Research Methods and Ethics
ANTH 3500 (3 credits)

Tunisia and Italy: Politics and Religious Integration in the Mediterranean

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 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 Tunisia. Essential among these tools is the conceptual ability to translate lived experience into learning experience. In particular, the course enhances students’ skills at building rapport; initiating purposeful dialogue in the context of post-colonial and post-revolutionary Tunisia; 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 Tunisia and the critical global issue, Migration | Identity | Resilience. Broadly, the seminar introduces students to both qualitative and quantitative approaches of social science field research. Throughout, the objective is to promote critical analysis of the processes of immigrants’ integration in Italy and the thorny relation between religion and democracy consolidation in Tunisia and foster insight and utilization of appropriate methodologies for qualitative study of society in total respect the ethics and value systems of the host community.

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 Migration | Identity | Resilience, development of a research proposal or internship 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 or completing an internship will be discussed. The overall aim is to help students hone their experience-based learning processes and prepare them for the development of either an internship at local organization or an Independent Study Project (ISP), which is largely based on the data gathered from primary sources.
Learning Outcomes
The Research Methods and Ethics course comprises 45 hours. 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 Migration | Identity | Resilience OR demonstrate awareness of the ethics of internship in the context of Tunisia;
- Analyze and process primary data gathered in the field and draw valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions;
- Develop a culturally-appropriate and intellectually-rigorous ISP or internship, grounded in current debates and relevant literature on immigration across the Mediterranean and the consolidation of democracy in Tunisia and the role of religion therein;
- 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 OR an internship proposal that includes a description of the host organization, an outline of tasks that will be performed, a proposed work timetable, and projected outcomes such as a paper or business plan in the context of Tunisia in its Mediterranean environment.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English, but 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 or internship. The module is designed to heighten students’ awareness of the various inter-cultural determinations set in motion when living and conducting research in another culture, and to turn this awareness into a learning experience useful for anthropological research.

Session 1: What is Cultural Anthropology?
This session reviews the various definitions of culture and the main issues raised by the discipline. It mainly explains the historical determinations of “culture” and “civilization” and shows their significance for cultural politics.

Required Reading:

Session 2: Cultural Informant
This session examines the ambiguous role of the indigenous informant in research and the anthropologist’s ambivalent position vis-à-vis that role. While deconstructing the notion of “objectivity” in cultural anthropology and social science generally, the session stresses the notion of validity and coherence.

Required Reading:

Session 3: Cultural Incidents.
This session teaches how to turn cultural incidents into learning experiences; and how to translate the anecdotal narrative into significant cultural discourse.

Required Reading:

Session 4: Teaching Culture?
This session raises the fundamental questions related to intercultural communication, mainly the centrality of verbal intercourse and art forms.
Module 2: Research Methods and Ethics in the Context of Tunisia
This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting quantitative and/or qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. The module reviews various social science research techniques and explains how they relate to fieldwork; it also demonstrates how empirical learning is transformed into qualitative research.

Session 1: Research Methods in Migration | Identity | Resilience.
This session explains the main research approaches used in social science, with an emphasis on conducting research related to the program's critical global issue, Migration | Identity | Resilience.

Required Reading:

Session 2: Qualitative Research: Participant Observation and Interviewing
This session familiarizes the students with qualitative research and its purpose, objectives, themes, and structures. It teaches the basic techniques of interviewing in social science research.

Required Reading:

Session 3: Data Analysis, Evaluation, and Interpretation
This session reviews major techniques used in social science research and explores how to analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data.

Required Reading:

Session 4: Research Ethics in Migration | Identity | Resilience
This session explains the moral and deontological guidelines set in research in social science and explains its institutional requirements.

Required Reading:
Module 3: Introduction to the ISP and Internship in the Context of Tunisia
This module will describe the ISP and internship processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP or internship. The module will include a review and critique of past ISP and/or internship papers. The module will also walk the students through the SIT Study Abroad Review Board (SARB) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the application for Human Subjects Review (HSR application).

Session 1: Critical Review of Past ISPs or Internships
During this session, students review past ISP or internship papers and engage in roundtable discussions about methods, ethics, and success of the projects.

Session 2: Human Subject Research
This session reviews the history of research on human subjects and reviews SIT’s Human Subjects Review application process.

Required Reading:

Session 3: IRB and SARB
This session clarifies the role of the review boards and walks students through the SARB/IRB application process.

On-site visit to Les Anges, day school for mentally handicapped children.

Required Reading:

Session 4: One-on-one Meetings with the Academic Director to Discuss Preliminary ISP or Internship Ideas
During this session, students meet one-on-one with the academic director to discuss their ideas and goals for their ISP or internship; they also discuss networking strategies for identifying an ISP advisor or internship placement.

Module 4: Project Proposal Development
Based on learning and engagement in the preceding course modules, this module focuses on ISP and internship proposal development and guiding students through the development of the Human Subjects Review (HSR) application for review by the SIT Study Abroad Review Board (SARB). This critical phase in the course involves both large student group meetings and individual student meetings with the academic director and the ISP advisor or internship supervisor.

Session 1: Writing an ISP or Internship Proposal in the Context of Tunisia
During this session, students learn what components are required for their ISP or internship proposal, and the various steps required for their successful completion.
Session 2: Peer Review of ISP or Internship Proposal Drafts
In this session, students do a peer review of the ISP or internship proposals and provide feedback about how to improve the drafts.

Session 3: ISP or Internship Proposal Presentation to Peers
Students turn in their ISP or internship proposals and present their proposals to their peers and the academic director.

Session 4: One-on-one Meetings with Academic Director and/or ISP Advisor or Internship Supervisor
Students continue to have one-on-one meetings with the academic director and the ISP advisor or internship supervisor to set goals and prepare for the ISP/internship period.

After completing Modules 1-4, students will split into groups by ISP or internship. ISP students will take Module 5a, and internship students will take Module 5b.

Module 5a: ISP in the Context of Tunisia
This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Tunisia. 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: Research-based Norms and Practices in Tunisia
This session explores norms and practices related to research in Tunisia, 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.

Required Readings:


Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology
This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving research challenges.

Required Reading:

Module 5b: Internship in the Context of Tunisia
This module prepares the student for the internship experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to internships in Tunisia. The module highlights the importance of ethics in the internship experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student, the host institution, and the program.

Session 1: Preparing for the Internship
This introductory session prepares the students for their internship in country. The session covers a range of areas that include résumé preparation and cover letter, dress, student objectives for the internship, and stages of student growth in the internship. Students will review the internship rubric.

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Tunisia
This session explores work-based norms and practices related to internships and work in Tunisia, exploring such issues as how best to describe the internship experience and purpose to potential internship hosts and others, gender norms, issues of language, and workplace expectations.

Required Reading:

Session 3: The Ethics of Participating in an Internship in Tunisia
This session outlines the responsibilities of the student and the host organization for a productive and significant experience that can serve the objectives of both. The session also reviews best practices for a successful internship and exposes the student’s positionality in relation to the organization.

Required Reading:
Assignments and Evaluation
Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Practice Interview (15%)
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, race, and class affected the set-up and wording of their questionnaire and consequently the outcome of the interview.

1) Field Visit Report (15%)
Students are asked to write a three-page report on one civil society organization from the following fields: women’s rights, ethnic minorities, LGBT, the environment, and transparency and good governance.

2) Field Work Journal (20%)
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 or the internship period. The work journal is submitted for review and evaluation three times during the course of the semester.

3) Research/Internship Proposal (40%)
All students must develop a research or internship 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. The internship proposal should include the objectives to be achieved during the internship period, a justification of the work and the organization selected, skills or areas in which the student can contribute to the work of the host organization, and an outline of the work plan to be carried out.

4) Class Attendance and Participation (10%)
Attendance during the thematic seminar is mandatory and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and during other activities and excursions.

Assessment:
  - Practice Interview - 15%
  - Field Visit Report - 15%
  - Field Work Journal - 20%
  - Research/Internship Proposal - 40%
  - Participation - 10%
Grading Scale:

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<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
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<td>87-89%</td>
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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 (those of classmates, lecturers, and 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.

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.