

Independent Study Project ISPR-3000 (4 credits)

Kenya: Global Health and Human Rights

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 four week Independent Study Project (ISP), scheduled in the final portion of the program, provides students a unique opportunity to study in-depth a key aspect of health in Kenya. The ISP draws upon the knowledge and various skills gained from the thematic, language, and Research Methods and Ethics seminars. At this point students will have worked with the academic director and various other in-country experts to develop their ISP proposals and to schedule interviews, arrange for translators if they will be required, and arrange other logistics that are essential to completing the ISP. They will also have developed the competence to act in culturally appropriate ways and to find resources in Kenya needed for ISP completion.

The ISP allows the students to practice and hone their primary data gathering skills and to practice various other skills learned in the Research Methods and Ethics seminar such as navigating unfamiliar cultural norms, building rapport, and navigating local bureaucracies. Further, students practice and hone their skills in gathering and analyzing data from primary sources, managing this data and making a coherent argument in a scholarly manner.

Each student finds or is assigned an ISP advisor with whom they work collaboratively to identify and schedule data collection appointments, review research tools for appropriateness and feasibility, and resolve any logistical and ethical issues that may arise during the course of their ISP. Students are also required to submit an ISP itinerary to their academic director and to check in with program staff regarding the progress of their ISP.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Analyze and synthesize data gathered from primary sources into a well written scholarly report and to compose an oral presentation from this report;
- Understand the importance of ethics and human relations in field research;
- Demonstrate competence in the processes involved in independent research, from choosing a viable topic and appropriate methodologies to final analysis, and interpretation; and

- Demonstrate awareness of the contingencies and complexities of working across cultures.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students are encouraged to use their local language skills as related to their ISP topic.

Instructional Methods

- Conversations with the academic director (AD) regarding choice of potential ISP topics will begin during the first week of the program and continue until the beginning of the ISP period;
- From the second to the ninth week of the program, students will be enrolled in the Research Methods and Ethics course, which will help them practice and refine their research skills prior to the ISP as well as design a research proposal and project;
- Students will work in conjunction with a local academic advisor (preferably a host country national);
- An oral presentation will be presented to the group and invited guests upon completion of project;
- A well-documented, culturally sensitive and in-depth presentation of field study findings will be written.

Required Texts

Relevant readings and articles as determined by student and advisor.

Assignments and Evaluation

Decisions regarding the topic of study are a primary responsibility of the student. However, students can count on the academic director (AD) to help focus their ISP and to guide them about how to translate their ISP ideas given practical realities of the local situation, and for assistance regarding potential advisor contacts. The Independent Study Project format allows the student flexibility and the ability to exercise personal initiative, while also promoting academic quality. In turn, the ISP paper provides the material evidence of capability in handling methodology and in synthesizing experiences in the host culture. The final project should have a clear thesis, should be fieldwork-based, and should include a clear description of ethical considerations.

Students are required to meet with the academic director (AD) prior to the beginning of ISP to discuss research topic and approach; during the ISP the AD or other designee will check in with the student at least once a week. Students must submit an ISP proposal, Human Subjects Review, and ISP itinerary for AD and Study Abroad Review Board (SARB) approval prior to beginning fieldwork.

Written Paper

- Reference a minimum of 10 articles from peer reviewed journals.

- The ISP should be 30-40 pages, double spaced, 1” margins and font 12.

Oral Presentation

Presentation length is 20 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for questions and answers.

Evaluation of presentations includes the following criteria:

- Organization, clarity, and accessibility of presentation (including use of audio/visual aids or demonstrations)
- Clear explanation of ISP objectives and research questions
- Clear explanation of field strategy and implementation
- Ability to field questions and comments from the audience

See ISP rubric, provided in class, for more details about paper and presentation assessment.

ISP: Fieldwork Journal

During the ISP period, students will be expected to keep a specific journal devoted entirely to recording field experiences. Some uses of the ISP work journal are as follows:

- Recording names and locations of contact persons, especially possible ISP advisors and other ISP resources.
- Recording thoughts about how you want the ISP to develop, the progress of the ISP and changes or developments in plans.
- Recording interviews conducted in the field relevant to the ISP.
- Recording observations and inferences made relating to the ISP.

Assessment

Written ISP paper	70%
Oral presentation	30%

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](#), [Accessibility Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.