

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 credits)

Cameroon: Development and Social Change

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

Drawing upon myriad in-country experiences, cultural encounters, homestay conversations, and community observations, this research methods and ethics course is primarily designed as a field-based course, complemented by classroom lectures, assigned readings and discussions facilitated by the academic director. The course relies on SIT's in-country professional network and academic and socio-cultural resources to structure assignments and field activities through which students practice and hone their skills in gathering, managing, and analyzing primary data.

A series of structured field activities and assignments provides the material for class discussions, complemented by scheduled lectures and assigned readings. Students learn qualitative and quantitative approaches of gathering, managing, and analyzing data from primary sources. The course puts particular emphasis upon the culturally appropriate ways of building rapport, initiating purposeful dialogue, forming constructive relationships with organizations and/or individuals, recording and analyzing primary data, and writing a scholarly academic report. The course also pays particular attention to both Cameroonian and US higher education ethical considerations that guide primary data collection, and how these could be translated within the local cultural context of Cameroon.

Along these lines, a core focus for this course is development of a feasible research or internship project proposal, including the ethical considerations necessary, topic development, selection and execution of methodologies, final write up, and reciprocity or civic engagement issues, while sensitizing students to power asymmetries, the politics of subjectivity, and devoting attention to local dynamics in pursuit of ethically sound research in Cameroon. As students will engage with Cameroon communities as they conduct their research projects or internship, the course will place emphasis on local context in the delivery of course materials, identifying potential cross-cultural issues where appropriate.

Learning Outcomes

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;
- Facilitate the process of identifying and investigating a research topic, selecting an appropriate methodology and choosing strategies for presentation of data in both written and oral formats
- Demonstrate awareness of appropriate decolonial methods and ethics used in field research on the critical global issue of development, economy, and inequality OR demonstrate awareness of the ethics of internship in the context of Cameroon;
- Analyze and process primary data gathered in the field and draw valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions;
- 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.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to local vocabularies related to course content through in-country expert lectures, field assignments, and activities. The field is a central component of the course, with half the course made up of field assignments and activities and the other half of lectures, assigned reading, and discussion sessions.

Assigned and recommended readings are listed in the course schedule section below.

Readings prepare students for field assignments, generate questions for class discussions and deepen student knowledge and skills for primary data collection. Students are responsible for all the required readings and should be prepared to bring them to bear in class discussions.

Students may submit assignments in either English or French and are expected to complete assignments by the due date. Assignments will be assessed on level of organization, analytical quality and depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence, where it is required, citation and formatting.

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.

In addition, as the AD on this program I encourage the restoration of love and care as a praxis of decoloniality as suggested by Maldonado-Torres (2016).

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Practicing Interviewing (20%)

Students are required to carry out ONE interview with an adult Cameroonian preferably on your ISP or internship topic. The interview will include a minimum of 10 questions, and the goal is to test the validity of your research instrument as well as serve as a reflexive exercise. Students will be required to use the information shared during the RME class as well as secondary sources to on interviews to design and conduct your interview. This exercise will serve to test your instrument (interview guide) before you start conducting the actual interviews for your project. Thereafter transcribe and identify at least three themes that emerged from the data.

2) Observation assignment (20%)

Students will conduct an observation episode in their neighborhood in Yaoundé. You are invited to observe a scene in a normal day and to gain some insights into Cameroonian's daily realities and to refine your observation skills. Students might consider observing a scene that relates to your ISP/Internship topic (where possible). Students are encouraged to use the your the D(describe)-I(interpret)-E(evaluate) format. This will help you separate facts/objective from subjective data.

3) Methodology assignment (40%)

With support and recommendation from the AD, students choose to read a case study, research paper, ethnography, past student ISP/internship report, or other text related to their potential ISP/internship interests and write a 2-4-page critical essay on the reading, detailing the methods of the research, ethical considerations, limits of the study, and suggestions for improvement.

The purpose of this assignment is to provide a broad overview of the methodology you intend to use for your ISP/Internship proposal. For each aspect of your chosen methodology, you need to provide a brief theoretical explanation with references, discuss your choice and establish the relevance to your study. You should consider these methods as related to

different milieus - urban/rural, ethnic groups, gender, age, etc. Students are also encouraged to consider decolonial methodologies (e.g., a horizontal approach) that center the voices of the participants in the selection and execution of the project.

4) ISP Critique (10%)

The objective of this assignment is to familiarize you with Independent Study Projects written by previous students, to enable you to develop a critical mind and to begin to think critically about the different elements that are important for conducting a successful ISP.

You will be placed in groups to select and critique a previous ISP from the program library. Your task as a group is to critique this ISP, using the criteria, which will be used by your ISP advisor and the AD to evaluate your ISPs at the end of the semester (refer to the ISP section for the rubric).

5) Final Proposal (10%)

The final proposal is a skeleton of your final project and may change as the student gets to the field however, your initial conception/intentions should nonetheless be clearly and succinctly defined. This final proposal will be made up of most of the sections from your previous assessments since the start of the program.

Assessment:

- Interview assignment – 20%
- Observation assignment – 20%
- Methodology assignment – 40%
- ISP Critique – 10%
- Final Proposal submission – 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:

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](#), [Accessibility 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.

Module 1: Introduction, Experiential Learning, and Cultural Adjustment

First, this module introduces unique aspects of SIT's experiential learning pedagogy and how it shapes SIT Cameroon's program structure, student, and faculty roles. 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.

Lecture Topics:

- 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 Cameroon
- Positionality and Outsider/Insider Research
- Skills for Networking, Time Management, and Productivity

Readings:

Fisher H. *When Americans Live Abroad.*

Fisher, G. (1955). *When Americans live abroad* (Vol. 6340). US Government Printing Office.

Marx, Elisabeth. (1999). "The Culture Shock Triangle." *Breaking Through Culture Shock: What You Need to Succeed in International Business* (pp. 3-18). London, England: Nicholas Brealey Publishing. ISBN: 978-1857882216.

Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema". *American Anthropologist*, 1956, 58(3), 503-507.

Weaver, Gary R. (2000) *Culture, Communication and Conflict: Readings in Intercultural Relations* 3rd ed. London: Pearson. Chapter 3: "Understanding and coping with cross cultural adjustment stress."

Recommended Reading:

Gupta, Khadija Ansari. (2004). "Travails of a Woman Fieldworker: A Small Town in Uttar Pradesh," in *The Fieldworker and the Field*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 103- 114.

Ritzer, George. (1983). "The McDonaldization of Society." *Journal of American Culture*, 6 (1), 100-107.

Module 2: Research Methods and Ethics in Development, Economy, and Inequality

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.

Lecture Topics:

- Research Methods and Development, Economy, and Inequality
- Selecting Topics, Formulating Research Questions, and Literature Review
- Data Collection: Participant Observation and Interviewing
- Mixed Methods Research
- Data Analysis, Evaluation, and Interpretation
- SPSS Practical Session

Readings:

Palmer, J., Fam, D., Smith, T., & Kilham, S. (2014). *Ethics in fieldwork: Reflections on the unexpected. Qualitative Report.*

Mikėnė, S., Gaižauskaitė, I., & Valavičienė, N. (2013). Qualitative interviewing: Field-work realities. *Socialinis darbas: mokslo darbai [Social work: research papers] Mykolo Romerio universitetas. Vilnius: Mykolo Romerio universitetas, 2013, t. 12, Nr. 1.*

SIT/World Learning, Human Subjects Review Policies and Procedure.

Salinas S., S. Rance, M. Serrate, & M. Castro (2000). Unethical ethics? Reflections on intercultural research practices. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 8(15), 104-112.

Ciesielska, M., Boström, K. W., & Öhlander, M. (2018). Observation methods. *Qualitative methodologies in organization studies: Volume II: Methods and possibilities*, 33-52.

Glesne, C. (2006). Making words fly: Developing understanding through interviewing. In *Becoming Qualitative Researchers. An introduction* (pp. 79-109). Boston: Pearson, Allyn, and Bacon.

Recommended Reading:

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications. Chapter One.

Bourdieu, P. (2000). Participant observation. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9(2), 281-294. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9655.00150/abstract>

Bernard, H. Russell (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* 4th ed. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. Chapter 3: "Preparing for Research."

Module 3: Introduction to the ISP and Internship

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 Local Review Board (LRB) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the application for Human Subjects Review (HSR application).

Lecture Topics:

- Critical Review of past ISPs or Internships
- Introduction to the LRB/IRB Process and HSR Application
- Identifying an ISP Advisor and Securing an Internship Placement
- One-on-one Meetings with the Academic Director to Discuss Preliminary ISP or Internship Ideas

Readings:

Bernard, H. Russell (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* 4th ed. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. Chapter 3: "Preparing for Research."

Booth, W. C., G. G. Colomb & J. M. Williams (2003). *The Craft of Research* - Chapter 3: Planning your project: From topics to questions and Chapter 4: Finding Topics: From questions to problems, pages 40-71.

Mertens, D. (2010). An Introduction to Research (selected excerpts). In Research and evaluation in education and psychology (pp. 8, 11-12). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Neuman, W. Lawrence (2005) Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches 6th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Chapter 10: "The Logic of Survey Research."

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.

Lecture Topics:

- Writing an ISP or Internship Proposal
- One-on-one Meetings with Academic Director and/or ISP Advisor or Internship Supervisor
- Peer review of ISP or Internship Proposal Drafts
- Writing the HSR Application
- ISP or Internship Proposal Presentation to Peers and Roundtable Discussion

Readings:

Lamotte, Anne. (1994). "Shitty First Drafts," in Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, New York: Anchor Books, pp 21-27.

Orwell, George. (1946) "Politics and the English Language"

<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm>

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 Cameroon

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

Readings:

- Jackson, Bruce. (1987). "Interviewing" in *Fieldwork*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp 79-104.
- Summer, Andy and Michael Tribe, Eds. (2008). *International Development Studies: Theories and Methods in Research and Practice*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Marshall, C., & G. Rossman (2006). *The what of the study: Building the conceptual framework*. In *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Cameroon

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

Readings:

- Bailey Carol. (2007) *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Denzin, N. K, & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Session 3: ISP Applied Methodology

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

Readings:

- Bell, Judith. (2010). Planning the Project. In *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science (5th ed.)*. Berkshire England: Open University Press.
- Emerson, R. M, Fretz, R. I, & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Sunstein, B., & E. Chiseri-Strater (2007). Analyzing your fieldnotes. In *Field working: reading and writing research* (pp. 105-107). Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Recommended Reading:

- Babbie, E. (2001). Analysis of data. In *The practice of social research* (pp. 364-369). Independence: Wadsworth.
- Newman, W. L. (1997). Analyzing qualitative data. In *Social research methods. Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (pp. 418-441). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Rossman, G., & Rallis, S. (2003). Analyzing and interpreting data (selected excerpts). In *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (pp. 267-273). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Module 5b: Internship in the Context of Cameroon

This module prepares the student for the internship experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to internships in Cameroon. 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.

Readings:

Switzer, F. and King, M. (2013). *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapters 2 and 3).

Session 2: Work-based Norms and Practices in Cameroon

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to internships and work in Cameroon, 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.

Readings:

World Bank Social Capital Assessment Tool, Annex 1B

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOCIALCAPITAL/Resources/Social-Capital-Assessment-Tool--SOCAT-/annex1.pdf>

Session 3: The Ethics of Participating in an Internship in Cameroon

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.

Reading:

McDonald, F. (2011). Ethical Use of Interns. Retrieved from:

<http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/ethics/ethicalstandardsadvisories/documents/psa-17.pdf>

Sunstein, B., & E. Chiseri-Strater (2007). Analyzing your fieldnotes. In *Field working: reading and writing research* (pp. 105-107). Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.