Virtual Internship & Seminar  
ITRN 3000 (4 credits)

Panama: Virtual Internship in Sustainable Community Development

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

Description
This virtual internship and seminar is a twelve-week distance learning course comprised of 180 hours. Students intern with a local community organization, a research organization, a socially responsible business, a government agency, or an NGO. Students will be expected to devote approximately 15 hours per week to both synchronous and asynchronous course activities. Synchronous activities may include orientation sessions, seminar lectures, initial meetings with the internship advisor, group reflection sessions, and project presentations. Frequency, duration, and scheduling of synchronous activities will be determined the first week of the course in conversation with participants to find mutually convenient times. In the event that a student cannot attend a live session, every effort will be made to provide a recording or summary for off-line viewing. Asynchronous activities may include seat time for the internship, writing progress reports, discussion boards, and/or completing assignments. Students are required to demonstrate a strong online presence by participating in group discussions, answering questions, and interacting with course participants and staff.

The aim of an internship is to enable students to gain valuable experience learning about and working on sustainable community development. SIT will facilitate an internship placement for students. The organization and the student’s internship activities, including the Internship Learning Agreement, must be approved by SIT’s academic director. SIT will maintain oversight of internship placements in line with SIT academic policies. Ultimately, each student takes responsibility for being proactive in engaging with internship colleagues and the internship supervisor to achieve their internship objectives.

Students will be informed of the types of internships available and the placement process early in the program. A placement meeting is required before the internship placement is finalized. Internships include placements with organizations that work on community development, community health, environmental conservation, environmental education, indigenous rights, agritourism, and other related fields.

Each student will be required to submit a final paper in which they process their learning experience during the internship and link those reflections to core program themes. Approved
in advance by the academic director and the internship supervisor, the internship paper may involve interviews and other data collection methods relevant to achieving internship learning goals. Students will also prepare a final presentation to demonstrate how the internship experience enhanced their understanding of sustainable community development.

**Learning Outcomes**
The Internship & Seminar comprises 180 hours for four academic credits. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of the ethics involved in doing an internship in Panama;
- Describe, analyze, and synthesize their learning experience in the internship in the form of an internship paper;
- Articulate new learning from the internship experience in the form of an oral presentation;
- Show understanding of Panama’s diverse cultural identities, social justice and community concerns as related to their internship;
- Assess the challenges to sustainable development in the context of Panama and Latin America in general;
- Gain meaningful and practical experience in community sustainable development.

**Prerequisites**
Two semesters of college-level Spanish

**Language of Instruction**
This course is taught in Spanish and English and students will be exposed to vocabulary related to the internship theme through expert lectures and their internship experience.

**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. Holistic in process, learning happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate and internalize new ways of knowing and being. 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 critical for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

**Required Texts**
Assignments and Evaluation
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 quality, academic scholarship, and adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Participation in Synchronous and Asynchronous Activities (15%)
Students are expected to engage with the synchronous and asynchronous activities through participation in discussions, posting on the course discussion forum, and responding to any prompts assigned by the internship instructor. Engagement is key to personal, academic, and professional development during the internship.

2) Progress Reports (10%)
Progress reports should document the student’s progress toward achieving their learning objectives during the internship. Students also document the challenges they face and how they try to deal with those challenges. Students submit two progress reports during their internship experience, each worth 5%.

3) Internship Performance (30%)
This evaluation by the Academic Director and the internship supervisor assesses the student’s contribution, overall professional achievements, and self-growth.

4) Module 1 Assignments (20%)
In module 1, there are three assignments that are geared to introduce students to the major themes of the course, including sustainability, community, and development. The assignments require that students reflect on the topics covered in class and examine how these issues occur in their communities. Details are provided in the module description.

5) Final Paper (25%)
Students are expected to submit a 10-page final paper at the end of their internship experience. The final paper should include a title, list of acknowledgments, and an abstract. The paper should also have an introduction which describes the work and history of the organization and incorporates several references, detailed description of the activities accomplished, and strong and innovative aspects of the organization. The final paper must include thoughtfully articulated analytical writing that addresses positionality and ethics and connects learning at the internship to the broader themes of the semester program and/or the investigation of one or more specific questions. The paper should be well written and well organized, with few grammatical errors. A summary of the final paper assessment rubric will be shared with students in advance. (Example at the end of syllabus.)
Assessment of the Internship

Participation in Synchronous and Asynchronous Activities 15%
Progress Report 5%
Progress Report 5%
Internship Performance 30%
Module 1 Assignments 20%
Final Paper 25%

Attendance and Participation
Criteria for evaluation of student performance include participation in synchronous and asynchronous activities. Unjustified absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments
The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (internship). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program. Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an ‘F’ for the assignment.

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
• Arrive prepared and on time. Have your readings completed and questions in mind for discussion or clarification.
• Complete assignments on schedule and according to the specified requirements.
• Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer.
• Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
• Respect differences of opinion (classmates’, lecturers, local constituents). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
• Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to you despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not considered valid excuses for late, missing work.
• Course communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system (Canvas). The course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course. Any revisions to the calendar will be posted on the course site.
• Virtual classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.
• Report to work prepared and appropriately dressed for your virtual internship. Respect organization rules.
• Follow proper guidelines for courteous communication in an online environment. These will be discussed during orientation.

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.

Course Schedule

Module I: Panama: Sustainable Community Development
In this module, students examine the challenges to and successes in sustainable community development in Panama and Latin America. Students explore the social, economic, and environmental components of sustainability and their role in community development. Through case studies and assessing their own communities, students learn about tools to effectively manage community-owned resources, overcome barriers to community transformation, and integrate notions of sustainability into community discourse. The course will also introduce students to the historical dimensions of international development in Latin America.
Session 1: Sustainability – Community – Development: Concepts and Definitions

Required reading/watching:

Assignment:
Define each of the concepts in your terms. Define each of the concepts according to the literature. Reflect on your community. Define and describe it. What is the role of development in your community? What are the perceived needs? What is left out? In your community, is there a sustainability office or agency or initiative? What work does it do? What have been its successes? In your opinion, are its initiatives appropriate? Justify your position.

Session 2: Development and the Anthropocene

Required reading/watching:

Assignment:
Choose a sub-topic or question from the lecture and discussion. Using an alternative presentation format (e.g. Storyboard, Canva, Squarespace, Glogster, Flipgrid or another program of your preference), present: 1. the current juxtapositions between Development and the Anthropocene as you perceive them, and 2. explain and discuss the opportunities for achievement and progress in the sub-topic of your choice (in your community) as they relate to Development and the Anthropocene. Details for this assignment will be provided in the synchronous class.

Session 3: From Sustainability to Regeneration

Required reading/watching:
Assignment:
In your community, identify opportunities for regenerative action and prospects for regenerative projects. Request an interview with an official from your community’s sustainability office, environmental department, or similar structure. Prepare a list of questions for the interview. Report back your findings to the group.

Module II: Making the Most of Your Internship
This module occurs prior to the start of the internship and will prepare students for the demands and expectations of an internship, strategies for success, and academic requirements.

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.

Session 2: Positionality and Internship Ethics/Awareness
- What do you bring to your role as intern that may influence how you perceive and engage in the internship experience?
  a. Stereotypes and preconceptions about interning in Panama
  b. What are your motivations? How do you imagine your role?
  c. Assess. You are embarking on a new experience. You want to enjoy it and grow from it. For this to happen, it is important to take a step back and assess what you bring with you on this journey and this experience.

Knowing what you bring with you will help you know what you need to supplement, complement, modify, and ultimately what you can share during your experience.

Really take some time out to reflect.

- What do you bring with you? What talents and skills have you arrived here with? What strengths? What weaknesses accompany you? What would you like to strengthen? What would you like to build on? Reflect and think deeply below and above the surface. Please provide written responses. 500 words minimum

  - Analyze. Read through your analysis from the questions above. Take your thoughts and ideas a step further. Given what you wrote, what do you want to keep? What
would you like to throw away? What do you want to change? If you want to change something, what do you want to change it into? Why? What do you want to share? What do you want to offer? What do you want to hide? 500 words minimum

- **Expectations.** You will be involved with your organization for twelve weeks and perhaps beyond. What do you hope to gain from your experience? In what way(s) do you hope to grow? What do you hope to give (of you) to the organization you will be working with? Be realistic about what you can do in twelve weeks. What do you expect to receive from your Panama experience? Consider what you bring with you and how your expectations converge or not. 500 words minimum

1. Introduction to Work Culture in Panama
2. Introduction to Internship – visit and develop understanding of context and position in field/country
3. Ethics in Internships: This is an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the ethics of engaging in internships in an international context in general and in Panama in particular.

**Session 3: The Internship Learning Agreement**
Central to a successful internship experience is development of the Internship Learning Agreement. The academic director will work with students individually and as a group to review the purpose of the Internship Learning Agreement. The academic director will discuss student strategies for collaborating with the internship supervisor to design the contents of the Internship Learning Agreement in adherence to internship learning objectives and in collaboration with the internship supervisor at the host organization. The Agreement also helps to ensure a clear understanding of the objectives of the internship among the student, academic director, and internship supervisor.

Once internship placements are confirmed, the students, together with the academic director will review objectives for the internship and discuss expectations, learning agreements, timeframes and other logistics, structural components of the final internship paper, content, layout, and general guidelines.

**Required Readings:**

Module III: The Internship Experience: Review and Reflection
This module occurs after students have begun their internship. Critical, guided reflection will play a key role in student development and learning during the internship. Students will keep an internship journal in which they respond to the questions/issues listed below. Journaling should be done daily, keeping in mind the learning objectives. Students will submit two progress reports on their successes and limitations toward achieving learning objectives. Students will also meet with their instructor and other internship students for reflection and discussion during the internship.

**Internship observations:** How is the professional environment different from what you are used to? What are you learning about working collaboratively in this environment? How do you find yourself reacting to and adjusting to workplace practices that are different from what you are accustomed to? How does it feel to be an intern in this environment? Why?

**Theory and Practice: Digging Deeper:** How does the work of your internship site connect to important program themes? How has the experience at your internship challenged or affirmed the arguments in a reading or lecture from this semester?

**Skills and Experience:** What insights to this field have you gained through your internship? What skills are most valuable for this internship site and what opportunities have you had to improve your skills in this area? What has challenged you and how are you handling those challenges? How do you see this experience preparing you for future opportunities?

**Learning Goals:** How much progress have you made toward your learning goals? What experiences or activities have contributed to your ability to meet them? Are you learning something important you didn't anticipate and would like to add to your Learning Goals at this time?

**Required Readings:**
Articles specific to the issues addressed by the internship will be assigned once the internship placement is determined.
Module IV: Processing and Maximizing the Internship Experience

The final module occurs toward the end or after the internship and focuses on ways of processing and articulating the internship as well as equipping students with practical tips and strategies for making the most of the experience personally, academically, and professionally. Students will reflect on the internship experience and process the learning that occurred in a safe and supportive context. The internship may have been a different experience than expected, may challenge the student’s expectations of interning in a new environment, and may change the student’s perspective of life projects or professional goals. The module discusses ways of acknowledging both the successes and failures of the internship, with an emphasis personal reflection, and setting realistic goals for the future.

Additional seminar content will include:
1. Processing the conclusion of the internship experience
2. Closure with colleagues and supervisors
3. Articulating the experience through an oral presentation
4. Next Steps: How to include your internship on your résumé, how to frame the internship in a cover letter, and other ways to build on this experience.

Required Readings:
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<th>Possible Considerations</th>
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| Title / Acknowledgements / Abstract/Technical Aspects | - The title is succinct and captures the essence of the internship experience  
- The acknowledgements are complete and professionally written  
- The abstract clearly summarizes the internship experience and learning outcomes  
- Table of contents, In-text citations, and reference list or bibliography are done correctly and completely  
- There are no mistakes in writing & grammar, spelling & punctuation  
- The paper is clean, legible, well-formatted, professional in appearance, and aesthetically pleasing |
| Contextualization and Organizational Profile  | - Important themes and background information are provided so reader understands the field in which the internship organization operates  
- The history and work of the internship organization, how its work relates to the program theme, and how it fits into the context of other similar organizations are all accurately described  
- The organizational structure, including division of responsibilities and the goals, objectives and activities of the organization are well elaborated  
- Care is taken not to harm by criticism, nor evaluate  
- The community served by the organization is described in sufficient detail |
| Internship Focus/Objectives/Justification     | - The paper specifies the focus area of the internship within the organization's broader work  
- The objectives of the internship are clearly presented and appropriate; how the objectives relate to the program theme and/or Critical Global Issue are clearly described.  
- The student's internship tasks/duties at the organization are presented and justified. |
| Information Acquisition                       | - How information was gathered in order to compose the final internship paper is explained in a clear and accurate manner and supporting materials are included in appendices (if applicable)  
- A clear and complete description of the work undertaken is given, including dates and hours worked (put in an addendum). |
| Positionality and Ethics                      | - The paper acknowledges the intern's views, values, beliefs and other aspects of their personal background that influence their worldview.  
- The paper demonstrates ongoing self-reflection throughout the internship experience in relation to their positionality.  
- Human Subjects policies and ethical guidelines are adhered to and thoroughly discussed |
| Critical Reflection on Internship Experience | -Appropriate consideration is given to informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants, in keeping with human subjects protocols and the approved internship learning agreement  
- The internship strengthens relationships and contributes to mutual trust between the author, the organization and its clientele in ways that are respectful, culturally appropriate, and collaborative  
- The internship project is responsive to host organization and/or host community needs, as applicable |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| Analysis of Critical Issues/Themes             | -The description of tasks and responsibilities is clear.  
- The paper examines the extent to which objectives were achieved, how objectives changed or evolved over the course of the internship experience.  
- Key professional lessons learned through the internship experience are described with specific examples  
- A personal evaluation of performance in the internship is included with suggestions of how it could have been improved.  
- Ways in which student identity may have shaped their insights of the internship experience are described |
| Conclusions & Recommendations for Future Interns| -The main insights and lessons learned through the internship experience are detailed  
- Recommendations of opportunities or projects for future interns are described |