

Field Study of Traditional Indian Healthcare Practices

ASIA 3020 (3 Credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
India: Traditional Medicine and Healthcare Practices

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from term to term.

Course Description

The six-week *Field Study of Traditional Indian Healthcare Practices* course complements the *Traditional Indian Medicine: Theory and Context* seminar by emphasizing field study methods that give students a foundation for engaging in basic ethnographic approaches to studying and understanding the practice of traditional medicine. Through visits to and interaction with organizations and individuals working in India's traditional healthcare system, students gain first-hand exposure to the practices and environments of these alternative systems of wellness. Through observation, note-taking and interviewing, students gain experience with primary sources for knowledge of traditional medicine in India. In line with its emphasis on field and clinical practice, the Field Study course has several objectives:

Course Objectives

The *Field Study of Traditional Indian Healthcare Practices* course encompasses 45 hours (3 credits). The main objectives of this course are:

- To introduce the techniques of eliciting and analyzing the methods used in the systems of Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Yoga, Naturopathy, Amchi and Folk medicine by interviewing the practitioners of these medical arts;
- To teach basic methods of data collection such as observation, note-taking, and interviewing in order to conduct a brief field study project;
- To consider the ethical issues embedded in health and wellness discourse and practice within and across cultures;
- To utilize case studies of the practice of traditional medicine as the basis for discussion and analysis of the sustainability of these systems.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Relate field study methods and approaches to findings and understandings of the healing practices used in India's major systems of traditional health;

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- Compare and contrast the paradigms, efficacies and indications of different therapeutic techniques using data collected from clinical site visits and examples drawn from case studies observed in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim;
- Critically appraise traditional approaches to healthcare in a diversity of rural and urban settings in North India;
- Apply the methods of observation, note-taking and interviewing in the completion of an ethically sound short field study project.

Course Requirements

The course features field visits to hospitals, clinics, ashrams, and local organizations involved in the practice and support of traditional healing. Students are taught foundational ethnographic techniques in order to be able to learn through field experience. By observing traditional health practitioners in a diversity of settings students will be able to situate their practices within specific the socio-cultural and economic contexts. By visiting the Himalayan locations of some of India's rich botanical resources, students will understand how environment and health are linked at state and local levels. A brief homestay in Gangtok, the capital of the state of Sikkim, enhances direct experience and understanding of the cultural and social dimensions of people actively using systems of traditional healing. Finally, a brief field study project requires students to apply knowledge of fieldwork methods to gather primary data and synthesize it in a coherent written and oral presentation.

Summer Schedule Overview

Week One: Arrival and Orientation in New Delhi

Lecture topics include: fieldwork in the South Asian context; critical use of secondary sources on traditional medicine; problems in integrating data from primary and secondary sources; medical ethics: a cross-cultural discussion; fieldwork ethics.

Weeks Two - Three: Nainital (Rural and Urban) Uttarakhand

Lecture topics include: Interviewing; note taking; compiling a field notebook; establishing rapport and gaining entré in primary field research.

Weeks Four - Five: Rishikesh (Uttarakhand)

Lecture topics include: participant observation in ethnography; advanced interviewing and data gathering in the field.

Weeks Five - Six: Dharamsala and Palampur in Himachal Pradesh

Lecture topics include: critical observation skills; reflection notes related to key research questions; research paper structure and composition.

Seminar Faculty, Advisors and Resource People

Academic Director: Dr. Azim Khan

Faculty

Dr Ashutosh Guleri, Head of the Department, Ayurveda and Panch Karma, Kayakalp, Himalayan Research Institute for Yoga and Naturopathy, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh

Dr Malvika Badyal, Physician and Panch Karma Specialist, Kayakalp, Himalayan Research Institute for Yoga and Naturopathy, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh

Dr. Rajeev Prasad Bijalwan MD (Ayurveda) and MA in International Health Management and Development; Research Coordinator, Himalayan Institute of Medical Science, Uttarakhand

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Mr Vivek Badoni, Yoga Teacher and Practitioner, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand

Dr Mohd Akram, Associate Professor, Hamdard Unani Medicine School, Hamdard University, New Delhi

Dr Sushil Sharma, CEO, AAROHI-Nainital, Uttarakhand

Mr Hariram Bisht, Traditional Healer, Bheemtal, Uttarakhand

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

With the exception of journals and field notebooks, all assignments should be typed and double-spaced. Spelling and grammar are part of grading criteria; careful proofreading and editing are essential parts of the writing process. Please note: *description is not analysis*. While there is a place for description of people, events or organizations in your assignments, be aware that extensive description is not a substitute for critical analysis based on independent thinking and understanding. The more the writing reflects synthesis of theory, observation and reflection, the more successful it will be.

Assignments

Timely completion of all 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.

New Delhi drop-off	15%
Fieldwork Journal	25%
Mini Field Study Project (Oral – 20%, Written – 20%)	40%
Discussions and Participation	20%

New Delhi Drop-Off– 15%

The drop-off has a long history in SIT's pedagogical approach to cross-cultural learning. Designed to help students gain confidence and skills in navigating a new cultural environment, this assignment pairs students in teams of two and presents them a set of tasks to complete at new location in New Delhi. The tasks may involve meeting with a traditional doctor, visiting a pharmacy or finding a hospital and are constructed to introduce students to the Indian healthcare environment. After completion of the assigned tasks students will write up a summary of their experience using the D-I-E format.

D-I-E Approach to Processing Field Learning

Recording accurate description and distinguishing between its interpretation and evaluation is important for interpersonal relations and intercultural communication as well as conducting field study. It's an important skill in order to avoid making assumptions and premature judgments. In drop-off write-ups, your results should be descriptive, discussions interpretive, and conclusions should be evaluative.

DESCRIPTION: to report on the phenomena that we observe with maximum fidelity and without attributing meaning. It is to count, list name, define, record; in other words, it is the **information recorded by all our senses**.

Example: The majority of patients waiting for treatment at the Tibetan Astro-Medical clinic in Nizamuddin are Indian.

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INTERPRETATION: to make inferences, to attribute meaning, to explain, relate, summarize, combine, and generalize. It is what we think about the recorded information.

Examples:

- 1) Tibetan medicine appeals to many Indians who already have a holistic and natural view about the treatment of illness and use of medicine though exposure to other systems of well being such as yoga.
- 2) Tibetan medicine is affordable and accessible to Indians, and the Tibetan doctors all speak Hindi because they are born and raised in India.

EVALUATION: to pass judgment, to make comparisons, to accept or reject. It involves what ought to happen or what should not be. It is our reaction to the phenomena, i.e., how we feel about it.

Examples:

- 1) The examination rooms at the clinic do not appear particularly hygienic; someone should tell the doctors.
- 2) Indians should support Ayurvedic medicine more than Tibetan medicine because it comes from India.
- 3) The Indian government should give support to the manufacture and practice of Tibetan medicine because otherwise it will die out.

Fieldwork Journal – 25%

At the end of the excursion period students will hand in a journal containing extensive notes from daily attendance at lectures and observations at all Ashrams, clinics, NGOs, and hospitals and daily **one-page** summaries of each day's learning. The assignment requires keeping a daily observation journal while in Nainital and Rishikesh and provides the basis for developing skills of observation and note-taking as techniques of fieldwork. The topics of spiritual health tourism, Ayurveda in modern India and yoga for health and longevity are highlighted during the excursion in Rishikesh and form the themes around which daily critical reflection takes place.

The guidelines for the journals are as follows:

- Daily notes should be properly noted in a systematic fashion, with dates, locations of entries, and complete data entry.
- Posing and then attempting to answer critical and important questions arising from the day's activities should be reflected in the time and effort spent on daily summaries. It is not enough just to recap. Students must link observations in Nainital and Rishikesh with broader knowledge of health practices and philosophical traditions in India.

Mini Field Study Project – Oral (20%) Written (20%)

Oral: This assignment requires students to conduct a short fieldwork project in the areas of Rishikesh or Simla. Students will work together in small groups of two for the duration of the project and each group will be asked to research a specific aspect of one healing system such as diagnostic techniques, philosophical underpinnings, or medicine manufacturing. Using some basic techniques of fieldwork such as participant-observation and interviewing, students are required to prepare a 30-minute oral presentation on their topic of interest addressing relevant questions, which might include:

- In what ways does this system understand the connection between mind and body?
- How do systems of diagnosis in this particular system reflect specific cultural beliefs about environment and place?
- How are the causes of illness understood in this healing system?
- What ingredients are used to make the medicine it uses and where are they found?
- Who utilizes these healing techniques?

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- For what kinds of diseases is this system most effective?
- What is the training to become a doctor or practitioner of this system?
- Does this system also combine its approach with allopathy?

The oral presentation will be evaluated according to organization of material, depth of information collected, and creative analysis of the material in light of the larger investigation of traditional health in India.

Written: At the end of this field study project, students will submit a five to seven page paper that critically considers some of the following questions:

- How do the practitioners and users of this traditional health system understand health, both physical and mental?
- In what ways does this system of health provide viable options for patients seeking health care? What are challenges to its sustainability?
- Would you consider using this if you were ill? Why or why not?

Papers will be evaluated according to the following: clarity of presentation of thesis statement; cogent organization of ideas; sophistication of analysis; proper use of the English language and careful editing; creative and effective conclusion.

Discussions and Participation – 20%

This course focuses on active learning during field excursions. Each student is required to lead at least one synthesis discussion session on a visit to a clinic, hospital or other organization during the course. They are expected to demonstrate attentiveness and proactive engagement during all excursions in order to facilitate group analysis of key themes and ideas. All seminar lectures and activities are mandatory and students must discuss absences with the Academic Director before their absence.

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 question opportunities after lectures, in group discussions and while visiting seminar locations. Students are expected to complete the required reading in a timely fashion, and to demonstrate their understanding of texts through reflection, writing, and discussion.

Participation includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, note-taking;
- Involvement in Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge and information. This means speaking up and allowing others to speak;
- Group Accountability - participates positively as a part of a group during excursions and classes;
- Respect - culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities. This includes appropriately greeting people when entering offices and classrooms and saying thank you.

Late papers will be marked down one step (B- to C+, e.g.) for each day they are late.

Grading Criteria

All grades assigned will take into account the special circumstances and challenges of students in a foreign country. An "A" grade for an assignment entails superior (not just "very good") performance in

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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, workshops 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.

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

Student Expectations

Responsibilities when conducting fieldwork:

- Students must respect, protect, and promote the rights and welfare of all those contributing to, and affected by, their work by protecting the privacy and dignity of the people and communities with whom they conduct field study.
- The right of those providing information to students to either remain anonymous, or to receive recognition, must be scrupulously defended and respected.
- Students must acknowledge the help and services they receive and must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in culturally appropriate ways.
- Students must record and represent accurately all aspects of the field study. This includes not representing as their own work - either in spoken or written form - materials and ideas directly obtained from other sources.

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.

Disability Services: For information about and support from Disability Services (DS) to facilitate an accessible educational experience, please contact 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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