

Research Methods and Ethics ANTH 3500 (3 credits)

Ecuador: Development, Politics, and Languages

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Description

The Research Methods and Ethics seminar (RME) introduces students to the conceptual and practical tools for gathering primary data and the knowledge and skills that are essential to forming constructive relationships with organizations and/or individuals, which are necessary for completing an academic project in the cultural context of Ecuador. In particular, the course enhances students' skills at building rapport; initiating purposeful dialogue in the cultural context of Ecuador; gathering, recording, and analyzing primary data; and writing a scholarly academic report. The course also pays particular attention to US higher education ethical considerations that guide primary data collection and how these could be translated within the local cultural context of Ecuador and Development, Economy, and Inequality. Broadly, the seminar introduces students to qualitative approaches of social science field research.

The main emphasis of the seminar is on the development of empirical tools and ethics of interactive research skills involving the collection of primary data. The seminar includes lectures on qualitative methods of research in social sciences and in particular in Development, Economy, and Inequality, development of a research proposal, and preparation of an application for review of research with human subjects. All students will participate in an overview of research design and methodological approaches to program themes. Ethical considerations related to conducting research will be discussed. The overall aim is to help students hone their experience-based learning processes and prepare them for the development of an Independent Study Project (ISP), which is largely based on the data gathered from primary sources.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Show an acute sense of positionality and perspective and operate independently, using cultural sensitivity, language skills, and local networks of trust built over the course of the semester;
- Demonstrate awareness of appropriate methods and ethics used in field research in the critical global issue of Development, Economy, and Inequality;
- Analyze and process primary data gathered in the field and draw valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions;
- Produce an Independent Study Project proposal that is in strict observance of ethical academic standards and local values and that includes a research question, sample review of the relevant

literature, outline of the research methods, and anticipated ethical challenges and ways of addressing them.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in Spanish and students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits to a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of *a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.*

Module 1: Experiential Learning and Positionality in Field-Based Research

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in a study abroad context. Students learn how to relate to local communities and individuals. Most particularly, this module allows students to discover the power of experiential learning and use it as a tool to connect to local communities and individuals and develop into reflexive researchers who are attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research.

Sessions

Cultural Adjustment Cycle

Homestay as a Cultural Experience and Site of Learning

Doing Field-Based Research in a Study Abroad Context

Experiential Learning Philosophy and the Politics of Culture in Ecuador

Positionality and Outsider/Insider Research

Skills for Networking, Time Management, and Productivity

Module 2: Research Methods and Ethics in Development, Economy, and Inequality

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community.

Sessions

Research Methods and Ethics in Development, Economy, and Inequality

Selecting Topics, Formulating Research Questions, and Literature Review
Data Collection: Participant Observation and Interviewing
Mixed Methods Research
Data Analysis, Evaluation, and Interpretation
Required Readings:

- Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Tuhiwai, L. Eds. (2008). *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tuhiwai, L. (2005). "Decolonizing Methodologies". *Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 1-77. London: Zed Books Limited

Module 3: Introduction to the ISP

This module will describe the ISP processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP. The module will include a review and critique of past ISP papers. The module will also walk the students through the Local Review Board (LRB) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the application for Human Subjects Review (HSR application).

Sessions

Critical Review of past ISPs
Introduction to the LRB/IRB Process and HSR Application
Identifying an ISP Advisor
One-on-one Meetings with the Academic Director to Discuss Preliminary ISP

Module 4: Project Proposal Development

Based on learning and engagement in the preceding course modules, this module focuses on ISP proposal development and guiding students through the development of the Human Subjects Review (HSR) application for review by the Local Review Board (LRB). This critical phase in the course involves both large student group meetings and individual student meetings with the academic director and the ISP advisor.

Sessions

Writing an ISP Proposal
One-on-one Meetings with Academic Director and/or ISP Advisor
Peer review of ISP Proposal Drafts
Writing the HSR Application
ISP Proposal Presentation to Peers and Roundtable Discussion

Module 5: ISP in the Context of Ecuador

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Ecuador. The module highlights the importance of applied methodology in the ISP experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student.

Session 1: Preparing for the ISP

This introductory session prepares the student for the ISP. The session covers a range of areas that include how to approach and develop rapport with research participants, how to work collaboratively with the ISP advisor, and logistics of the ISP period, including travel, materials, and timelines. Students will also review the ISP assessment rubric.

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Ecuador

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to research in Ecuador, exploring such issues as how best to describe the ISP to potential research participants and others, gender norms, issues of language, and expectations for behavior while conducting research.

Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology

This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving research challenges.

Required Reading:

- Guerrero Arias, P. (2002). *Guía etnográfica: Sistematización de datos sobre la diversidad y la diferencia de las culturas*. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Assignment I: Practice Interview

Students are asked to conduct a practice interview with one of the members of their host family. They are asked to write a small reflection (2-3 pages) about their role and attitude towards their research subjects and the skills they brought to the interview to establish an ethical and safe environment for the interviewee. Students are also encouraged to explore how their own positionality along the lines of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class affected the set-up and wording of their questionnaire and consequently the outcome of the interview.

Assignment II Cultural Patterns Journal

Students are asked to engage in qualitative methodology (focused observation, intercultural dialogue and interviews, participant observation) as they attempt to identify the values, principles, and beliefs that sustain cultural patterns. They are expected to analyze the variables of such patterns according to ethnicity, class, gender, and age. The skills developed in this assignment aim to prepare students to carry out their Independent Study Project with high ethical considerations.

Field Work Journal

Students are expected to keep a work journal where they will document thoroughly all the activities and assignments carried out during the course. This will also continue during the Independent Study Project period. The work journal is submitted for review and evaluation during the course of the semester.

Research Proposal

All students must develop a research proposal. The research proposal should address a theme related to the program, include research question and objectives, theoretical framework, methodology, and comply with the ethical standards learned throughout the course.

Participation

All students are expected to prepare for classes, attend and participate in all lectures, class discussions, field activities, and carry out all assignments and other activities prepared in the context of the Research Methods and Ethics course.

Assessment:

Practice Interview	10%
Assignment II	25%
Field Work Journal	35%
Research Proposal	20%
Participation	10%

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

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time. Have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (those of classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits, etc.). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.