

Internship & Seminar ITRN-3000 (4 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

This course consists of a four-week internship with a community-based, national, international, or local public health delivery organization that is based in South Africa. The internship enables students to gain valuable work experience in the public health field and introduces students to the planning, delivery, and management of public health using South Africa as the case study.

SIT will use its extensive network to place students in public health or social development organizations. These may include organizations at the cutting edge of public health work, in rural and urban water and sanitation improvement projects, health clinics, maternal and child health innovations, urban health infrastructure projects and mobile app innovations in the health care field. In addition, students may petition SIT for approval of internship placements that they find on their own initiative. However, SIT's academic director will approve of the student's internship duties and locations in both SIT and student-initiated internship placements, and SIT will maintain oversight over internship placements in line with SIT academic policies, student health and security guidelines. Ultimately, each student takes responsibility for making optimal use of resources available at the organization and to be proactive in engaging with local experts to achieve internship objectives. Weekly two-hour reflection and assessment classes are held with the academic director or internship coordinator to review the progress of the internship, learning associated with the internship experience and to draw out broader issues related to positionality, culture, and ethics as they relate to public health or social development.

Students complete an internship and submit a paper in which they describe, assess and analyze their learning. The paper also outlines the tasks that the student completed through the internship.

Learning Outcomes

The Internship and Seminar course comprises 185 hours (4 credits) of internship, briefings, in-class instruction and reflection, preparation of final assignments, interactive learning, and research activities. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of the ways in which local cultural practices shape public health and social development outcomes in a context such as South Africa;

- Show understanding of the dynamics that shape successes and/or failure of a public health or social development project in a context such as South Africa;
- Assess and articulate the benefits, challenges and obstacles that the internship organization encounters in their work;
- Describe, analyze, and synthesize their learning experience in the internship in the form of an internship paper and oral presentation;
- Gain meaningful and practical work experience in their chosen field.

Language of Instruction

English is the official language in South Africa and students should expect that English will be widely spoken in work and field settings during the internship.

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 lectures' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Preparation for the Internship

During this module, students will prepare for the internship. In weekly personalized meetings, students will discuss options and goals in week 2, explore organizations in week 3, select their site in week 4, write an internship application letter in week 5, and write a proposed memorandum of understanding in week 6. Students will be given instruction on how to write the assignments and the Final Paper and have regular meetings with the academic director. Complementary reading will be assigned by the academic director. (Students complete the same Research Methods and Ethics (RME) course as those doing the Independent Study Project option. An Internship Proposal and Human Subjects Review process is graded within the RME Course. Thematic Seminar Courses taken prior to embarking on the Internship provide students with knowledge on the South African context in which the organization operates).

Sessions include:

- Week 1 Introduction to the Internship Option (30 mins)
- Week 2 Options for Internships and acquiring details about sites (2 hours)
- Week 4 Writing an Internship Application Letter with abridged resume (2 hours)
- Week 5 Constructing an Internship Learning Agreement. (2 hours)
- Week 6 Work-based norms and practices related to internships and work in South Africa. (1 hour)
- Week 8 Review of past Internship writeups (2 hours)
- Week 9 Instructions for Assignments and the Final Paper (90 minutes)

Readings:

Strong, A. (2016). Volunteerism or Voluntourism? A Case Study of NGO Motivations & Success in South Africa.

Sweitzer, H. F., & King, M. A. (2013). The successful internship. Cengage Learning. (Ch1 &10)

Module 2: Learning in the Organization

Once in the organization, students need to form working relationships so as to acquire the skills they aim to gain through interning. They will be contacted by their Intern Advisor and Academic Director after 3 days, so as to ensure that expectations are met and/or managed. Students set weekly learning objectives, keep an internship journal, and write two “critical reflection” papers on selected aspects of their experience. The AD will hold weekly discussion sessions so students can benefit from the experience of other interns.

Sessions include:

- Week 11 Reflection and Discussion (2 hour)
- Week 12 Reflection and Discussion (2 hour)

Reading:

Nhapi, T. (2021). Social work decolonisation-forays into Zimbabwe experiences, challenges and prospects. *Social Work & Policy Studies: Social Justice, Practice and Theory*, 3(2).

Module 3: Documenting and applying the Learning

After spending 4 weeks, including 120 hours actively working in the organization, students reflect and discuss what was learned. The writeup enables students to crystallize their experiences through communicating them in a writeup. Students will be grouped with other students who did similar types of internships for sessions involving reflection.

Sessions include:

- Reflection and discussion on what was learned (1 hour)
- Future relevance of the internship, including adding it to your résumé (1 hour)

Reading:

Switzer, F. and King, M. (2013). *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapter 12).

Internship Paper Written Format

Expectations for each section of the final paper are outlined below. These, however, are guidelines and may be adapted to the specificities of your internship.

I. Description of host institution in context

A brief description (two pages) of the host institution for the internship. This should include the history and mission statement of the organization, the nature of the services offered and a profile of the customers who use them. Where appropriate include the Institutional culture, and/or the legal framework within which it operates. The student may also provide brochures or other material that further describes the institution.

II. Description of the intern's task/focus of learning

The goal of the internship is clearly stated, and the focus defined. Tasks involved are described in general terms, with more detail provided below (1 page).

III. Information Acquisition

Similar to a methodology section in an academic paper, students describe how they prepared and placed themselves so as to acquire information needed to complete tasks and/or learn. They describe how they acquired new knowledge/skills (half a page). They also refer here to a daily log which records each day's tasks/learning experiences (bullet form, length will vary according to number and diversity of tasks/learning experiences),

IV. Positionality and Ethics

Students describe the construction of the memorandum of understanding and the ethical review process they went through. They then point to specific instances where they needed to apply ethical principles while they were working. The positionality is situated and how it affected work and/or learning (1.5 pages).

V. General Critical Analysis

Students reflect on their initial goals and how they were achieved or modified according to the context. Without being critical of the organization, students reflect on their own and host staff's actions and how the learning/tasks might be better achieved, bearing in mind the ethical and other constraints which must be honored. More-general learning experiences which time did not allow analysis of may be documented here (1-2 pages).

VI. Focused Critical Analysis

Whether learning collaboratively or learning by doing a task assigned, critical issues arise when humans try to design or implement a social or health intervention. Practice seen or prescribed in the organization is situated in comparison to the mission, context, resources, protocols, legal framework and/or suggested best practice. Plans, missions, and protocols need to be adapted to diverse situations encountered. In this section students select a

substantive issue and compare how practice is adapted according to context, bringing other opinions on best practice to bear (4 to 5 pages).

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.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weekly two-hour reflection and assessment meetings are held with the academic director or internship coordinator to review the progress of the internship and learning associated with the internship experience.

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 the quality of academic scholarship and adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Assignments

1) Request to Intern Letter (5%)

Write a 1-page letter in which you request to intern at the organization. Include a paragraph that demonstrates you know something about the good work done at the organization and why you are keen to intern there. Add a short resume.

2) Description of the Organization (5%)

From information gathered from their website or a personal visit, write a 2-page description of the organization including the work it does and the community it serves.

3) Internship Learning Agreement Proposal (5%)

Using the template provided, adapt the template Internship Learning Agreement to more-fully document the role you expect to play and what role you expect the organization to play. Indicate your knowledge of sensitive areas and how access to them will be avoided or managed.

4) Progress Report 1 (10%)

After 1 week at the site, take an excerpt from your journal and write a 2-page critical reflection piece in which you describe a particular thing you saw, show information you gathered to make sense of context, and express what you learned by reflecting. Take pictures of pages reflecting week 1 of your journal in its raw form and submit those with the progress report

5) Progress Report 2 (10%)

After another week at the site, take an excerpt from your journal and write a 2-page critical reflection piece in which you describe a particular thing you saw, show information you gathered to make sense of context, and express what you learned by reflecting. Take pictures of pages reflecting week 2 of your journal in its raw form and submit those with the progress report

6) Internship Performance (20%)

Your onsite advisor/gatekeeper will be requested to assess your performance, specifically regarding willingness to assist, maintaining ethical standards, acting in the best interests of the organization, and maintaining warm, professional relationships with staff and clients.

7) Internship Paper (40%)

Using the format provided in the Internship handbook, write a 20-page paper on the organization and what you learned while placed there.

8) Oral Presentation (5%)

Present the organization and what you learned from it in a 20-minute oral presentation, followed by 5 minutes in which you answer questions.

Assessment

- Request to Intern Letter – 5%
- Description of the Organization – 5%
- Proposed Memorandum of Understanding – 5%
- Progress Report 1 – 10%
- Progress Report 2 – 10%
- Internship Performance – 20%
- Internship Paper – 40%
- Oral Presentation – 5%

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.

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 the 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.

| RUBRIC: Internship Paper | |
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| Category | Possible Considerations |
| Title / Abstract/Technical Aspects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 -Appropriate consideration is given to informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants, in keeping with human subjects protocols and the SARB - 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 |

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| Critical Reflection on Internship Experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 |
| Analysis of Critical Issues/Themes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The manner in which the organization and its work are linked to the core themes of the program is described. -Analysis is given by comparing and contrasting the theory of the work/field studied throughout the semester with the practice of the work at the specific internship site. -Clear articulation of how the intern's knowledge and understanding of the core themes of the program were enhanced through the internship experience. |
| Conclusions & Recommendations for Future Interns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The main insights and lessons learned through the internship experience are detailed -Recommendations of opportunities or projects for future interns are described. |
| Effort | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determinations of effort vary by program. |