

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 credits)

Czech Republic: Human Rights and Refugee Integration

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 (RME) seminar introduces students to conceptual and practical tools for developing and executing a research project on a topic of their choice. In this course, students gain the knowledge and skills essential to forming constructive and ethical relationships with organizations and/or individuals so that they can successfully complete an Independent Study Project in the Czech Republic. Students will learn about the complexities of conducting research with refugees and migrants, who often find themselves in precarious and vulnerable situations due to their uncertain status within their host countries.

Rather than simply classifying refugees as “vulnerable persons” based on Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines, the course seeks to approach the topic with empathy and a commitment to upholding the dignity of refugees by considering the ways in which refugees carry unique skills, knowledge, and perspectives on their home and host countries, which are critical to an understanding of the politics of human movement in the European Union. In this way, the course seeks to balance ethical considerations and compassion while also stressing the urgent need for research methods that allow refugees and migrants to share stories and ideas that contribute to a variety of human rights projects and initiatives.

The course surveys common empirical methods, tools, and methodologies as students begin to identify methodological approaches that align with their research question, target research populations, and their personal values to effectively develop a research proposal for the Independent Study Project course. To do this, the seminar uses lectures, readings, in-class activities, and field assignments to prepare students to undertake field study in the cultural context of Czechia in strict observance of research procedures involving human subjects and the regulatory ethical norms defined by the Study Abroad Review Board (SARB) and SIT’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The overall aim is to support students with SIT’s experience-based learning process and prepare them for the development of an Independent Study Project (ISP), which is largely based on data gathered from primary sources.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an acute sense of positionality and perspective and operate independently, using cultural sensitivity in collaboration with local networks of trust built over the course of the semester;
- Design appropriate methods and ethics for field research projects studying refugee integration, migration, and cultural transformation;
- Analyze primary data gathered in the field and draw valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions;
- Develop 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.

Language of Instruction

This seminar is conducted in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to seminar content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues.

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.

Required Texts:

See course schedule for a full list. All course readings for modules are available on the course management site.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Practice Interview (20%)

Students will conduct two practice interviews with two or three people from different identity categories from their host community and write a small reflection (2-3 pages). The reflection should include a description of how the student prepared for the interview, including any ethical considerations. The reflection should explore how the student's own positionality as a study abroad student and their identity (such as race, class, gender, nationality etc.) influenced the set-up and outcome of the interview.

Additionally, in the reflection students should consider how the identity of the interviewees may have affected their responses, the flow of conversation, and other non-verbal communication. Depending on the nature of the two interviews, students may also compare and contrast how the identity and personality of each interviewee may have influenced the process and outcome of each interview. In class sessions will help students to prepare sample questions and choose a structured, unstructured, or semi-structured approach to interviewing in advance of the practice interview.

2) Methods and Methodologies Presentations (25%)

During the semester students will be studying different qualitative research methods and methodologies that they will use during the ISP. This exercise is designed for students to explore a methodology (such ethnography, phenomenology, mixed methods research, participatory action research, case study, etc.) or a method (interviewing techniques, arts-based methods, surveys, focus groups, etc.) to deepen their knowledge on an area of interest. Students may work individually, in pairs or in small groups to design a 20-minute presentation or experiential learning activity on their topic for their classmates.

3) ISP Proposal (45%)

In this assignment, students will begin to explore literature on a developing research idea and create a comprehensive research proposal. The assignment consists of two parts. In Part 1, students will select 6-10 sources relevant to their research topic, which may include peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, films, or other online resources, and publications. They will create a reference list using the appropriate citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) and write a 2–3-page literature review, discussing the selected sources, identifying any trends, topics, discussions or debates that emerge from the literature surveyed.

In Part 2, students will develop a research proposal addressing a theme related to the program. The proposal should include an introduction, research questions and objectives, theoretical framework/literature review, methodology, and ethical considerations. The proposal must comply with ethical standards learned throughout the course. Students will work directly with the AD and/or ISP advisor on the development of the proposal, which may vary depending on the nature of the project. The total page limit for the assignment is 8 pages, including both the literature review and proposal.

5) Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions, and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.

- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment:

- Practice Interview – 20%
- Methods and Methodologies Presentation – 25%
- In Progress Literature Review – 10%
- ISP Proposal – 35%
- Participation – 10%

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

- **Be prepared and engaged:** For an interactive course to succeed, you must be present, on time, and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone. Moreover, the content of this course is learned collaboratively, meaning that when a student is not here, they take away from everyone's opportunity to learn. The only way to maximize our collective learning potential is if we are all here contributing. 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.

- **Submit assignments on time:** 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 the 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.
 - Please note late penalties will be forgiven for most assignments if they are related to circumstances beyond your reasonable control (ex: you are sick, etc.). Otherwise, please submit upload assignments by their due dates.
- **Bring your curiosity:** Ask questions in class. Engage the guest lecturers, as these are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak. Remember, there are no foolish questions, and your inquiries might help others in class who have similar ideas/thoughts. By actively participating and showing curiosity, you demonstrate respect for our guests and contribute to creating a dynamic learning environment for everyone.
- **Maintain academic Integrity:** As members of a learning community, we all want to submit work that reflects our own ideas and efforts. Even if it is unintentional, plagiarism can have serious consequences. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself these questions:
 - Did I reference ideas, quotes, phrases, or facts I read about in a book, article, or website, without citing the author and year of the source where I read about them?
 - Did I paraphrase by changing only a word or two or moving the words around?
 - Did you answer "yes" to any of the above questions? If so, you are committing plagiarism and need to give credit to appropriate sources before you submit your assignment***
- **Principled Disagreement:** Learning often involves discomfort. Some discomfort

can facilitate personal and collective growth. You, your peers, guest lecturers, instructors, and local constituents, have diverse experiences, values, beliefs, affiliations, and identities. Reflecting on these differences can be emotionally challenging, even when it deepens self-awareness and mutual understanding. In this course, we aim to encourage principled disagreement rather than avoiding difficult conversations. *This is challenging work, and we will inevitably make mistakes.* Our goal is to thoughtfully critique ideas rather than attacking individuals. We aim to embrace productive discomfort and minimize unproductive discomfort, striving for principled disagreement.

- **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.
- **Our social identities** – Our social identities – race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, mental and physical ability, size, national origin, citizenship status, and more – shape how we are perceived, represented, and treated. They also influence what knowledge and learning is deemed valuable and legitimate. To challenge hegemonic paradigms and perspectives, this course intentionally includes readings, topics, videos, and assignments from authors and perspectives of diverse backgrounds. However, there may be gaps we have overlooked. Your constructive feedback is always welcome on how to make this course more inclusive and transformative.
- **Store 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.
- **Mindful Digital Engagement:** While the topics of refugee integration and cultural transformation are captivating, it is difficult to compete against the internet's endless distractions. Engaging with the digital world during class or study abroad activities can be disruptive to both instructors, guests, community partners, and peers. To foster an environment of active presence and engagement, we ask students to adhere to these mindful digital engagement guidelines:
 - Cellphones 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.

- 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 adhering to 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.

SIT has a wonderful array of resources available to help with your academic, personal, and social life. If you are feeling strain in any of these areas, do not hesitate to reach out to your instructor or the staff on campus. 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

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: 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. More 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 their research.

Sessions may include:

- Cultural adjustment cycle
- Homestay as a cultural experience and site of learning
- Doing field-based research in a study abroad context
- Experiential learning philosophy and the politics of culture in Czechia
- Positionality and outsider/insider research

Required Readings:

Glesne, Corrine. (2021). Field relations: Researcher roles, rapport, and reflexivity (chapter 5). In *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction (5th edition)*. Pearson.

Pink, Sarah. (2015/2009). Situating sensory ethnography: From academia to ethnography (chapter 1). In *Doing sensory ethnography (2nd edition)*. Sage.

Schweitzer, R., & Steel, Z. (2008). Researching refugees: Methodological and ethical considerations. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Doing cross-cultural research* (pp. 87-101). Springer.

Module 2: Introduction to the ISP

This module will describe the ISP processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP. The module will also introduce students to the SIT Study Abroad Review Board (SARB) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the application for Human Subjects Review (HSR application). The final session of this module will focus on traditional and decolonial interview methods to help students develop a basic understanding of interview techniques in advance of their first assignment.

Sessions may include:

- Introduction to the SIT Study Abroad Review Board (SARB)/Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process and Human Subjects Review Application
- One-on-one Meetings with the academic director to discuss preliminary ISP ideas
- Defining and discussing vulnerable research populations; ethical considerations in research with refugees
- Traditional and decolonial interview approaches and interview question design

Required Readings:

Chilisa, B. (2011). Decolonizing the interview method (chapter 7). In *Indigenous Research Methods* (pp. 202-224). Sage.

Clark-Kazak, C. (2021). Ethics in forced migration research: Taking stock and potential ways forward. *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 9(3), 125-138.

Ellis, B. H., Kia-Keating, M., Yusuf, S. A., Lincoln, A., & Nur A. (2007). Ethical research in refugee communities and the use of community participatory methods. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 44(3), 459-481.

Assignment: Practice Interview (20%)

Module 3: Methods of Research in Refugee, Migration, and Cultural Transformation Studies

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting qualitative field research in studies of migration, refugees, and cultural transformation. The module also addresses the ethics of research in data collection and interpretation. Students choose a method or methodology of interest, and review at least two select articles or book chapters in order to prepare a presentation on their topic for the class (some possible readings are included below but students are encouraged to depart from this list to complete their

assignment). By the end of this module, students should have a basic understanding of a wide variety of qualitative and mixed methods approaches to consider when pursuing their ISP. Possible presentation topics include, but are not limited to, methodologies such as ethnography, phenomenology, case-study, mixed methods research, narrative inquiry, participatory action research, arts-based research; or methods such as interviewing, focus groups, participant observation, surveys, etc.

Sessions may include:

- Research methods and ethics in refugee and migration studies
- Selecting topics, formulating research questions, and writing a literature review
- Data collection: participant observation and interviewing
- Fundamentals of mixed methods research
- Data analysis, evaluation, and interpretation

Required Reading:

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2013). Five qualitative approaches to inquiry (chapter 4). In *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.)*. Sage.

Additional Recommended Readings for Method/Methodology Review:

Bazeley, P. (2018). "Mixed methods in my bones": Transcending the qualitative-quantitative divide. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* 10(1), 334-341.

Baranik, L., Hurst, C., & Eby, L. (2018). The stigma of being a refugee: A mixed-method study of refugees' experience of vocational stress. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 105, 116-130.

Bulakh, T. (2020). Entangled in social safety nets: Administrative responses to and lived experiences of internally displaced persons in Ukraine. *Europe-Asia Studies* 72(3), 455-480.

Fabos, A., Kahn, L., & Sarkis, M. (2021). Moving stories: Methodological challenges to mapping narratives and networks of people in diaspora. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34(3), 2554-2567.

Heidenreich, T., Lind, F., Eberl, J., & Boomgarden, H. (2019). Media framing dynamics of the 'European refugee crisis': A comparative topic modelling approach. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32(1), 172-182.

Korz, A. (2023). Education behind bars and beyond prison: Incarcerated women's education aspirations and barriers in Ukraine. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative & International*

Education 53(4), 636-653.

Kutter, P., Weaver-Hightower, M., & Sousanis, N. (2021). Comics-based research: The affordances of comics for research across disciplines. *Qualitative Research* 21(2), 195-214.

Sperry, M., & Mull, S. (2021). Life on the line: Border stories. *Psychoanalytic inquiry* 41(2), 115-127.

Weber, S. (2018). Participatory visual research with displaced persons: 'Listening' to post-conflict experiences through the visual. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32(3), 417-435.

Assignment: Methods and Methodologies Presentations (25%)

Module 4: Literature Review and Project Proposal Development

Based on learning and engagement in the preceding course modules, this module focuses on ISP proposal development through the crafting of research question, creation of an in-progress literature review, and submission 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.

Sessions may include:

- Honing your research question and details of the ISP Proposal
- One-on-one Meetings with Academic Director and/or ISP Advisor
- Peer review of ISP Proposal Drafts
- Writing the HSR Application
- ISP Proposal Presentation to Peers and Roundtable Discussion

Required Reading:

Markovic, M., & Bjekic, J. (2018). Methods and ethics in refugee research (chapter 12). In *Forced Migration and Social Trauma*, Eds. Hamburger, A., Hancheva, C., Ozcurumez S., Scher, C., Stankovic, B., & Tutnjevic, S. Routledge.

Additional Readings:

Self-select at least three additional readings for the literature review portion of your ISP proposal.

Assignment: Part 1 of ISP Proposal (2–3-page literature review)

Module 5: ISP in the Context of the Czech Republic

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Czechia. 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 Norms and Practices in Czechia

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to research in Czechia 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.

Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology

This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving research challenges.

Recommended Readings:

- Bell, J. (2010). Chapter 6. In *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers* (5th edition). McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th edition). Sage. (Chapter 1).
- Pink, Sarah. (2015/2009). Preparing for sensory research: Practical and orientation issues (chapter 3). In *Doing sensory ethnography* (2nd edition). Sage.
- Flick, U. (2023). Ethics of doing qualitative research (chapter 9). In *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. SAGE
- Kara, H. (2015). *Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences: A Practical Guide*. Policy Press.
- White, P. (2009). *Developing Research Questions: A Guide for Social Scientists*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Assignment: Parts 1 and 2 of ISP Proposal (45%)