

Research Methods & Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 credits)

South Africa: Community Health and Social Policy

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.

Course Description

The Social and Community Health Research Methods and Ethics course provides students with the necessary methodological and conceptual tools needed for independent learning in an unfamiliar setting using the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on communities in South Africa as the context. Through a combination of formal classes and field-based learning, students will develop the knowledge and skills to undertake primary research in the area of public health. Building on a unique dataset developed by former students and derived from a survey and interviews with local community members that was administered at the onset of the pandemic, students will participate in ongoing research to monitor the social and personal health effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The course covers a variety of mixed methodological tools typical of research in the area of public health, including evidence based, ethnographical and qualitative research, and basic epidemiology and statistical analyses. The course also introduces a number of non-traditional methods including narrative inquiry, photovoice, art, and body-mapping. The course prepares students to embark on their own independent study project or internship.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will have the ability to:

- Effectively carry out a variety of social sciences research methodologies, including interviewing, questionnaires, focus groups, observation, and case studies, with emphasis placed on critical cultural analysis and ethical considerations when working with study subjects;
- Utilize methods of knowledge creation and presentation that are more acceptable and accessible in a developing world context, including narrative inquiry, photovoice, art, and body-mapping;
- Apply and critique basic statistical and epidemiological analyses in the evaluation of health-related research; and
- Compare and contrast research methods used for health-related research in the context of South Africa.

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.

On occasion, the class will be split so as to focus on issues relevant to ISP or Internship. Readings will all be provided online.

Course Schedule

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

Session times given are approximate with 30 minutes added for reflection and where staff are available to answer questions and assist with suggestions. Note that students will not sit for more than 90 minutes without a break, and further accommodations will be made for students with special needs.

Module 1: Research Methods & Ethics

Sessions include:

- Introduction to Experiential Learning (1 hour)
- Observation – Including reflection on the Johannesburg Bus Tour (2 hours)
- Narrative & Art– Including reflection on Johannesburg Museums (2 hours)
- Participatory Research & Photovoice (2 hours)
- Case Studies & Traditional Social Science Methods (2 hours)
- Basic Epidemiology (2 hours)
- Reading Medical Research Articles (2 hours)
- Workshop on accessing demographic data and relevant articles (2 hours)

Excursions:

- Johannesburg Explorer Bus (6 hours) – The limits of observation and single narratives.

- Freedom Park and the Old Fort Prison (4 hours) – power of multimedia and experience.

Readings:

- Budig, K., Diez, J., Conde, P., Sastre, M., Hernan, M. & Franco, M. (2018). Photovoice and empowerment: Evaluating the transformative potential of a participatory action research project. *BMC Public Health*, 18, 432-441.
- Eichsteller, M. (2019). There is more than one way - a study of mixed analytical methods in biographical narrative research. *Contemporary Social Science*, 14(3-4), 447-462.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2017.1417626>
- Kaplan, J. M., & Valles, S. A. (2021). Reflecting on what philosophy of epidemiology is and does, as the field comes into its own: Introduction to the Special Issue on Philosophy of Epidemiology. *Synthese*, 198(10), 2383-2392.
- Jewkes, R., Nduna, M., Levin, J., Jama, N., Dunkle, K., Wood, K., ... & Duvvury, N. (2007). Evaluation of Stepping Stones: a gender transformative HIV prevention intervention. In *Witwatersrand: South African Medical Research Council*.
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. FT press. xvi-xxv
- Stuckey, H.L. & Nobel, J. (2010). The connection between art, healing and public health: A review of current literature. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(2), 254-263.

Module 2: Fieldwork Workshop

Volunteers from our Cato Manor Homestay community look forward to sharing their perspectives as students work with them to practice the skills necessary for conducting Field Research. This workshop provides students with practical skills and experience in primary research techniques.

Sessions include:

- Defining & Refining the Hypothesis and Scope of Enquiry (2 hours)
- Survey Design and Peer-testing (2 hours)
- Survey Pilot-test and refinement (2 hours)
- Interview Design and Peer Testing (2 hours)
- Focus Group Design and Peer Testing (2 hours)
- Implementation morning with community volunteers. (3 hours)
- Synthesis and analysis of data workshop (3 hours)
- Presentation workshop (2 hours)
- Presentation and reflection session (2 hours)

Excursions: Cato Manor Community Implementation

Module 3: Ethics and Preparations for Independent Research

Work starts in week one, with regular meetings to move from idea to final product. The AD and advisor/s use individual and group sessions to ensure that students are supported in the process of planning a research project.

Sessions include:

- Weekly 1 on 1 sessions with the Academic Director to conceive, design and refine (30mins)
- General Ethics of Research (2 hours)
- Workshop on Writing the Proposal (4 hours)
- Workshop on completing the Human Subjects Review Forms (3 hours)
- Defending the Proposal (15mins)

Excursions: Students undertaking research or internships within 1 hour's drive of the centre will visit the site of their proposed study/work.

Readings:

Landram, S. V. (2018). *A methodological review of the cross-cultural ethical dilemmas that exist within the informed consent process: When ethical considerations in human research differ*. University of Northern Colorado, 157-167

McGladdery, J. 2021. *Revised Handbook for Independent Study Projects*. (Unpublished)

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assignments

Timely completion of all seminar assignments is expected. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments and papers must be turned in on the due date, at 4pm. Assignments must be emailed to the Academic Director (AD) and Academic Co-ordinator. Any assignments received after 4 pm on the due date will be considered late. No extensions will be given on the date an assignment is due. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding; argumentation and presentation of evidence. Students will be assessed on the quality of their graded work.

1) Non-Traditional Research Activity (15%)

Using one of the non-traditional approaches to undertaking community health research, develop a protocol that you would use to investigate the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown on mental health of young adults in Cato Manor. Describe how your approach would enable you to create knowledge that effectively communicates the lived realities of people's experiences.

2) Critical Analysis of Medical Research (15%)

In reference to a supplied journal research article, critically evaluate the research methodology adopted and the conclusions made.

3) Mixed Methodologies Community Workshop (30%)

3.1 Provide the sets of questions your pair designed for the survey, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group. (10) Questions will be assessed according to appropriateness and their effectiveness in gathering the information for which they were designed.

3.2 In a 10-minute oral presentation, present the findings, analyse the knowledge gained and reflect on the benefits associated with employing mixed methodologies when undertaking the research exercise with the community volunteers. Each pair of students will use a power point presentation to share their findings with the group. The oral presentation will be evaluated on ethical presentation of summarised content and the extent to which audience interest is maintained.

4) Independent Study Project (ISP) or Internship Proposal (30%)

Using the template provided, write a proposal in which you describe the study/internship, from hypothesis/internship goals to methods and ethical considerations. (5-10 pages depending on complexity inherent in the area of study and methods used). Proposals will be evaluated according to the extent to which they describe and explain how issues that can be anticipated will be addressed. A detailed rubric will be given in the ISP/Internship Handbook.

5) Human Subjects Review Forms (10%)

Students must complete Human Subject Review requirements for their research or internship project. (After reflection, the form itself will take approximately 1 to 2 hours to complete)

Assessment

Non-traditional Research Activity – 15%

Critical Analysis of Medical Research – 15%

Mixed Methodologies Community Workshop – 30%

Independent Study Project (ISP) or Internship Proposal – 30%

Human Subject Review Form – 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). 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.

Example: 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

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| 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 accordingly 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 (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the 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.
- 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 despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question

assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.

- 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.

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.