

Practicum on Food Security, Nutrition, and Sustainable Development

IBPH-3060 (3 credits)

Italy: Food Security and Nutrition

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 Practicum on Food Security, Nutrition, and Sustainable Development offers students a unique opportunity to identify, connect, analyze, and apply useful theories and concepts highlighted in their coursework on, and their experiences related to sustainability, sustainable agriculture, food security, and food systems. It also leads to enhanced capacity for life-long reflection, reflective practice, and professional development. In this practicum, students will intern with a farmer, experience sustainable farming and winery practices in Tuscany, and learn directly the challenges that local farmers face in a growing international agri-business market dominated by multinational companies.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify, design and implement an individual project on a topic related to food security, food systems, nutrition, agriculture, human development, development policy, environment and ecology, public and global health, European and Mediterranean affairs, and international trade, among others;
- Apply field-based study techniques;
- Gain knowledge about sustainable agriculture, food security, and food systems;
- Develop an experience in sustainable farming practices;
- Assess the challenges that local farmers face in a growing international agri-business market;
- Gain knowledge on local solution to food security;
- Describe and analyze the effects of neoliberal agricultural policies on food security in Tuscany;
- Assess the impact of recent policies and research on food security and development;
- Write a paper that is relevant to students' careers and academic interests and demonstrates critical thinking.

Language of Instruction

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

Instructional Methods

In this course, the principles of cross-cultural professional practice will be achieved through the following methods, which have been designed to incorporate various stages of the experiential learning cycle:

- Concrete Experience - draws primarily on the practicum placement experience working with a local farm.
- Reflection / Observation - reflects on the practicum experience, especially analysis of what has been learned, which takes account of the student's practice, reflections from peers, and instructor reviews; systematic analysis of topics of interest that accounts for the contexts of previous experiences in classes, the workplace, other fieldwork, and aspects of the student's life.
- Generalization / Abstract Conceptualization - draws general conclusions from the practicum experience and other sources, especially about specific questions, approaches, and experiences in relation to food security, nutrition, and sustainable development.
- Application/Active Experimentation - design reflection and research approach(es) to reflect on what might be done differently next time; application of learning to subsequent activities.

Required Texts

See course schedule for a full listing.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Practicum Field Journal Reflections (15%)

The practicum field journal is a key component of the reflective observation component of the experiential learning cycle. In addition to documenting the weekly evolution of the practicum experience, this sustained writing practice is intended to help students organize their thoughts and reflections to gain critical perspectives on food security, nutrition, and sustainable development. Journal entries are to be submitted to the practicum coordinator. Suggested entry length: one single-spaced page per entry (with 12pt. Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins). Each journal entry is worth 3.75%.

2) Group Discussions (30%)

Students should prepare for and participate in three group discussions with their peers who are also in practicum placements. The purpose of group discussions is to provide opportunities for structured, collective reflection intended to foster cross-fertilization of the experiential learning process. These discussions will help the group to identify common learning objectives and to

share initial concerns, challenges, hopes, and fears. Moreover, the discussions will enable students to begin to identify differences and commonalities in each other's practicum placements (cultural contexts, professional settings, institutional viewpoints, etc.). Discussions may help in the formulation of critical questions that link up to core learning objectives and the development of the practicum paper. Moreover, group discussions will facilitate comparative perspectives about critical questions as a learning community. The practicum coordinator will facilitate discussions. The discussion will be structured in a specific manner. The coordinator will provide a question that serves as a reflection prompt. Each group discussion will be worth 10%.

3) Midterm and Final Practicum Evaluation with Practicum Supervisor (20%)

Midterm and Final reviews with your practicum supervisor are required as part of the practicum process. You will meet with your practicum supervisor to receive feedback and discuss performance. An evaluation form will be provided to your supervisor to assess your experience, including progress made with the professional contributions outlined in your scope of work. Supervisors will share review summaries with the practicum coordinator. The supervisor's evaluation forms will be used as part of your final practicum grade. Each evaluation will be worth 10%.

4) Final Practicum Paper (25%)

This assignment serves as the final documentation and analysis of the practicum experience. It details the challenges and accomplishments attained during the semester, and links theory to practice. As such, the report includes descriptive, reflective, and analytical components. For the description, students complete a site report describing key aspects of their partnership organization, its mission, its cultural and institutional context, and the nature of the practicum. Beyond this description, the final paper includes a critical reflection on what the student experienced. Points to reflect on may include most important lessons learned (in terms of professional development, cross-cultural experience, personal growth, etc.); expected or unexpected challenges; successful or unsuccessful strategies that were implemented to overcome challenges; unexpected opportunities; tensions or contradictions; conflicting perspectives encountered; and so on.

The rubric your Practicum Instructor will use to grade this paper will be provided. Following the rubric will give you a good sense of what needs to be addressed. Suggested paper length: 6-8 double-spaced pages (with 12pt. Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins).

5) Participation (10%)

The participation grade will be assessed by gauging the quality of preparation for and engagement during individual meetings with the Practicum Instructor. Participation will also encompass the timeliness of students' postings for on-line group discussions as well as the quality of commentary in response to peers' postings.

Assessment

Active Participation - 10%

Practicum Field Journal Reflection – 15% (3.75% ea.)

Group Discussions – 30% (10% ea.)

Midterm Practicum Evaluation - 10%
Final Practicum Evaluation - 10%
Final Practicum Paper - 25%

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

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.
- 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.

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.

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*

Outline:

- Weekly meetings and discussion with Practicum Coordinator
- Weekly Practicum Field Journal Entries
- Midterm and Final Reviews (week 3 and 6)
- Group Discussions (on-going)

Discussion due dates:

Week 2: Students discuss response to reflection questions, work at their practicum sites, and complete field journal entries.

Week 3: Students discuss response to reflection questions, work at their practicum sites, and complete field journal entries.

Week 4: Students discuss response to reflection questions, work at their practicum sites, and complete field journal entries.

Week 5: Field journal entry and Final Practicum Evaluation (with practicum coordinator)

Week 6: Final Practicum Paper