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Global Organizational Culture & Ethics

GOCE-3500 (3 credits)

Spain: Choose Your Track—Climate, Psychology, Economics OR Cinema

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 course equips students to engage meaningfully and ethically in internship experiences across diverse sociopolitical, cultural, environmental, and global contexts. Using a critical, practice-based approach, students examine the nature and purpose of internships as transformative experiential learning opportunities that connect to the program's Critical Global Issue theme. Emphasis is placed on navigating workplace and organizational cultures, reflecting on identity and positionality in professional settings, and applying ethical principles to working globally with communities, individuals, and environments—particularly in collaboration with vulnerable populations and in sensitive ecological or habitat settings.

Students will develop key professional intercultural competencies, including communication in context, critical self-reflection, and ethical engagement in applied settings. The course guides students through the process of designing a learning plan, establishing shared expectations with host organizations, and presenting a comprehensive internship proposal. While this course does not include a formal academic research component, it supports students in making connections between field-based learning and broader structural, ethical, and cultural considerations. The knowledge and skills learned through this course can be applied to this internship, but also beyond as students embark on their professional journeys.

The overall aim is to equip students with the tools and mindset to approach internships not only as professional opportunities, but also as sites of meaningful cross-cultural learning, solidarity, and critical engagement aligned with the program's thematic focus.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Critically reflect on the role of internships as sites of experiential learning within complex social, political, and cultural systems;
- Demonstrate intercultural awareness and adaptability by identifying, respecting and navigating organizational norms, power dynamics, and workplace culture in diverse settings;

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- Articulate their own positionality and apply ethical frameworks when engaging with host organizations and communities, especially when working with vulnerable populations and/or sensitive ecological habitats;
- Develop and present a clear, contextually informed internship workplan and proposal—co-created with the host organization—that outlines objectives, tasks, and timelines, and demonstrates an understanding of the organization's history and sociopolitical context.
- Apply reflective practice to continually examine personal learning, growth, and challenges during the internship preparation phase;
- Establish and negotiate expectations with host organizations through written and verbal communication that demonstrates professionalism, accountability, and cultural humility.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in the program's language of instruction of the host country, and students will be introduced to vocabulary relevant to the course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits to a wide range of regional venues.

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.

Required Texts
See Course Schedule for a full listing.

Assignments and Evaluation

<u>Grading Criteria</u>

Students are expected to attend all classes and actively participate in class discussions, individual and group activities and to complete all assigned readings and written work. Full alertness, active listening, engaged questioning, and full participation as well as demonstrated sensitivity to and respect for cultural practices of host communities are expected of all students.

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Assessment

Participating & Engagement 30%
Reflective Journal Entries 20%
Internship Learning Agreement (ILA) 20%
Career Competency Growth Plan 10%
Internship Proposal Presentation 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

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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.

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: Defining the Internship—Purpose, Learning, & Positionality

This introductory module invites students to explore the purpose and possibilities of internships as forms of experiential learning deeply rooted in local context. Students will reflect on the distinct nature of internships compared to traditional academic learning, and how these placements can serve as sites for personal growth, intercultural engagement, and ethical collaboration. This module also establishes foundational concepts of professionalism, critical

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self-awareness, and the reciprocal nature of learning in community-based or organizational settings.

Key questions include: What is an internship in a cross-cultural context? How does one define success beyond deliverables? How can students engage in mutually respectful relationships with host organizations and communities?

Session 1: Orientation to Experiential Learning & the Internship Context

- Framing the internship as a site of experiential learning
- Introduction to cultural humility and learning in context
- Overview of academic expectations, assignments, and evaluation for the internship course
- Discussion of group norms, professional communication, and self-awareness in diverse contexts

In-class Exercise
Reflective mapping: Students identify prior experiences that shaped their understanding of "professionalism" and "success" and consider how these may shift in new cultural and organizational settings.

MODULE 2: Workplace & Organizational Culture

Session 1: Building Career Readiness—Career Competencies in Context
This session introduces students to SIT's adapted career readiness competencies as a foundation for success in internship settings across cultures and sectors. Students explore how these competencies are applied in workplace settings, reflect on their own strengths and areas for growth, and begin aligning their internship learning goals with specific professional skill areas. This session supports students in developing a deeper understanding of how intercultural workplaces function and how they can show up with purpose, adaptability, and self-awareness.

SIT Career Readiness Competencies Introduced:

- Self-Development & Career Management
- Intercultural Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity & Inclusion
- Global Leadership
- Collaboration
- Technology

Key Themes:

- What does "career readiness" look like in a global, intercultural context?
- Exploring how competencies are expressed differently across workplace cultures
- Using SIT's competencies as a roadmap for personal and professional growth
- Preparing to articulate goals and development areas in the Internship Learning Agreement

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In-Class Activities:

- Mini-Workshop: Overview of the 7 SIT Career Competencies and how they connect to internship success
- Self-Assessment Exercise: Students evaluate their current confidence in each competency
- Group Discussion: What do these competencies look like in different cultural and organizational contexts? How might expectations vary?
- Goal-Setting Activity: Students identify 2–3 competencies to focus on during their internship and draft SMART goals.

Session 2: Internships as Relationships—Collaboration, Learning, & Responsibility

- Internships as learning partnerships: understanding power dynamics and reciprocity
- Exploring student goals vs. organizational needs
- Clarifying roles: student, mentor/supervisor, academic director/internship coordinator
- Introduction to the Internship Learning Agreement (ILA): structure, purpose, and key components
- Developing shared expectations: setting objectives, responsibilities, supervision, and communication plans
- In-class work session: Students begin drafting their Internship Learning Agreement and initial workplan
- Preparing to share the ILA draft with host organizations for feedback and revision

In-class Exercise:
Students use guided prompts to draft the Internship Learning Agreement, including identifying a minimum of three learning objectives, articulating expected tasks, and outlining a preliminary supervision/feedback plan.

Homework:
Complete a draft of the Internship Learning Agreement and schedule a time to review it with the host organization. Final version due [insert due date], to be approved by Academic Director/Internship Coordinator and Host Supervisor.

Required Reading:

- SIT Internship Handbook (section on the Internship Learning Agreement)
- Mruk, C. J., & Moor, M. J. (2020). Designing the internship experience. In *Succeeding at your internship: A handbook written for and with students* (Ch. 3). Bowling Green State University. https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/oer/1
- Sample Internship Learning Agreements (case examples)

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Homework / Preparation for Next Session:

- Begin incorporating selected competencies and corresponding goals into the draft Internship Learning Agreement (2nd draft).
- Reflective journal prompt: How might your host organization's culture shape your opportunity to grow in a specific career competency?

Required Materials:

- SIT Career Readiness Competency Handout (adapted from NACE)
- Self-Assessment and Goal Mapping Worksheet
- Center for Engaged Learning. (2019). Reflective practice student toolkit. Providence College: https://engaged-learning.providence.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2019/08/REFLECTIVE-PRACTICE-Student.pdf

MODULE 3: Working with Vulnerable Populations

This module supports students in developing the ethical awareness, emotional preparedness, and practical communication tools needed to engage respectfully with individuals and communities who may be considered vulnerable, marginalized, or historically underserved. Students will explore how power and privilege shape field-based engagement and will examine strategies for protecting both community dignity and their own well-being during emotionally complex interactions. Emphasis is placed on listening with care, honoring community ownership of stories, and working in alignment with host organization guidance.

Session 1: Ethical Engagement and Positionality in Context

This session introduces key frameworks for working with vulnerable populations through an ethical, culturally responsive, and self-reflective lens. Students consider how their own identities, social locations, and institutional affiliations shape interactions and interpretations, and how to cultivate humility, respect, and accountability in their roles as interns.

Key Themes:

- Who defines “vulnerability” and why does it matter?
- Power, privilege, and access in field-based roles
- Ethical principles of autonomy, dignity, and non-exploitation
- Positionality as a dynamic practice, not a fixed identity
- Avoiding saviorism and performative solidarity

Activities:

- **Reflection mapping:** Students map their own social identities in relation to those they may engage with during their internship
- **Case study review:** Pairs analyze a scenario involving an intern navigating cultural or ethical missteps with a vulnerable group

Readings:

- Adams, Bell & Griffin (2016). *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, chapters on working with communities
- Tamas, Steven. “The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Framework for Engaged Fieldwork” (*Qualitative Inquiry*, 2020)

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Session 2: Listening & Story Sharing: Ethical Communication with Community Members
This session offers tools and strategies for engaging in dialogue with community members whose experience may include marginalization or systemic violence. Students will explore how to prepare, listen, and respond in ways that honor dignity while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Key Themes:

- Preparing ethically and practically for conversations or storytelling spaces
- Care-centered, dignity-based communication (informed by oral history principles)
- Consent, confidentiality, and minimizing re-traumatization risks
- Consent, confidentiality, and re-traumatization risks
- Language, tone, body language, and power dynamics in interviews or dialogues
- Knowing when to pause, redirect, or decline to pursue a story

Activities:

- **Paired practice:** Students conduct short "listening interviews" using ethical guidelines, followed by debrief on tone, respect, and comfort levels

Debrief: Group discussion on community ownership of narratives and the role of interns in protecting dignity

Readings:

- Oral History Association, *Principles & Best Practices*
- Herman, Judith (1997). *Trauma and Recovery* (excerpt on narrative and bearing witness)
- SIT Internship Handbook section on community engagement and informed consent

Session 3: Cultivating Resilience & Emotional Boundaries in Internship Work
This session focuses on emotional self-care and boundary-setting in professional environments where students may encounter difficult stories or systemic inequities. It reinforces that responsible engagement includes attending to one's own well-being to avoid burnout or secondary stress.

Key Themes:

- Recognizing signs of vicarious trauma and emotional overload
- Setting boundaries with empathy and professionalism
- Building reflective practices for emotional processing
- Accessing peer and supervisory support structures
- Affirming the intern role—not counselor, advocate, or researcher

Activities:

- **Resilience toolkit creation:** Students build a personalized toolkit of practices, contacts, and resources for emotional sustainability
- **Guided reflection**: Journaling or visual mapping to identify emotional triggers and support strategies

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- **Optional:** Guest speaker or short video from a fieldworker or social justice practitioner on long-term resilience

Readings:
- Bloom, Sandra L. (2003). *Caring for the Caregiver: Avoiding Vicarious Trauma*
- Hooks, bell. *All About Love* (excerpt on boundaries and compassion)
- Vickers, Emma L. "Unexpected Trauma in Oral History Interviewing"

Session 4: Oral Histories & Difficult Stories in Global Contexts
This session equips students to recognize when unexpected or difficult narratives that may arise during their internship and how to navigate them responsibly, without soliciting trauma or exploiting personal histories.

Key Themes:
- Oral history vs. research vs. internship conversations
- Anticipating and responding to "difficult stories" ethically
- Respecting silence, refusal, and partial narratives
- Community ownership and "afterlife" of narratives or stories

Activities:
- **Case discussion:** Only Human: analyzing ethical dilemmas in story collection
- **Role play**: Practicing how to respectfully pause, redirect, or conclude a conversation when a story becomes overwhelming

Readings:
- Sheftel, A. & Zembrzycki, S. *Only Human: Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Working with Difficult Stories*
- Pascoe Leahy, C. *The Afterlife of Interviews*

Session 5: Partner & Supervisor Guidance in Ethical Engagement
This session emphasizes that internship stie supervisors carry expertise and responsibility for setting appropriate engagement protocols. Students will learn to defer to site guidance and clarify their role early on.

Key Themes:
- Distinguishing student responsibilities from practitioner roles
- Supervisor guidance as a cornerstone of ethical engagement
- Asking clear questions about organizational protocols
- Recognizing red flags and when to escalate concerns

Activities:
- **Drafting supervisor questions:** Each student develops 3-4 questions to ask about community engagement protocols at their placement site
- **Group brainstorm**: Red flag scenarios and how to bring them to a supervisor

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Readings:

- SIT Internship Handbook: Community & Supervision section

MODULE 4: Initiative, Global Leadership, & Professional Growth in Context

This capstone module equips students to take initiative in thoughtful and culturally appropriate ways, while also guiding them through the finalization of their internship work plan and the reflective closure of their internship preparation process.

Session 1: Practicing Initiative & Leadership—Finding Your Role, Making Your Impact

This session focuses on understanding what it means to take initiative in a new cultural and professional setting. Students examine what proactive engagement can look like without overstepping boundaries or replicating extractive or saviorist behaviors. Through reflection, case studies, and peer discussion, students strategize how to respectfully ask for more responsibility, propose new ideas, and show up with purpose and humility.

Key Themes:

- Redefining leadership in intercultural and nonprofit settings
- Initiative vs. overstepping: when and how to propose ideas
- Reading the room: navigating hierarchy, communication style, and expectations
- Building trust before proposing change
- Advocating for your learning while adding value to the organization

In-Class Activities:

- **Scenario mapping:** Students respond to workplace situations involving unclear roles, underutilization, or project stagnation. They draft possible next steps for initiating more engagement
- **Peer coaching circles**: Students share moments when they felt unsure whether to speak up or take initiative and get feedback on how to approach similar moments with confidence and humility

Readings:

- SIT Competency Brief: *Global Leadership & Collaboration*
- Cialdini, R. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (excerpt on timing and trust)
- Mruk, C. J., & Moor, M. J. (2020). Designing the internship experience. In *Succeeding at your internship: A handbook written for and with students* (Ch. 7). Bowling Green State University. https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/oer/1

Session 2: Developing & Finalizing the Internship Work Plan

This session offers structured time for students to collaboratively refine and finalize their internship work plan in alignment with their host organization's goals and their own learning objectives. Students are encouraged to integrate feedback from their supervisor and reflect on how the tasks align with their selected SIT competencies.

Key Themes:

- Clarifying tasks, timelines, and expectations
- Aligning internship duties with personal learning goals and host organization needs

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- Effective communication with supervisors
- Integrating SIT competencies into daily work

Activities:

- **Guided work session with peer review:** students refine their work plan
- **Troubleshooting Q&A**: What if the org isn't sure what to assign? How do you advocate for more responsibility?

Deliverable:
Finalized and signed Internship Learning Agreement (ILA). Final Presentation on Internship Proposal in class.

Internship Proposal Presentation Guidelines:
Your presentation should include:
1. Overview of the Internship

- Briefly introduce the host organization (mission, focus areas, location, and target audience/environment).
- Describe your role and how it connects to the organization's work.

2. Goals & Objectives

- Share your **internship learning goals** and how they align with both the organization's needs and the program's Critical Global Issue theme.
- Identify the NACE/SIT career competencies you aim to develop.

3. Workplan & Timeline

- Present key tasks, deliverables, and milestones.
- Include a realistic timeline showing when you will complete each component.

4. Context & Ethics

- Highlight relevant sociopolitical, cultural, environmental, and/or global contexts.
- Identify any ethical considerations in your work, particularly when engaging with vulnerable populations or sensitive habitats.

5. Anticipated Impact

- Explain how your work will contribute to the host organization's mission and your own professional growth.

6. Reflection & Adaptability

- Discuss how you plan to reflect on your experience throughout the internship.
- Share how you will adapt if challenges or changes occur.

Presentation Format:

- **Length**: 7–10 minutes + 3–5 minutes for Q&A.
- **Slides**: 5–7 slides maximum, with visuals to complement your speaking points.
- **Clarity**: Use plain language; avoid jargon unless explained.

Materials:

- Career Competency Growth Plan (Template found in accompanying toolkit)
- Internship Learning Agreement
- Excerpt: Mruk, C. J., & Moor, M. J. (2020), Chapter 8: "Completing the Internship"

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