

Global Health Field Methods and Ethics RSCH-3500 (3 credits)

India: Public Health, Gender, and Sexuality

Academic Director: Dr. Abid Siraj

Office Hours: Academic Director and Staff are accessible by appointment.

Course Description

The Global Health Field Methods and Ethics course provides students with the concepts and methodological skills to conduct fieldwork in a cross-cultural setting. In particular, this course helps students negotiate additional barriers and boundaries faced while conducting research or doing fieldwork in a public health context in India, specifically in navigating power dynamics with an anti-colonial stance while collecting and analyzing data in a rigorous and ethical manner. During this course, students learn how to consolidate and apply the knowledge imparted during other semester courses as well. The first-hand experience that each student gains while conducting fieldwork during this course will prove valuable at the culmination of the semester by the successful completion of the four-week Independent Study Project (ISP).

Learning Outcomes

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

- Understand the fundamental principles and methodologies of global public health research, including quantitative and qualitative approaches
- Produce a methodologically and ethically sound proposal for fieldwork on a specific topic related to public health, gender, and sexuality in India
- Apply ethical frameworks and principles to the design, conduct, and dissemination of public health research
- Analyze the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism and power imbalances on global public health research ethics and practices
- Apply principles of decolonizing methodologies and culturally responsive research to the design and ethical conduct of public health research in diverse global settings
- Synthesize information gathered from primary and secondary sources and integrate them to produce a sound paper/report as a material product.
- Apply skills in research ethics and assessment of the impact of a fieldworker on local people and cultures being studied, using sensitivity and awareness.

- Show critical insights on a particular topic/organization/public health module in an oral presentation.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content as well.

Instructional Methods

Seminar activities encompass both excursions to field sites and classroom lectures on practices in the field. Reading materials will be assigned and discussed to prepare and enhance understanding of the course and assignments.

Assignments and Evaluation

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

(1) CITI Training	5%
(2) Formulating a Research Question and Review of Literature	15%
(3) Presentation of Proposed Research	15%
(4) Research Tool design and Three Interviews Assignment	25%
(5) Public Health Research Proposal	30%
(6) Attendance, Participation and Completion of Assigned Readings	10%

Evaluation Components

1. CITI Training (5%)

Complete online IRB training through CITI programs. This training addresses human subjects research protocols and ethical considerations essential for conducting ethical research. You can find a FAQ for students which includes guidelines on how to access the training at this link: [CITI - FAQ Doc for SIT students.docx](#).

2. Formulating a Research Question/Topic/Theme and Review of Literature (15%)

You will identify 2-3 potential research topics, and after consultation with the instructor, narrow it down to one area for study.

- b) Develop a problem statement related to the program theme and formulate it into research question(s). Write in about 250 words as to why you chose the topic or theme and its significance for you personally, for knowledge generation in the field, and/or for policy or social intervention.
- c) Develop a 1000-word review of literature on the topic/theme

3. Presentation of Proposed Research (ISP Workshop) (15%)

Before you submit your draft proposal, you will present your proposed research project to the class and receive feedback. This presentation requires you to clearly articulate your research questions, summarize your methods, highlight the relevant literature, discuss the implications of your work, and reflect on the ethical considerations and your researcher positionality. The goal is to effectively communicate a qualitative research plan to an academic audience in a concise and engaging manner.

4. Tool Design and Three Interviews Assignment (25%)

- a) For qualitative data collection, design an interview protocol or a checklist with probes (10-12 questions) to collect data to answer the research question through interviews; Alternatively, for quantitative data collection, design a survey with 10-20 fixed response questions (or for mixed-methods, the survey can combine fixed-response and open-ended questions).
- b) The tool should be accompanied by a note explaining the rationale for the questions/items on the checklist and their sequence.

Canvas the interview guide/survey developed and compose two sets of the questions – one in English and the other with its translations in Hindi (translated with the help of the Hindi instructors). Using these two distinct sets of questions, students will conduct one Hindi and two English interviews (or deliver the survey to 5-10 people, about half in English and half in Hindi). Students will write up their results in a 1000-word summary, focusing on a description and analysis of the interview/survey process. For the interviews, two must be conducted outside of each student's homestay during a day-long visits in Delhi or weeklong excursions or weeklong workshop period. Students should include transcripts of both sets of questions as appendices to the paper. Each student should keep in mind the limitations and possibilities of language when composing Hindi questions. English questions should be rethought and rephrased in a manner appropriate to Hindi language levels.

Working on this assignment will be a cumulative process ending with a written summary on a topic of each student's interest which should include a description of the topic, participant

selection, interview location/survey distribution, and the process and lessons learned from the data collection. The goal of this assignment is to orient students to the data collection process and prepare them for ISP.

3. Public Health Research Proposal (30%)

The students must develop a research proposal related to the program focus areas. The ISP proposal should include research question(s) and objectives, theoretical framework, and methodology, and comply with the ethical standards learned throughout the course. ***Draft must be submitted first (worth 10%) and final paper will be submitted after incorporating feedback from peers, advisor, and instructor (25%).

4. Attendance and Participation (10%)

Students are expected to fully participate in all course activities, complete all required readings and enthusiastically participate in classroom discussions and field activities.

Participation is not the same as attendance. Full participation means asking pertinent questions to the course's guest lecturers, and engaging in discussion and analysis during the question-answer section of lectures, group discussions, and while on an excursion. Students are expected to read the assigned readings, complete and submit assignments on given deadlines and demonstrate their knowledge through reflection, writing, and discussion.

Participation includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

1. **Attendance** - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
2. **Active Listening** - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, entertaining contradictory perspectives, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language) and taking notes.
3. **Involvement in Class Discussions** - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge and information. Students should challenge themselves to step outside their comfort zones to ensure the best discussion possible: speaking up if they're usually quiet or allowing other classmates a chance to speak if they tend to dominate class discussions.
4. **Group Accountability** - participate positively as a part of a group during field excursions and classes.
5. **Respect** – students should engage in culturally appropriate interactions with their host families, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and local communities. This includes appropriately greeting people when entering offices and classrooms and saying thank you.

Expectations

With the exception of journals and field notebooks, all assignments should be typed and double-spaced. Careful proofreading and editing are essential parts of the writing process; spelling and grammar will be graded. Compliance with a standard format of citation is expected for both primary and secondary sources. Most importantly, concise and logical arguments should be clear throughout assignments.

Please note: *description is not analysis*. While there is a place for the description of people, events, or organizations in assignments, be aware that extensive description is not a substitute for critical analysis based on independent thinking and understanding. The more writing reflects a creative synthesis of theory, observation, and reflection, the more successful it will be.

Academic Policies: While SIT prides itself on providing students with an experientially-based program we hold ourselves and our students to the highest of academic standards. Students are asked to 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.

Late Assignments

Late papers will be marked down one step (B- to C+, e.g.) for each day they are late.

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 have 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). SIT Respect differences of opinion (classmates, lecturers, and local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across differences and consider other perspectives with respect.

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

Course Schedule

Module 1: Starting Points of Research: Approaches, Ethics and, Research Questions

This module focuses on the approaches to quantitative and/or qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. This module also addresses the methodological and ethical challenges and considerations in health research on vulnerable populations.

Class 1 - Introduction to Global Health Research - Positionality, Power, and Subjectivity in Research

This session will introduce students to health research and the specific features differentiating qualitative and quantitative research in health, their uses, and methods. The session focuses on exploratory, descriptive, observational study designs in qualitative and quantitative approaches. Students will also be introduced to positionality, power, and subjectivity in health research and the ethical dilemmas arising from vulnerabilities and power hierarchies along the axes of age, caste, gender, sexual orientation, and poverty.

Required Readings:

Jacobsen, K.H. (2021)) Chapters 7 and 13. Overview of Study Designs and Qualitative Studies. In *Introduction To Health Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. (3rd ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning. 161-178; 320-334

Kantek, J. (2025). 'Reflexivity in Action': Navigating Researcher Positionality(ies) and Responsibility(ies) Through a Community Advisory Board. *Journal of Participatory Research Methods*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.35844/001c.137810>

Rojas-Rozo, L. et al (2024). Unlocking Engagement: Enhancing Participation in Research With Vulnerable Populations. *International Journal of Public Health*, 69, 1606705. <https://doi.org/10.3389/ijph.2024.1606705>

Recommended Readings:

Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. Vintage. pp 1-57

Ratcliffe, J.W. and Gonzalez-del-Valle, A. (1988) Rigor in health-related research: Toward an expanded conceptualization. *International Journal of Health Services*, 18(3), 361-391.

Hamer, B. (Director) (2003) 'Kitchen Stories'[Motion Picture] BulBul Films. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0Oan6gGnVI> (Accessed on 20th January 2023)

Class 2 - Formulating Global Health Research Questions and Review of Literature

In this segment the students will be taken through the initial steps in the research process - identifying their research interest(s), selecting a topic, writing the statement of problem and formulating a research question. This session also addresses the significance of a review of literature in situating the research question in the landscape of existing knowledge; conceptualizing and developing its theoretical and conceptual underpinnings, articulating, refining and operationalizing it.

Required Readings:

Kumar, R. (2019). Chapter 8: Step one: Formulating a research problem in *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications

Flick, U. (2015). From Research Idea to Research Question. In *Introducing Research Methodology: A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project*. (2nd ed.). (pp.45-56). Sage.

Flick, U. (2015). Reading and Reviewing the Literature. In *Introducing Research Methodology: A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 59-69). Sage.

Module 2: Research Ethics and decolonization

This module explores responsible research in global public health through both formal oversight and critical reflection. It examines the role of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and ethical guidelines in protecting participants, while also addressing how colonial legacies, power, and researcher positionality shape global health research. Together, these sessions highlight that ethics requires not only compliance with review processes but also reflexivity, equity, and more just collaborations.

Class 3 - Research Ethics and Institutional Review Board – Global context

This class introduces the principles and practices that guide ethical research in global public health. We will explore why ethics is essential to research, the role of institutional review mechanisms in protecting participants, and the standards that shape decision-making across diverse contexts. The class also examines the challenges of applying universal guidelines in low- and middle-income countries, where questions of justice, equity, and power often

complicate formal procedures. Students will reflect on how ethical oversight not only ensures compliance but also fosters trust, accountability, and fairness in the production of knowledge.

Required Readings:

Standards and operational guidance for ethics review of health-related research with human participants (2011). WHO; <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241502948>

Benatar S. R. (2002). Reflections and recommendations on research ethics in developing countries. *Social science & medicine* (1982), 54(7), 1131–1141. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0277-9536\(01\)00327-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0277-9536(01)00327-6)

Steinert JI, Atika Nyarige D, Jacobi M, Kuhnt J, Kaplan L (2021). A systematic review on ethical challenges of ‘field’ research in low-income and middle-income countries: respect, justice and beneficence for research staff?. *BMJ Global Health*. 6:e005380. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2021-005380>

Class 4 - Positionality & Decolonization

This session explores the growing debates around decolonizing global health and the diverse ways in which scholars and activists are working to rethink research and practice. We will examine how global health continues to be shaped by entrenched hierarchies of power and knowledge, and why efforts to challenge these hierarchies require more than symbolic gestures. Attention will be given to movements that foreground local voices and community-led knowledge practices, showing how alternative frameworks for health and research are being created in India and beyond. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their own positionality and consider how research can become a space for critical dissent, equitable collaboration, and the reimagining of more just health systems.

Required Readings:

Mehjabeen, D., Patel, K., & Jindal, R. M. (2025). Decolonizing global health: a scoping review. *BMC health services research*, 25(1), 828. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-025-12890-8>

Prasad, Shambu C., and Mathieu Quet. 2022. Creative Dissent in India: Knowledge Swaraj and the People’s Health Movement. *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*. 8(1): 87–104. <https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2022.471>

Module 3: Methods of Data Collection

This module introduces students to a range of research methods while focusing a select set of qualitative and quantitative methods and tools of data collection including participant observation (research journal), interviews (interview guides and checklists), focus group discussions (guides and checklists), and surveys (questionnaires).

Class 5 - Qualitative Methods: Participant Observation and the Contextual Interpretation of Data

This first session on qualitative methods introduces students to a typology of observational methods based on the researcher's role in the process of data collection ranging from non-participant observation through Rapid Rural Appraisals to the ethnographic method. The technique of Description, Interpretation, and Evaluation (DIE) will enable students to distinguish between the steps of recording observational data, its interpretations, and their evaluations by the researcher. Students will learn about the importance of situating the data in the context of existing knowledge and of the human subject under consideration before interpreting it.

Required Readings:

Thorogood, N. and Green, J. (2014) Observational Methods. In *Qualitative Methods for Health Research*. (4th ed.). (pp.131-136). Sage.

Spilsbury, K., Haunch, K., Hodge, G., & Pearce, S. (2024). The Opportunities and Challenges of Conducting Observational Research in Care Homes: What a Researcher Brings, Does, and Leaves Behind?. *Journal of Long-term Care*, 360–370.
<https://journal.ilpnetwork.org/articles/10.31389/jltc.280>

Seim, J. (2021). Participant Observation, Observant Participation, and Hybrid Ethnography. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 53(1), 121-152.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124120986209>

Class 6 - Semi-structured Interviews, Key Informant Interviews, Group Interviews, and Focus Group Discussions

The second session on qualitative methods will address individual, group and key informant interviews and focus group discussions used in qualitative health research. Students will learn how to develop an interview guide, pretest the guide, and refine it. They will learn the practical steps of setting up an interview, introducing the self and the study, obtaining informed consent, starting and closing the interview, and techniques of interviewing to simultaneously maintain flexibility and focus during the interview. Teaching will combine a lecture, and a facilitated hands-on exercise to develop an interview guide and conduct a mock interview.

Required Reading:

Luetke Lanfer, H., Krawiec, S., Schierenbeck, M. et al. (2024). Balancing between reality, ideality, and equity: Critical reflections from recruiting key informants for qualitative health research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*. 24, 276. Springer Nature.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-024-02403-2>

Mwilongo, N. (2025). Focus Group Discussions in Qualitative Research: Dos and Don'ts. *Eminent Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.70582/28z5p189>

Class 7 - Quantitative Data: Survey Method and Questionnaire Design

Continuing the focus on methods of data collection this will be an introduction to the use of the survey - a quantitative method to collect data in a defined time period, from a clearly defined sample drawn from a specified population. The session will help students acquire the skills to design a survey questionnaire- identifying the sociodemographic data and themes to be covered, types of questions and responses, considerations about the wording and sequence of questions, obtaining informed consent, pretesting, and revision. They will learn of issues in the canvassing of questionnaires and ways of addressing concerns of the reliability and validity of survey instruments

Required Reading:

Jacobsen, K.H. (2021) Questionnaire Development. In *Introduction To Health Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. (3rd ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning.p.515-538

Module 4: Data Management, Analysis and Writing

The module addresses the methods and challenges in the systematic management of data after its collection. It takes students through steps of data cleaning and filling gaps while generating codes from narratives or creating frequency tables and performing simple correlations for quantitative data. It underlines the importance of interpretation in context and alongside theoretical issues of representation and language offers practical suggestions for strategizing writing.

Class 8- Coding, Data Analysis, and Interpretation - Qualitative

The session will introduce students to categorizing and coding themes emerging from the narrative data, and examination of patterns and associations in the narratives. It then will guide them to the interpretation of these patterns in the context built through a review of the literature and socio-demographic data of the study participants.

Required Reading:

Sirwan Khalid Ahmed et al (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*.Volume 6.100198.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>

Thorogood, N. and Green, J. (2014). Analysing Qualitative Data In *Qualitative Methods for Health Research*. (4th ed.). (pp.173-183 and 203-215). Sage.

Recommended Reading:

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). Reporting guidelines for qualitative research: A values-based approach. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 22(2), 399–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2024.2382244>

Class 9 - Coding, Data Analysis, and Interpretation - Quantitative

In the context of quantitative research, they will learn about univariate and bivariate analysis, the generation of frequency tables, and a situated interpretation of the findings.

Required Reading:

Bryman, A. (2016). Quantitative data analysis. In *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Fatma, N., & Ramamohan, V. (2023). Healthcare seeking behavior among patients visiting public primary and secondary healthcare facilities in an urban Indian district: A cross-sectional quantitative analysis. *PLOS global public health*, 3(9), e0001101.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0001101>

Class 10 - Writing: Language, Content, Strategy, and Process

This session will discuss strategies to approach the writing of the academic paper, planning, and structuring of the content. How should one plan and prepare for the writing process? It will highlight issues of language and representation of individuals and communities, especially in the context of vulnerabilities arising from geographical location, gender, caste, sexual orientation, and poverty. The lecture will also share pointers on effective ways to present findings in an academic paper.

Required Reading:

Jacobsen, K.H. (2021) Writing Success Strategies. In *Introduction To Health Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. (3rd ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning. pp. 974-998

Module 5: Presenting Public Health Research: This module equips students with the skills to effectively communicate public health research through both written and oral formats particularly after they are through with their Independent Study Projects (ISP) and/or Internship. It emphasizes the importance of crafting clear, rigorous, and ethically responsible research reports and presentations that address diverse audiences, from academic peers to policymakers and community stakeholders.

Class 11 - Strategies for Writing Research Reports

Best strategies for effective research report writing involves clear organization, critical analysis, and precise communication. Begin by defining the research objective(s) and structuring the report with standard sections such as the introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion. Use concise and formal language, support arguments with credible evidence, and

maintain objectivity throughout. Finally, revise thoroughly to ensure clarity, coherence, and accuracy before submission.

Required Readings:

Public Health Writing Guide (2023). The University of North Carolina, Charlotte, USA
https://publichealth.charlotte.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/555/2023/07/BUSPH_Public-Health-Writing-Guide-PHX-3-27-1.pdf

Guidance for Creating Impactful Health Reports (2021). WHO
<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/349091/WHO-EURO-2021-2661-42417-58838-eng.pdf>

Class 12 - Presenting Public Health Research

Presenting public health research effectively requires clarity, relevance, and engagement. Researchers should tailor their presentation to the audience highlighting key findings, implications, ethical dilemmas and recommendations. Audio-Visual aids like popwerpoints can enhance understanding, while storytelling techniques help connect data to real-world impact. It's essential to communicate both the scientific rigor and the social significance of the research.

Required Reading:

Naumova, E.N. (2024). Telling Truth with Data Visuals: A Guide for Public Health Professionals. J Public Health Pol. 45. 191–197. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41271-024-00479-0>

Class 12 - Presentation of draft proposal by students before final submission