

Internship and Seminar

ITRN 3000 (4 credits)

Panama: Community and Non-Governmental Organizations Internship

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

This seminar and internship consists of a five week seminar and internship with a local community organization, research organization, business, or international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The aim of an internship is to enable students to gain valuable work experience and enhance their skills in an international work environment.

SIT will use its extensive network in Panama to facilitate placement with an organization, and work with each student to secure the internship placement. Drawing on the wide network of community organizations, activists, and academics that sustain the academic program and connect to the work and life of the host community, SIT internships prioritize collaborative engagement/relationships with host communities and inclusive internship opportunities to better match students' interests with the internship placement. This placement may be dependent on the student's Spanish language abilities.

The internship seminar's reflection and assessment meetings are held with the academic director or internship coordinator before and during the internship period to review the progress of the internship and learning associated with the internship experience. The internship seminar culminates in an internship paper in which students process their learning experience on the site and analyze issues important to the organization. The paper should also document a comprehensive schedule and other skills and knowledge acquired through the experience. A focus will be on linking internship learning with the program's critical global issues, Development & Inequality and Identity & Human Resilience and community/NGO organizations in Panama.

This internship provides students the opportunity to put into practice the theoretical material, methodologies, language abilities, and intercultural skills developed during the seminar and language classes. Our experiential education model helps students develop self-confidence, deeper understanding of the challenges of putting theory into practice, as well as analytical clarity, and cross-cultural sensitivity.

The Community and NGO Organizations Internship and Seminar program in Panama is designed to offer a broad range of possibilities for internship placements. These may include internships in public health, education, environmental issues (terrestrial and marine), sustainable businesses, indigenous groups, sustainable agriculture, etc. Once in country students will be presented with the diverse

internship options and placement will be made in collaboration with the academic director and internship site.

Learning Outcomes

The Seminar and Internship course comprises of about four weeks at your internship site which includes seminar hours before, during and after the internship. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of the ethics of internship in the context of Panama
- Describe, analyze, and synthesize their learning experience in the internship in the form of an internship paper;
- Articulate the output of the internship experience in the form of an oral presentation;
- Show understanding of elements of Panama's diverse cultural identities, social justice and community concerns as related to their internship site;
- Assess the challenges of social justice and community concerns in the context of Panama;
- Gain meaningful and practical work experience in their chosen field.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in Spanish and English and students will be exposed to vocabulary related to the internship through a range of venues prior to the start of the internship.

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 I: Making the Most of Your Internship (Weeks 1 & 2 – prior to the Internship)

During this module students will prepare for the internship and the writing of the internship paper, in meetings with the academic director, students' will reflect on the internship opportunities.

Additional seminar content will include:

1. Introduction – country context/history crash course/lectures/visit NGOs
2. Positionality and Internship Ethics/Awareness
 - a. Stereotypes and preconceptions about Panama/Latin America
 - b. Students' lens – how have you been taught to understand foreign places?
 - c. What are my motivations?
3. Introduction to Work Culture in Panama
4. 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.
5. Introduction to Internship – visit and develop understanding of context and position in field/country
6. The Internship Learning Agreement

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:

Hastings, Jesse Guite (2015). Building Participation in Large-scale Conservation: Lessons from Belize and Panama. *Conservation & Society*, 13(3) 221-231. Retrieved: <http://www.conservationandsociety.org/article.asp?issn=0972-4923;year=2015;volume=13;issue=3;spage=221;epage=231;aulast=Hastings>

Orgaz Agüera, Francisco (2013). *El turismo comunitario como herramienta para el desarrollo sostenible de destinos subdesarrollados* (Universidad Tecnológica de Santiago (UTESA), República Dominicana) Retrieved: https://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/nomadas/38/francisco_orgaz.pdf

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013). *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic Development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapters 1-4)

Recommended Readings:

Uzo, Marvin (2016). *Panama History: The Conquest, the Spanish Colony, the War Years, the Society and Its Environment, Ethnic Groups, the Economy, Government*. Panama City. CreateSpace.

Module II: The Internship Experience: Review and Reflection (Weeks 3-6)

During the seven weeks of the seminar students will focus on the review and reflection process of the internship experience. Students will keep an internship journal responding to the questions/issues listed below. Journaling should be done daily, keeping in mind the learning objectives. Two progress reports on their learning experience should be submitted.

Week 3 – First week at Internship site

Cultural observations: *How is the work environment different from what you are used to? What are you learning about working collaboratively in this culture? How do you find yourself reacting to and adjusting to cultural practices that are different from what you are accustomed to? How does it feel to be a foreigner in this environment? First Progress Report submitted.*

Week 4 – Second week at Internship site

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

Week 5 – Third week at Internship site

Skills and Experience: *What insights into this field have you gained through your internship? What skills are most valuable for this work and what opportunities have you had to improve yours 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? Second Progress Report submitted.*

Week 6 – Fourth week at Internship site

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 internship placement is determined.

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013). *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic Development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapters 5-11)

Recommended Readings:

McCullough, David (1978). *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914*. Simon & Schuster.

Module III: Processing and Maximizing the Internship Experience (Week 7)

This module 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.

Week 7 – Fifth week at Internship site

Articulating the Internship Experience

This session allows students to 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 working in a diverse and challenging 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, of completing tasks, handing over projects to and sharing insights with colleagues on the job, and setting realistic goals for the future.

Additional seminar content will include:

1. Processing the End of the Internship Experience
2. Closure with Colleagues and Supervisors
3. Articulating the Experience and Setting Plans for the Future

This final portion occurs in the final days of the program, as students plan their next steps, academically and professionally. Students discuss fears and strategies for building on this experience in other work settings, opportunities for professional growth, and how to make optimal use of the internship experience.

4. How to Include Your Internship on Your Résumé
5. Next Steps

Required Readings:

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013). *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic Development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapters 12-14)

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

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.

Description of Assignments

Discussion and Reflection Sessions

Discussion and reflection sessions take place on a weekly basis. Students are expected to share their personal experience in the internship and reflect on the professional learning process. These discussion and reflection sessions are key elements in the process of the learning experience and the student's professional achievements within the host organization.

Progress Reports

The progress report should document the progress of the student's professional and personal learning on the internship. Students document aspects of the challenges they face and how they try to deal with those challenges. Students submit two progress reports in the course of their internship experience.

Internship Performance

This evaluation by the Academic Director assesses the student's internship experience, overall professional achievements, and self-growth.

Oral Presentation

In the presentation, you should provide a succinct and clear description of the internship experience, a brief history of the organization where you interned, and the responsibilities undertaken. The oral presentation should relate the learning associated with the focus project and reflect on its relevance to the program theme and Critical Global Issue (Development & Inequality and Identity & Human Resilience). You should demonstrate effective management of the discussion with the audience and attend to the aesthetic elements of the delivery. A summary of the oral presentation assessment rubric will be shared with students in advance.

Final Paper

Students are expected to submit a 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 summarizes the work and history of the organization and incorporates a number of references, detailed description of internship accomplishments, and strong and innovative aspects of the organization. The paper should be well-written, well-organized, and aesthetically pleasing. A summary of the final paper assessment rubric will be shared with students in advance.

Assessment of the Internship

Discussion and Reflection Sessions	10%
2 Progress Reports	10%
Internship Performance	35%
Oral Presentation	10%
Final Paper	35%

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

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared, on time, and appropriately dressed for your internship. Comply with organization rules.
- Have work journal and progress report assignments completed on schedule and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions when in the field/office. Engage yourself in everyday life of the organization and initiate interaction.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (those of your internship supervisor and colleagues, classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with onsite visits). 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.