue 2 pp113-138
(basic readings but helpful)

Session 2 &3: The Internship Experience: Review and Critical Reflection

These sessions focus on the review and reflection process of the internship experience. Students set weekly learning objectives, keep an internship journal, and write two progress reports on their learning experience. During the reading discussion, students reflect on where they are in terms of work place: work ethos and work ethics.

- What assignments were you given and how engaging would you rate them on a scale of 1-10?
- What cultural issue struck you at the internship?
- What has been the main role you played this period?

- How has it influenced, challenged or informed your perspective on biodiversity and natural resource management?

Suggested reading:

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013) *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapter 3&10)

Sandra, L. Bryan and M. Sprague. (2012). “The Effect of Overseas Internships on Early Teaching Experiences” in *The Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, pp 199-201

Session 4: The Internship Experience: Review and Critical Reflection continued

This session allows students to reflect on the internship experience and begin to process the learning that occurred in a safe and supportive context. The session discusses ways of acknowledging both the successes and failures of the internship, of completing tasks, handing over projects to and sharing insights with colleagues on the job, and setting realistic goals for the future.

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013) *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapter 12)

Lee, E. Ross and O.O. Elechi. (2006). “Student Attitudes Towards Internship Experiences: From Theory to Practice” in *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, pp297-312

Session 5: Next Steps and How to Include Your Internship on Your Résumé

This final session occurs in the final weeks of the program, as part of re-entry discussions. Students discuss fears and strategies for successful re-entry into their home setting, opportunities for professional growth, and how to make optimal use of the internship experience. They will discuss ways to describe the experience gained and skills learned in their internship in cover letters, résumés and how to use this experience for future professional growth.

THE FINAL PAPER

The final paper shall consist of the following four sections:

- Description of the host institution
- Description of tasks performed on the job
- Business plan design, grant proposal, or other major output of the internship experience
- Personal assessment of your job performance

GUIDELINES FOR THE FINAL PAPER

Expectations for each section of the final paper are outlined below. These, however, are guidelines and may be adapted to the specificities of your internship.

Description of host institution: a brief description (one page) of the host institution for the internship. This should include the nature of the services offered and a profile of the customers who use them. The student may also provide brochures or collateral material that further describes the institution.

Description of tasks performed: this should be written in third person as if the student, acting as a manager, were writing it for a new employee/associate. It should be written in outline form, except for the job summary section. Headings should be used to identify each of the sections. A suggested outline for this description is listed below:

- Job title and place of employment
- Job summary—narrative summary of the activities of the position

- Qualifications—education and experience required and/or desired
- Working conditions—uniform requirements, physical surroundings, working days, hours, etc.
- Job relationships—who is the mentor and to whom reported
- Specific duties and responsibilities—a list should be provided to indicate all duties performed by the individual in this position

Output of the internship experience: this can be a proposal for a strategic response to an existing problem, a creation of a sustainable plan, a grant proposal, or a research project that responds to the need of an organization. The proposal should also outline the human and financial resources needed for the implementation of the proposed model and measures of its success.

Personal assessment of the experience: in this section provide an assessment of the key learning milestones acquired on the internship experience, the challenges faced, and the possible impact of the experience on the student’s academic and professional career. Included in this section is a reflection on the internship experience, including the output of the internship (mentioned above), as it relates to biodiversity and conservation in Madagascar.

Ethics

The internship experience must reflect SIT’s ethics policy and commitment to the values of reciprocity. The student intern should also abide by the policy and regulations of the host institution including dress, punctuality, and employee behavior. Violations of SIT’s code of conduct or employee conduct at the host institution will result in an immediate termination of the internship and can lead to further disciplinary sanctions by SIT.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Weekly two-hour reflection and assessment meetings are held with the academic director or internship coordinator to review the progress of the internship and learning associated with the internship experience.

At the end of the internship period, students are expected to present their work to the group.

Assessment of both written work and the oral presentation is based on the quality of research and academic scholarship and adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Assessment of the Internship

Internship Paper	35%
Internship Presentation	10%
Internship performance	35%
Progress reports	20%

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

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.

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>.

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, evidence of having completed assigned readings, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, field visits 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.

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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>.