

Internship & Seminar

ITRN-3000 (4 credits)

Italy: Island Ecosystems in the Mediterranean

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 seminar consists of a four-week internship with a non-profit organization, research institute, or government agency focused on Mediterranean island ecosystem conservation, marine-terrestrial interactions, sustainable resource management, or community-based environmental initiatives. The seminar will help you prepare for and process your internship experience. Permission may be granted to undertake an internship with a for-profit entity, but this will only be given if the entity is primarily focused on outcomes related to the program theme and has a designated officer whom you can work with. The aim of an internship is to enable students to gain valuable work experience in the field of Mediterranean island ecology and conservation while enhancing their skills in an international work environment. A minimum of 140 hours must be spent working for the organization.

While SIT will suggest organizations willing to take on our students as interns, it is ultimately each student's responsibility to secure an internship placement. Whether a student is accepted at any particular organization will, in large part, depend on the organization's requirements in that semester and on the student's skills, and academic and employment background. The organization and the student's internship activities must be approved by the academic director having regard to both the program's academic goals and safety requirements. You will consult regularly with SIT staff and faculty to review your progress in setting up and undertaking the internship and learning associated with the internship experience.

Once an internship has been arranged, it will not be possible for you to change to another internship without the permission of the academic director. This permission will only be given if there is a clear and compelling reason for the change and if there will be no damage to the internship program for future students.

Students prepare, plan, and design their internship as part of the Environmental Research Methods and Ethics course, where you will submit a detailed proposal before beginning your internship. The proposal will include an extensive literature review covering the background and history of the organization, the conservation issues it focuses on, and how it fits in the context of similar organizations in the Mediterranean region, Europe, and/or globally.

Students, in consultation with their internship organization and the SIT internship coordinator, will identify a focus project that they will spend the majority of their internship hours working on and a responsible person at the internship site who will act as their supervisor. Regular reflection and assessment meetings are held to review the progress of the internship and learning associated with the internship experience.

Students complete a paper in which they discuss the overall structure and work of the organization, process their learning experience on the job, and analyze their focus topic. The paper must also document a comprehensive work schedule and the specific skills and knowledge acquired through the experience and how the student intends to apply these skills and knowledge upon return to the United States. A focus will be on linking internship learning with the program theme of Mediterranean island ecosystems.

Learning Outcomes

The Internship seminar comprises 140 hours working for the internship organization.

- Define local, regional, and global issues, problems, and challenges in global food security and sovereignty, and the ways in which organizations in Italy are addressing these issues;
- Develop a sense of career purpose, as well as the workforce skills and competencies needed to solve problems and work for social change in the field of global health and well-being
- Analyze how theories and processes of decoloniality/decolonization can support the creation of inclusive workplaces and organizational structures;
- Describe, analyze, and synthesize their learning experience in the form of an internship paper and oral presentation.

Language of Instruction

Depending on student language skills and the nature of the internship site, students can expect their internship experience to be conducted in English, Italian, or some combination of the two.

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.

Course Schedule

Module 1: Making the Most of Your Internship

During this module, students will be introduced to doing an internship in Italy as a foreign student by the academic director. Students begin their weekly reflection sessions and journaling as a means to reflect on the internship experience, consider career goals and purpose, and to outline their internship paper.

Students meet with the academic director, following confirmation of their internship placement, and discuss expectations, timeframes and other details. Structural components of the final internship paper, content, layout, and general guidelines will also be reviewed.

Readings

Coleman, J. (2022, January 11). *Finding Success Starts with Finding Your Purpose*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2022/01/finding-success-starts-with-finding-your-purpose>

Lorde, A. (2007). The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. In *Sister Outsider, Essays and Speeches*. Ten Speed Press.

Journaling Prompts

- Consider the Japanese concept of Ikigai with regards to your career development and interests. (What do I love? What am I good at? What can I get paid for? What does the world need?). What does this framework help you understand about your career goals?
- As another way of thinking about purpose, rather than think about career trajectories, reflect on your current internship or other work or personal experiences to ask the question: What types of problems do I like to solve? What does this say about the type of professional opportunities you could pursue?

Module 2: Developing Intercultural Competence

During this second week of reflective work, we review the US National Association of Colleges and Employers career-readiness competencies as a framework for considering our own skills and opportunities for growth. One of the core competencies, listed here under the Equity & Inclusion header, raises important questions for this international internship around developing the intercultural skills to succeed in a variety of professional environments.

Readings

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2021, April). *Competencies for a*

Career-Ready Workforce. National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Bennett, M. J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J.S. Wurzel (Ed.) *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education*. Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.

Journaling Prompts:

- How would you rate yourself in each of these core competency categories? What are your skills, and where are your areas of growth?
- In what ways do these core competencies line up with the workplace norms in your home country, and in what ways do they line up with your internship host organization?
- Does simply reading through these competencies give you hints or ideas about how to improve your internship experience? How will you make these competencies actionable within the scope of your internship?

Module 3: Critical Reflection and Decolonizing Approaches

Creating inclusive and productive workplaces is a challenge for businesses and organizations, even those whose missions are to fight for social justice and equity. In this module we reflect on our experiences at internship sites and other organizations and institutions we have been a part of. In what ways do they reflect White, heteropatriarchal norms, and how have other organizations worked to move past this?

Readings (choose one and be prepared to discuss)

Dismantling Racism Works adapted by The Centre for Community Organizations. (2019). White Supremacy Culture in Organizations. The Centre for Community Organizations. <https://coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Coco-WhiteSupCulture-ENG4.pdf>

Morton, J.W. (2017). Think leader, think heterosexual male? The perceived leadership effectiveness of gay male leaders. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences* 34. 159-169.

Maida, A., & Weber, A. (2022). Female Leadership and Gender Gap within Firms: Evidence from an Italian Board Reform. *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 75(2), 488-515.

Journaling Prompts:

- What has been the main role you played this period?
- What have you noticed about the structure of the organization, who does what, when, and how?
- What are some ways your internship host works to improve inclusion? Are these explicit policies or not?

Module 4: Wrapping up the Internship Experience: Review and Critical Reflection

This module allows students to continue to reflect on the internship experience and begin to process the learning that occurred in a safe and supportive context. The session discusses ways of acknowledging both the successes and failures of the internship, of completing tasks, handing over projects to and sharing insights with colleagues on the job, and setting realistic goals for the future. Students discuss fears and strategies for successful re-entry into their home setting, opportunities for professional growth, and how to make optimal use of the internship experience. They will discuss ways to describe the experience gained and skills learned in their internship in cover letters, résumés and how to use this experience for future professional growth. Time is allotted to discuss finalizing the internship paper.

THE FINAL PAPER

The final paper shall consist of the following four sections:

- Description of the host institution
- Description of tasks performed on the job
- Business plan design, grant proposal, or other major output of the internship experience
- Personal assessment of your job performance

GUIDELINES FOR THE FINAL PAPER

Expectations for each section of the final paper are outlined below. These, however, are guidelines and may be adapted to the specificities of your internship.

Description of host institution: a brief description (one page) of the host institution for the internship. This should include the nature of the services offered and a profile of the customers who use them. The student may also provide brochures or collateral material that further describes the institution.

Description of tasks performed: this should be written in third person as if the student, acting as a manager, were writing it for a new employee/associate. It should be written in outline form, except for the job summary section. Headings should be used to identify each of the sections. A suggested outline for this description is listed below:

- Job title and place of employment
- Job summary—narrative summary of the activities of the position
- Qualifications—education and experience required and/or desired
- Working conditions—uniform requirements, physical surroundings, working days, hours, etc.
- Job relationships—who is the mentor and to whom reported
- Specific duties and responsibilities—a list should be provided to indicate all duties performed by the individual in this position

Output of the internship experience: this can be a proposal for a strategic response to an existing problem, a creation of a sustainable plan, a grant proposal, or a research project that

responds to the need of an organization. The proposal should also outline the human and financial resources needed for the implementation of the proposed model and measures of its success.

Personal assessment of the experience: in this section provide an assessment of the key learning milestones acquired on the internship experience, the challenges faced, and the possible impact of the experience on the student's academic and professional career. Included in this section is a reflection on the internship experience, including the output of the internship (mentioned above), as it relates to development in Uganda.

Ethics

The internship experience must reflect SIT's ethics policy and commitment to the values of reciprocity. The student intern should also abide by the policy and regulations of the host institution including dress, punctuality, and employee behavior. Violations of SIT's code of conduct or employee conduct at the host institution will result in an immediate termination of the internship and can lead to further disciplinary sanctions by SIT.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Weekly two-hour reflection and assessment meetings are held with the academic director or internship coordinator to review the progress of the internship and learning associated with the internship experience.

At the end of the internship period, students are expected to present their work to the group. Assessment of both written work and the oral presentation is based on the quality of research and academic scholarship and adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Assessment of the Internship

Internship Paper	35%
Internship Presentation	10%
Internship performance	35%
Journal	20%

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.