Independent Study Project (ISP)
ISPR 3000 (4 credits / 120 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent term. Because seminars develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual seminar content varies from term to term.

Description

The Independent Study Project (ISP) provides the opportunity to study in greater depth an aspect of particular academic interest relating to the program theme. In most cases, the topic proposed in the students' applications are revised once in-country, or a new topic is developed out of the lectures, discussions, and field trips of the thematic seminar. With the assistance of the Academic Director, a project advisor appropriate to the topic is selected. Advisors are usually host country professors or experienced field professionals but may also be experts in a particular area of study. In conducting their projects, students directly utilize the concepts and skills of field-based learning discussed in Field Methods and Ethics, use language skills developed through formal instruction and informal practice, apply knowledge gained in the Religious Change in Tibet and the Himalayas and Politics of Tibetan and Himalayan Borders, and explore contacts made in the homestay or larger community setting. In the process, students hone their skills in dealing with and learning from the unexpected, while accomplishing a major academic project in a challenging new environment.

Learning Outcomes
The ISP comprises 120 hours of field work. Upon completion of the ISP, students will be able to:
- Select, design and implement an individual project that investigates a topic agreed upon by the student and AD
- Use effective field study methodologies and techniques to gather data
- Increase their capacity to think critically and creatively and integrate and analyze information from primary and secondary sources
- Present their study in both a written and oral presentation
- Understand and demonstrate appropriate ethics for undertaking field research

Language of Output
This ISP will be written in English but students should include vocabulary in Tibetan, Nepali, etc. when relevant.

ISP Locations

We encourage students to develop their research projects in culturally Tibetan and Tibetan refugee settlement locations in Nepal and India (e.g. Dharamsala, Ladakh, Spiti, Sikkim, or Darjeeling), or equally in another Himalayan culture. Each location is evaluated prior to the ISP period to ensure that students are able to accomplish relevant and fruitful month-long research.

ISP Requirements
General requirements are:

- Satisfactory completion of the Research Methods and Ethics course.
- A majority of the ISP work conducted in the field (as opposed to in libraries, for example)
- Approximately 120 hours of work for a four-credit project, 180 hours for a six-credit project.
- Periodic progress reports sent to the program staff.
- Final product in the form of a major paper, internship report, creative project, e.g., portfolio of drawings, or possibly special advanced language work, as agreed upon by the academic director, project advisor, student, and where required, US home institution advisor.
- A 20–30 minute oral report to the group and invited guests.
- Multiple copies of the paper are required for the SIT program library, advisor or organizations involved; some of those may be electronic.

All students should complete Ethics and Consent to Use of ISP forms. Copies of all ISPs will be kept in the program library for reference by future students.

— Specific requirements are:

1) Three meetings with the AD, program staff and/or your ISP advisor prior to the beginning of your ISP in order to discuss your topic and your research approach. **Students must have their ISP journals with them for each meeting in order to take notes.**
2) A 2–3 pages ISP proposal, which will have been developed in part through three individual discussions over the first two months of the program with the Academic Director. The proposal should include:
    a. Title of the project (even if it changes later, give the project a title).
    b. Abstract: a short summary that explains the main argument(s), topic(s) or findings
    c. Description: Overview of the ISP project discussing its goals and objectives.
    d. Methods: how the student plans to carry out the study and analyse findings.
    e. Logistics: work plan/schedule, travel, translator, communication, advisor.
    f. Bibliography and Literature review: Your proposal has to include a list of the bibliographical sources you are using and a list of between 5 and 10 articles relevant for your project. Each of the sources should have a brief description of the importance of those sources for your ISP like a thesis of one of the authors that your research supports or questions, etc.
3) Approval by the AD and the SARB (Study Abroad Review Board) of the final project regarding possible ethical issues.
4) A minimum of 120 hours of fieldwork towards completion of the project.
5) A minimum of 10 academic bibliographical sources.
6) A mid-ISP report to be sent in two weeks into the ISP period. The report should be a continuation of your proposal and should include your new ideas on the project, new sources being used, etc. Specific date TBA.
7) Two (2) clean copies, and one electronic copy (pdf) emailed to npt.assignments@gmail.com, of the final paper—one printed in color and bound (optional additional b&w printouts or photocopies can be given to advisors, co-researchers and collaborators). Double check the submitted copies to ensure that the text is readable, in order, and that no pages are missing. The bound copy remains in the SIT library (this copy must include original photos and/or color photocopies).
8) A twenty-minute oral presentation to the group and guests upon completion of the project. The presentation should include:
    a. An abstract that should be handed in together with your ISP.
    b. The use, as much as possible, of audio-visual materials to enhance the presentation (PowerPoint, transparencies, pictures, maps). This will contribute to a better grade for the presentation.
9) A well-documented, sensitive presentation of field study findings following standard academic protocols and augmented by photos. The ISP should be 25–50 pages.
10) *Contacting the SIT academic staff twice a week during the ISP period (Mondays and Thursdays). If a student misses one of the contacting dates, s/he/they will get a warning. If s/he/they misses another day of checking in during the remaining time of ISP, s/he/they will be put on probation. Probation automatically lowers your ISP by 1/3 of a grade. A*

student on probation who again omits to contact the office will again have his/her/their grade lowered further and such omission could be a cause for dismissal from the program.

Sign the copyright release form.

ISP Schedule

Each student's ISP time will be quite self-regulated, basically scheduling one's own. Each student will have to consult with AD and advisor about how to make the most of the month by efficiently scheduling interviews or other field research. Some of the things that students will be required to do though during the ISP period are:

Week 1–3
- Contact the office upon arrival at ISP site and twice a week from then on (Mon and Thurs)
- Establish contacts with local community (advisor, possible interviewees)
- Undertake interviews and other field work research. Make sure to keep accurate notes and transcriptions of interviews in ISP journal

Week 1–4
- Submit weekly progress report (details TBA)

Week 4
- ISP writing
- Final consultations with advisor and/or AD
- Submit ISP abstract

ISP Format

1. Must be neatly typed. There is no need for double-spacing.

   2. Formatting and submission:

      a. Title Page should include:

         1. Title
         2. Author (Last Name, First Name)
         3. AD (Last Name, First Name)
         4. Senior Faculty Advisor (Last Name, First Name)
         5. Project Advisor (Last Name, First Name)
         6. Sending School
         7. Major
         8. Location of Primary Research (Continent, Country, Region, Town)
         9. Statement: "Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples, SIT Study Abroad, [insert Semester and Year]"

Example:

Cultural and Physical Barriers to Conservation:
A Study of Endangered Species Protection within the Ngöbe Comarca
Dow, Mike
Academic Director: Dagang, Alyson K.
Project Advisor: Septimo, Roger
Carleton College
Biology
Central America, Panama, Panama City
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Panama: Development and Conservation, SIT Study Abroad, Fall 2023

      b. Use a consistent formatting style, preferably Chicago Style citation

      c. Required length is 25–50 pages, pictures included. The writing should be a solid 20–25 pages minimum.

   3. Outline of your ISP

      a. Title page (see above)

      b. Abstract: a brief introduction to the student's project with specific details about topic, location, objectives of the paper, and methodological approach.

      c. Acknowledgments (required) – please remember to acknowledge project advisor.

d. Table of contents and page numbers. [Please include subsection page numbers.]

e. Text

    1. Introduction.

    2. Body of the paper. Here is where the specific research and analysis of findings is discussed in an organized fashion. Divide your research into subsections, as it will be more accessible to readers.

    3. Conclusion

f. Appendices: relevant information or data that does not belong in the body of the text (maps, charts, extra illustrations or photos that do not belong in the body of the paper, etc…). The appendix should also include a discussion of research methodology (methodology used, obstacle and strategies, reasons, biases, resources, etc…). A brief biography of the student's main advisor with his qualifications should also be included.

g. Glossary of terms, especially if using technical terms or a lot of Tibetan words. This is essential in order to keep research on par with international academic standards. In the body of the text the student can write Tibetan terms using Tibetans script or Wylie transliteration system.

h. Bibliography

i. Suggestions for future research: add a final page with suggestions for future ISP's with contact information. This has often helped students and has developed a line of continuity of ISP research. **Include a picture of yourself during your research.**

ISP Samples

Below are a few abstracts from recent ISP's. They have been selected to show the broad scope of topics that can be researched while on our program as well as some of the places where one can accomplish one's research.

Lily Smith—Faith in the Floodplain: Environmental and Religious Change in the Bön Village of Lubra, Mustang, Fall '24
In the Nepali Himalayas, the village of Lubra, Mustang is contending with how to adapt to intensifying flash floods. Lubra is a religiously and culturally unique village, as it is the only village in Mustang entirely practicing the Tibetan indigenous religion of Bön and contains multiple well-preserved old Bön monasteries. The people of Lubra have a strong historical and spiritual connection to their village and this connection is increasingly being strained by the effects of climate change, development of infrastructure, and outmigration. Residents are looking for ways to adapt to change, and wondering how they will keep their culture and religion alive while protecting their livelihoods. Many are relocating homes and crops to higher land, but are at a loss for what to do when the flooding begins to affect their monastery. Additionally, elder religious leaders do not know to whom they will pass the torch of their teachings, creating concern that the highly localized religious knowledge will disappear when village religious leaders pass. This paper focuses on the effect of climate change on religious practice and thought in Lubra, as well as how religion shapes residents' stories of climate change.
Cece Rhyneer— Healing or Harming? Evaluating Perspectives and Impact of Short-Term Medical Camps on Nepali Communities, Fall '24
Medical volunteering, or "voluntourism," via short-term health camps is an increasingly popular way for doctors and paramedical staff to see a new region while still offering services to nearby under-serviced communities. In particular, these health camps are often propagated by the global north in largely low- and middle-income countries of the global south. Skeptics in literature point out that medical volunteers often lack cultural competence or knowledge of local health options in the community. Furthermore, ephemeral care is often too short to address chronic issues and prevents meaningful development of sustainable local healthcare. However, this literature often lacks the voices, perspectives, and first-hand lived experience of the communities intended to benefit from these health camps. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine different perspectives on short-term medical health camps in Nepal. By asking volunteers, organizers, existing health professionals, community members, and those receiving care, this research aims to uncover how medical camps affect, benefit and/or harm communities. Who organizes, volunteers, and engages in them—whether as a patient or medical profession—and why? What does existing literature say about short-term medical camps, and how the does lived experience of Nepali communities' support or oppose these representations? This research follows two healthcamps: one in the remote Himalayas of the Gorkha district, and a second in the urban-rural hills of Kavre. Observations were conducted over the course of two weeks of trekking into the Nubri valley and over the course of five days in Panchkhal, Kavre. It examines the physical and historical context in which these health camps are conducted, the scholarship, reports, and articles that support and oppose the camps, and first-hand experience of patients, villagers, organizers, and medical staff.
Bella Infante—White Cups: Tibetan Buddhist Nuns' Intellectual Agency and Sectarian Identity at Dolmaling Nunnery, Fall '24
Historically, Tibetan nuns have had limited access to debate-based philosophical study or any formal monastic education, primarily being trained in ritual practices. While debate has been practiced by other sects, it is largely understood as a major component of the Gelukpa study program. This essay attempts to explore the introduction of debate at Dolma Ling, a non-sectarian nunnery, and how the practice of non-sectarianism is reflected in the curriculum, especially in a context where women have historically been excluded from the design of their own curriculum. While Dolma Ling's non-sectarian approach offers a platform for intra-sectarian dialogue, the Gelugpa-centric curriculum and emphasis on debate raise questions about the complexities of navigating sectarian identities. I aim to better understand how contemporary practices of debate among Tibetan nuns reflect and influence the evolving roles of women in Tibetan Buddhism, and the implications these changes have for gender equality, education, and monastic authority within the broader Tibetan community. Ethnographic fieldwork will be conducted at Dolma Ling, where interviews and conversations with nuns will reveal their experiences and challenges in practicing debate. The research will also investigate broader trends toward inclusivity in Tibetan education and the impact of these changes on nuns' roles as social actors within the Tibetan diaspora.
Tenzin Namsey—Garwang Dorje in Kyimoloung, Fall '24
This project intends to study the life of Ngari Terton1 Garwang Dorje (Wyl., mnga' ris gter ston gar dbang rdo rje, 'Garwang Dorje, the treasure revealer from Ngari') and his activities both mundane and religious in Tsum Valley. This was done by extensive readings of Garwang Dorje's writings, biography, and discussions on his and activities with the people of Tsum Valley.

Josi Aguilera—The sovereign people of Nepal: a portrait of democracy in 2024, Spring '24

In Nepal, the scars of history run deep. The past, filled with discriminatory hierarchies, authoritarianism and state violence, and the unreconciled tragedies of civil war weigh heavy on Nepali society. It was through this pain and against these injustices that Nepal's democracy was born and continues to develop. Nepal has changed government systems no less than five times over the past century. Despite repeated wrestles for and losses of democracy, the movement always persisted, and today has produced a Federal Republic.
This study aims to better understand democracy's development and to paint a picture of civic participation in Nepal in 2024. While great strides have been made in access, participation, and governance, Nepal falls behind in efficiency, consistency, and accountability. Corruption in particular is causing weaknesses in Nepal's democratic system. This study was conducted through qualitative analysis using 34 interviews conducted across Kathmandu. 20 were random street interviews that focused on individual level participation and experiences. 9 were interviews with experts and civil society leaders. 5 were conversations with ward staff or members.

Ruth Leech—Water sacred and profane: hydropower and muhan in Upper Solu, Spring '24

This paper interrogates the relationship between waterways and the people that live near them in upper Solu. Hydropower, one of Nepal's most promising sources of wealth for the 21st century, is critical to both rural and state development. In the Solukhombu district, there are numerous projects – as many as 30 in the upper Solu region alone – in operation and being built. These projects are bringing both rapid development and change into the landscape and culture of the region. In places where these projects are constructed, residents have nuanced perspectives on their effects, informed by community relations and perspectives on use of natural resources. As foil, relationships to nearby springs (*muhan* in Nepali) inhabited by gods (*nag* in Nepali) are imbued with spirituality in ways that river water is not. By examining these phenomena in tandem, I provide insight into the social construction of natural resources and their extraction in a culturally heterogenous and dynamic region of Nepal.

Silas Benevento Zahner— *Feeling philosophies at 4000: a study of affective conceptualization in the Dho Tarap valley*, Spring '24

 Using a mixed method approach of interviews and a survey, this field work set out to understand how individuals in Dho Tarap, Dolpo experience and regulate emotions. This research found that the untranslatability of the concept "emotion" into the local language meant that the way people conceived of their feelings was situated in their cultural understandings. For many participants, they experienced their feelings as forms of thought in སེམས (sem), or the mind, which may be a more accurate way of conceiving of cognition.
This paper argues that emotions are not universally defined discrete constructs or innate parts of human experience. Instead, this field work underscores that there are diverse conceptualizations of affective experience with the Tarap-Pa community as an example. By challenging the idea of a singular cognitive framework, this research aims to foster a deeper understanding of emotional diversity, potentially leading to a sense of agency, expanded worldviews, inform future research, and lead to the ability to become a better cross-cultural communicator.

Tenzin Kunsang— *Status and implications of ethnic demographic shifts in the Tibetan Children's Village, Dharamshala, India*, Spring '24

Since the illegal occupation of Tibet in 1959, exiled Tibetans have settled in different parts of the world, most notably in India. Dharamshala, India—a town located in the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range in the Himachal Pradesh state—is currently home to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).1 The town, known as "Little Tibet," is also the inaugural location of the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV), which has become the largest Tibetan educational institution in exile.
This ISP examines the recent ethnic demographic shifts within TCV, more specifically the witnessed rise of Himalayan descended students and dwindling population of Tibetan students. By understanding the status and implications of such changing ethnic demographics, the ISP will also examine its relation to the ongoing language and cultural preservation plight among exiled Tibetans, as well as key historical events in academia such as the "Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile" and Tibetanization project. Due to the novel and empirical nature of the aforementioned trend in ethnic demography within TCV, information in this ISP is immensely supported by interviews conducted with TCV faculty and staff, as well as background information from web and print based research journals, articles, and books.

Luke Stumpfl—*Lha, Lu, and Shipda: Religious Landscape in a Conservation Area,* Fall '23

Living in a political, cultural, and geographic border region between Nepal and Tibet (People's Republic of China), the families of Tsum Valley face many demands from their sociopolitical, religious, and economic climate. Practicing Tibetan Buddhism, the people uphold a set of rules implemented by the community with leadership from Serap Dorje Drukpa Rinpoche over 100 years ago that prohibits the intentional murder of all animals. Hailed by leaders and scholars as a haven of biodiversity conservation due to this customary-turned-municipal law, Tsum Valley also exists within Manaslu Conservation Area governed by an entity of the federal government of Nepal that seeks to promote biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. Furthermore, in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Tsum is *Beyul Kyimolung*, a major point on a pilgrimage circuit. The people traditionally engage in agropastoralism and trade as economic subsistence strategies, but some have started to practice ecotourism in Tsum and labor migration to major cities around the world. In this work I ask: to what extent does the culture of Tsum work towards biodiversity conservation, as others claim? How does the built (art and architecture) and natural (plants, animals, springs, rivers, mountains) landscape itself contribute to spiritual relationships between humans and other-than-human beings? How do Tsumpa families negotiate relationships with the environment between the interests of the Manaslu Conservation Area Project, municipality, agropastoralism, and ecotourism?

Isabella Delaney—*If We Were Fiction: Insect-Human Stories,* Fall '23

This creative project delves into the nonlinear, interconnected web of insect-human relations in Nepal. Through exploring humans' perceptions and stories of insects, this work intends to remedy the limits of traditional entomological knowledge, which forgets the ubiquitous reality of insects as more than biological and ecological agents. Insects are social, economic, and ethical "characters" in our lives, and recognizing this opens up possibilities for connection, hope, and evolution in this world. The potential of the mundane, the forgettable, pulses within humans' unique attitudes toward insects and the forces that shaped them. This potential is represented in the final product of this project: a children's book titled *Knowing Karma,* the story of a shape shifting, open-minded insect. By synthesizing qualitative interviews conducted in Pokhara and Beni, two areas of Nepal, and theories of understanding human relations with insects and the environment, such as multispecies justice, *Knowing Karma* illuminates fractals of insect-human relations.

Olivia Kenney—*Causes, Cards, and Caution: A consideration of various foreign policy perspectives on India's approach to Tibet within Sino-Indian relations,* Fall '23

This paper demonstrates various perspectives that exist among journalists, scholars, and former and current associates of both government and non-governmental organizations, representing Tibetan-in-exile and Indian national perspectives. This project portrays four separate yet intertwined topics of debate from both historical and current aspects of India's approach to Tibet and Tibetans on Indian soil within India's relations with China, focusing on four questions:

1. What options were available to India in relation to Tibet in the early-to-mid 1950s?
2. Did India's extension of hospitality to the Dalai Lama and to Tibetan refugees in 1959 motivate China's invasion in the Ladakh/Aksai Chin region in 1962?
3. Does India employ Tibet as a strategic 'card' in its negotiations with China?
4. To what degree does India refrain from signaling friendliness to Tibetans to reduce tensions in its relations with China?

I consider varying perspectives on these issues, and I portray a prevailing theme that emerged through my interviews that India will not sacrifice core interests of Tibetans, including their ability to protest on Indian soil. This is especially true given the recent downward direction of India's relations with China. Several of my interviewees portrayed recent developments, especially the Galwan Clash of 2020, as making crystal clear to Indian policy makers that under its current form of governance, China can never be a true friend to India.

Lhakpa Tsering—*Construction Aspects and Seismic Analysis of Typical Building in Dolpo,* Fall '23

This study delves into the construction aspects and seismic analysis of typical buildings in the challenging terrain of Dolpo, situated within the Himalayan mountain range. Dolpo's unique geological and geographical characteristics, combined with its susceptibility to seismic activity, make it crucial to investigate and understand the dynamics of construction in this remote region. The research explores traditional and contemporary building practices, aiming to elucidate the interplay between construction methodologies and seismic resilience. Through a comprehensive examination of the geological context, structural design, and seismic vulnerability, this study contributes valuable insights to inform the development of robust and earthquake-resistant building strategies tailored to the specific conditions of Dolpo. The findings of this research are pertinent not only to the local communities in Dolpo but also to broader discussions on resilient construction practices in seismic-prone areas worldwide.

ISP Journal

During the ISP period, the student should keep a specific journal devoted entirely to recording field experiences, observations, thoughts and musings, vocabulary notes, contact details – in short everything that may be valuable in composing an ISP. You are aiming for quantity and quality. For a project of this kind, nothing short of 50 pages written during the semester reflects serious field research. Some (though not all) uses of the ISP Work Journal are as follows:

- Recording names and locations of contacts persons, especially possible ISP advisors and other ISP resources.
- Recording thoughts about how the student wants 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.
- Recording statistical or other hard data useful to the ISP, whether gathered in the field or through appropriate readings.
- Recording vocabulary items, whole phrases or excerpts from written or oral works in Tibetan or other relevant language that may be useful for the ISP.
- Recording notes taken from secondary sources in preparation for the ISP.
- REMEMBER TO DATE ALL ENTRIES!!!!!

Evaluation

The Independent Study Project is evaluated based on the following criteria:

Written presentation: **a) Documentation, including photographic material**	**15%**
b) Familiarity with and reference to background published material (use of articles and bibliographic resources)	**15%**
c) Development of topic and achievement of objectives; Critical analysis and thought; Accuracy of information	**40%**
Oral presentation	**30%**

In order to get an ISP grade, the student is also *required* to complete the following:

- Produce **one copy** of the ISP: color copy bound for the SIT NPT library.
- Send an **electronic copy (pdf)** of the ISP to npt.assignments@gmail.com or share it with a staff member via a pen drive or airdrop.

Failure to follow any of these requirements will result in the final grade being diminished by a third or a half a grade, depending on the circumstances. Additionally, failure to contact as stipulated during the ISP period will also result in the final grade being diminished by a third or a half a grade each time there is a failure to contact as required.

Policies

If a student were to deviate from the expected cultural and behavioral expectations during the semester and were to be put on probation as a result, the student would be at risk for a grade reduction in both the FME and ISP courses (this could range from the reduction of the final grade by 1/3 to failure in one or both courses, depending on the severity of the infraction). Culturally appropriate behavior is an important component of both of these courses

SIT SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

STUDY ABROAD

ISP Site Information

Reminder: During ISP, you are responsible for ensuring the Academic Director and program staff know how to get in touch with you **at all times**.

Complete this form by printing your full name and completing the ISP Itinerary and Call-In Dates tables, below. ISP itinerary details must include the mode of transportation to your ISP site and to any and all destinations away from the program base during the ISP period. Please also indicate the places you will be staying, contact names, phone numbers, addresses or PO Box numbers, email addresses, and fax numbers (if applicable) during ISP.

This document must be approved by the Academic Director before you will be permitted to begin your ISP. In addition, you may not travel to any destination other than what is listed below without first receiving permission from the Academic Director.

Student Name: _____

ITINERARY:

Travel date(s)	Destination	Mode of travel: bus, train, airline (if approved) (with flights, times)	Contact Information (phone, email, people you are staying with)

CALL-IN DATES: Mondays and Thursdays
—Every **Monday** and **Thursday before 4 pm**, beginning Monday November 11.
—Call-in should be made to SIT office +977 1 5178 154 (complete with voicemail), or if that doesn't work then to Wangmo la (+977 9768389866), Rinzi la (+977 98037 01404), Michael (+977 98186 30589) or Nyima Dorjee la (+977 98418 42339).
—On Thursdays you all must furthermore send (to NPTcheckin@gmail.com) or phone in a **one-paragraph progress report**. When possible, reports should be either sent as email text or in word file (not pdf).
—On Thursday April 24 you will submit (by email or phone) **a mid-ISP report** For ISPs, the report should be a continuation of your proposal and should include your new ideas on the project, new sources being used, etc.

By signing this document, you acknowledge your understanding that:
1. I am responsible for ensuring that the Academic Director and program staff know how to get in touch with me at all times based on information I have provided.
2. The Academic Director & program staff will be awaiting my calls on the designated call-in dates.
3. Certain activities deemed potentially dangerous to individual safety and program integrity are not permitted and are grounds for dismissal. These include, but are not limited to, motorcycling, hitchhiking, driving, parachuting, bungee-jumping, hang-gliding, riding in private airplanes, rock climbing, white water rafting, scuba diving, and surfing. See the Code of Conduct in the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook for complete details.
4. I am not permitted to leave the program countries (India & Nepal), unless pre-approved by the Academic Director and consistent with the Independent Travel Policy.

_____   _____
Date   Student Signature

TIBETAN AND HIMALAYAN PEOPLES GRADING POLICY

ISP Paper Rubric

Category	Possible Considerations	Maximum
Title / Acknowledgements / Abstract	-The title is succinct, interesting, and engaging; and it clearly explains the project -The acknowledgements are complete and professionally written -The abstract clearly summarizes the project	5
Research Question / Objectives / Justification	-The study/research question is relevant, thought-provoking, and original -The project aims to contribute information on a topic relevant to the local community and/or other researchers -The objectives of the study are clearly presented and appropriate -The justification for the project is clear and contextualized	10
Context and Literature Review	-Context: The content is relevant. Important themes and background information are provided so reader understands study/research question and its place within the field of research -Literature Review: The paper includes appropriate, high-quality of relevant background sources, including several from refereed journals, indicating familiarity with key publications on the topic -Creative projects: background information is relevant to both the thematic topic being explored and the previous history of artistic work in this field. -Practica: the goals of the practicum are meaningful and are stated clearly; a focus project and how it relates to the program theme are clearly described. The history and work of the practicum organization, how its work relates to the program theme, and how it fits into the context of other similar organizations are all accurately described.	10
Methods	-The explanation of methodology is clear and accurate and supporting materials are included in appendices (if applicable) - Implementation of methods through the research process (e.g., interviewee recruitment) is thoughtful and handled with care -The methods are appropriate -Practica: a clear and complete description of the work undertaken is given, including dates and hours worked	15
Ethics	-Human Subjects policies and ethical research guidelines are adhered to and thoroughly discussed -Appropriate consideration is given to informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of research participants, in keeping with human subjects protocols and the SARB-approved ISP proposal -The ISP strengthens relationships and contributes to mutual trust between the author and research participants in ways that are respectful, culturally appropriate, and collaborative -Natural science ISPs not involving human subjects show an awareness of and respect for environmental ethics, as appropriate to the topic -The ISP is responsive to host community needs, as applicable	10
Presentation of results / findings	-The findings are complete and are logically and convincingly presented -The findings are clearly differentiated from discussion or interpretation -The prose discussion of findings is clear, succinct and logical -Any tables, graphs, photos and direct quotes are relevant and support the argument -Creative projects: The thinking and concepts behind the creative work, as well as the messages contained within it are clearly explained, and the intended audience (and availability to that audience) is described.	15
Depth of analysis	-Important implications raised by the findings are included -The argument is well-structured and different sources of information are well-integrated -Patterns in the findings (or a lack of a pattern) were identified and discussed -The author gives logical explanations of what findings mean -The author clearly and specifically related his/her findings to the study/research question -The findings are linked to previous research in the field -Creative projects: An analysis of the creative piece is given, including an assessment of its educational value and aesthetics -Practica: A description and analysis of how the organization/focus project is set up and functions are given; the organization's strengths, weaknesses and challenges are discussed; observations of the organization or project are placed in the context of the existing literature	15
Conclusions	-The main findings are summarized and discussed within the broader implications or concerns of the study -The author made research-based recommendations, as appropriate, and made recommendations for future study -Practica: a range of lessons learned from the practicum are detailed	10
Technical aspects	-The paper is organized into major sections (and sub-sections, as appropriate) and/or follows guidelines established in accordance with the orientation of the program/discipline -Table of contents, In-text citations, and reference list or bibliography are done correctly and completely -There are no mistakes in writing & grammar, spelling & punctuation -The paper is clean, legible, well-formatted, professional in appearance, and aesthetically pleasing	5
Effort	*Determinations of ISP effort vary per program*	5
Creative project, performance, or practicum	*Criteria for review of creative works or performances, or for successful completion of practica, will be determined by the program academic director*	

*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.

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ISP Presentation Rubric

Category	Possible Considerations	Possible
The student articulates a primary study/research question and provides a clear introduction to presentation.	The student clearly articulates a research question. It is clear what the work was about and what to expect in the presentation.	10
The student contextualizes her/his work.	The student contextualizes the work in reference to the literature/ larger social panorama/scope of problem at hand/local site or relevant parameters. The presentation begins with focus and explanation. Practica: the student describes the organization's history and work and explains how its work fits the context of similar organizations; the student describes how the organization and project relate to the program theme	10
The student addresses methods.	The student includes a clear description of the methods employed and why these methods were chosen. The student discusses the success/failure/appropriateness or challenges of these methods. Practica: the student describes the work undertaken and methods used	10
The student organizes the presentation of findings and discusses the content of the argument well.	The student clearly addresses the study/research question through well-selected examples (evidence, arguments, cases). The content conforms fully to the goals set forth in introduction or stated study/research question. The presentation is easy to follow. Practica: the student shares observations and impressions of the organization/project	10
The student provides in-depth analysis of findings, and discusses important implications of the project.	The student articulates clear/though-provoking conclusions that relate back to the study/research question. The broader implications (for further study or inquiry) are mentioned. Creative projects: a description and explanation of the creative piece and how it relates to the program theme is given Practica: the student describes what s/he learned from the experience and how s/he can apply these knowledge upon return to the home community	20
The student addresses ethics.	Ethical considerations/human subjects issues are covered fully and discussed well. The issues included are relevant.	10
The student includes a brief personal reflection.	The student discusses the personal relevance or lessons learned in the experience. The discussion is thoughtful and appropriate.	5
The student effectively manages discussion with the audience.	The student responds well to questions and can clarify or add new examples, explain points, ponder ideas, etc. "live and on-stage." The student shows the ability and willingness to open and extend the discussion with others.	10
The student's presentation is well organized, stays within the designated time, and is well articulated.	Visual or material support is clearly referred to and explained/engaged in the presentation. There is evidence that the student prepared and practiced the delivery. The student speaks clearly and employs effective body language (looks at the audience, manages papers or other things well). The student respects the time allotted for the presentation (neither too short nor too long).	10
The student delivers a respectful and professional presentation.	The student speaks and acts in a manner that is respectful of him/herself, the people and the organizations or entities involved in the work. The student is humble about what has been achieved. The student avoids stereotyping.	5

Late assignment policy:
All assignments must be completed on the due date by 5pm, unless otherwise specified. Any assignments received after 5pm, or other specified time, will be considered late. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 of a grade (from A to A- and so forth), for each day, or portion of a day, late. Students must notify the AD at or before the time of collection that an assignment will be late, otherwise a grade of 'F' will be given. No assignments will be accepted after 5 late days. In other words, anything more than 5 days late will receive a grade of 'F'. Exceptions to this policy will only be made for serious and substantiated medical reasons brought to the attention of the AD **BEFORE** the due date/time. (Note: individual grades in group assignments may vary.)

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

*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.
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Expectations and Policies
- <u>Show up prepared</u>. 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.
- <u>Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements</u>. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- <u>Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer</u>. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honour by coming to speak.
- <u>Comply with academic integrity policies</u> (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- <u>Respect differences of opinion</u> (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.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at: http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices.

ISP proposal outline

In brief

Objective
To outline your course of action for the independent study period, which has been checked and approved by the Academic Director. This proposal can then function as a guideline for what you do in the field.

Assignment
All students must discuss their projects in depth with the AD before handing in the proposal. Below is a brief review to serve as a checklist. Remember that this assignment is also mostly about *process* – systematically thinking about and planning a fieldwork project of your own.

Title of project (even if it changes later, give your proposal a title)
Abstract – brief sketch of research questions, methods, relevance of the study
Introduction – hypothesis/expectations/theoretical models, definitions of key terms and ideas, advisor
Literature review – analytical summary of previous work in your field
Methods – how you plan to carry out the study and analyze your findings
Discussion – significance, limitations, relevance to others
Logistics – budget, workplan/schedule, travel, room & board arrangements, translation, communication
Bibliography

In more detail
The primary components of an ISP project proposal are (or rather: can include):

1. <u>Proposal Introduction</u>. The introduction should succinctly state the research question your topic investigates and the proposed methodology of research. Explain the value of the project. (250 words)

2. <u>Discussion of the primary themes</u> to be explored in the ISP: This should introduce the main question (the "fruitful question") behind your field study, and it should also discuss some of the sub-themes and questions that you expect to investigate, although the ideas you present in this proposal may change once you begin the actual field study. (750-1000 words)

3. <u>Literature Review</u>. A minimum of five to ten sources should be included with your draft and final proposals. This is not just a laundry list of texts, but must be an <u>annotated</u> review of applicable

written sources, whether books, journals, or articles. Internet sources will be accepted only if from reliable sources.

4.   Itinerary for the field study period. Please be as specific as possible, including dates and places where you plan to conduct your field study, and any/all contact information that you have for each location and date. If at any time we cannot contact you because you have failed to give us accurate and up-to-date information on your whereabouts, you may be subjected to penalties ranging from probation to dismissal from the program, depending on the severity of the situation. (1 page)

5.   Timeline for the field study period. Unlike the itinerary, the timeline should focus on what you plan to do at each stage of your field study. This, again, is likely to change once you begin field study, but you should set specific short-term goals that will lead to the completion of the final project. (1 page)

6.   Budget for the field study period. The budget should include your total projected expenditures for travel, room and board, water, laundry, phone, etc. along with any additional costs associated with hiring translators, material purchases, photocopying, and typing and binding charges. Each item should have a separate line, and the total projected expenditures must be clearly located at the bottom of your budget. (1 page)

7.   Information about your ISP Advisor. You should have an ISP advisor. We can help you find someone, but ultimately as an independent study project, this is your responsibility.

8.   Statement of Risk Assessment of project in terms of communication, travel, politics, unrest, weather, health, time, and finances. This need not be lengthy but should be thoughtful. (1 page)

9.   Several other forms must be submitted before the ISP period begins. These will be distributed and collected in the days before departure.

Procedures and Criteria for Alternative Independent Study Projects

For certain ISPs the primary outcome or product may not be an extended narrative or monograph. Projects in creative writing, photography, theater and dance, field-based language learning, cooking/cuisine, and textiles/fashion, and musical projects all fall into this category.

Regardless of the category, the following must be included:
1. A written statement of learning goals, methods, resources, difficulties encountered, and recommendation for future study.
2. A bibliography and/or resource list.
3. Guidance, direction, and evaluation of an in-country advisor.

If the student is participating in an activity as part of the ISP process, this participation should be narrowly focused to the topic, e.g. set-design, acting, direction, etc. for a theater project.
1. Some projects in this category may require the prior approval of the student's home university if the student expects to get credit.
2. Consideration should be given to special materials expenses that such projects often necessitate.

The following suggests procedures to define and set criteria for ISPs in these categories.

— *Short stories, poetry or other literary narrative*
    The final product should be a broad sampling of writings that reflects the values, particular cultural behavior, topography, and "local color" of the host country based on the student's observations and experience in that culture. A part or the entire product might be written in the host language.
— *Photography*
    As with a monograph ISP, students should submit a preliminary outline of the study. Again, there should be a broad sampling of photos. Other criteria should include:
    1.   Clear labeling of photos. (Who, What, When, Where, Why)

2. The photos should have a thematic presentation; a "photo-essay."
3. The photos should reflect a depth of engagement and experience in the host culture.
4. A written explication should accompany the photos as a summary, preferably with clear parenthetical citations to individual photos.
5. Possibly a slide show during the ISP oral presentation.

— *Dance and Theater*

A dance concert or theater performance should be in the context of the local culture:

6. It should include costumes, music, props, etc.
7. If possible, the performance should be videotaped or photographed as an archive. Video and photographic documentation can be sent to Brattleboro for archiving.
8. A written explication should deal with all aspects of the performance: historical background, ritual significance, style, costuming, music, etc.

— *Language Learning as an ISP*

Occasionally, the student might do an ISP on an area of the host language. Following are some suggested topics:

- The language learning could be based on field study and an individualized program of study, not necessarily just further language lessons.
- The student might do a tutorial based on interviews and background readings in the political, social, economic, educational or current events in the host culture.
- Based on field methods the student might undertake a study of one of the following: proverbs, gnomic wisdom; songs; argot and slang; nomenclatures as in politics, economics or communications; ritual language; gestures and body language; writing; a series of language lessons on a focused topic such as a life situation accompanied by visualizations.
- Study of regional accents and dialects with recordings.

— *Cooking/Cuisine*

A cookbook of the local cuisine whether original or a collection of received recipes should reflect the total food cycle in that culture: food production, marketing, processing (tools, recipes, serving, etc.), rituals and taboos. There should be a demonstration included in the final oral presentation and photos illustrating stages in the food cycle. The student might even generalize to discuss the role of food production and consumption in the overall economy of the host country.

— *Fashions/Textiles*

The study should focus on textiles or fashions, which are native to the host culture, not imports. Moreover, the entire cycle of clothing wear should be examined: production of raw materials, fabrication, marketing, and costuming--who wears what? The study should also examine costuming rituals, aesthetic considerations, origin of the styles and geographic considerations. For the final oral report the student can give a demonstration and use visuals.

— *Music*

Musical compositions should again be peculiar to the styles of the host culture. There should be an ample sampling, not just a single song. Songs could be written in the host language. The student should arrange for the music to be performed and recorded for final presentation and as an archive. (See Dance and Theater above). Again, archival material can be sent to Brattleboro.

— *Film*

The film should be focused on a single topic in the host culture, e.g. village festivals. A script should accompany it. A series of touristy moving photos do not constitute a film. Is there ample time in the ISP period for the student to make even a short adequate film? Can the student sustain the expense of making a film? Is there adequate equipment available? Will the intervention of the process offend settings in the host culture?

— *Internship Report*

See internship syllabus.