

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

Switzerland: Global Health and Development Policy

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

The Global Health Research Methods and Ethics course provides students with the concepts and methodological skills to conduct fieldwork in a new cultural environment. In particular, this course helps students negotiate additional barriers and boundaries faced while conducting research in a public health context in Switzerland and Morocco, specifically in navigating power dynamics and adhering to local and international ethical standards while collecting and analyzing data. During this course, students learn how to consolidate and apply the knowledge imparted during other semester courses in relation to their chosen research topic. The seminar includes a number of practical exercises such as the organization and conduct of interviews with experts in Switzerland and Morocco, preparation of an application for review of research with Human Subjects, a local case study, and the integration of interviews and/or surveys into a research project. The ethical implications of field research will be examined throughout. The seminar helps develop the skills necessary to navigate both the local and international institutional environments of Geneva and Rabat, the capital city of Morocco. 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:

- Demonstrate awareness of the impact of researcher's positionality on the research projects;
- Develop capability to formulate a clear research problem and question, carry out a literature review and identify relevant experts for primary data collection;
- Develop networking and organizational skills for interactive research in the local and international environments in Geneva;
- Apply qualitative and quantitative research techniques such as participant observation, interviewing, and surveys to collect data;

- Demonstrate capacity to synthesize information gathered from primary and secondary sources and integrate it into the research project;
- Demonstrate awareness of ethical issues in the context of field research in local and crosscultural settings, taking into account the special needs and concerns of vulnerable human subjects and focus groups, including in the area of public health;
- Produce an Independent Study Project proposal and an application for review of ISP research with Human subjects to be approved by the Local Review Board (LRB) /SIT Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- Communicate effectively about global health research to academic and professional audiences.

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) Research Tool Design & Implementation Assignment	20%
(4) Group Field Research Project	20%
(5) Global 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. Tool Design & Implementation Assignment (20%)

- 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 French. Using these two distinct sets of questions, students will conduct one French and two English interviews (or deliver the survey to 5-10 people, about half in English and half in French). Students will write up their results in a 1000-word summary, focusing on a description and analysis of the interview/survey process. 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 French questions. English questions should be rethought and rephrased in a manner appropriate to local 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.

4. Group Field Research Project (20%)

Student form field research groups prior to the departure to Morocco and integrate the results of their group's respective field research, at least two face-to-face interviews, into a power point which they will present upon return from the study trip to Morocco.

5. Global 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. Students must include a reference list with a minimum of 8 sources. ***Draft must be submitted first (worth 10%) and final paper will be submitted after incorporating feedback from peers, advisor, and instructor (25%).

6. 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, 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

Module 1: Introduction to Global Health Research & Experiential Learning

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in a study abroad context. Students learn how to relate to local communities and individuals. Most particularly, this module allows students to discover the power of experiential learning, and use it as a tool to connect to local communities and individuals, and develop into reflexive researchers who are attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research. In this context, students will participate in a number of field visits, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and its humanitarian museum, the United Nations office in Europe (Palais des nation), the Maison de la Paix, the Graduate Institute, the Biotech center of the University of Geneva,, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its museum based in Lausanne, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), as well as the Swiss Federal Capital City of Bern, including the Federal Parliament building and its UNESCO cultural heritage registered medieval city.

Session 1 - Introduction to Global Health 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.

Required Readings:

Reynolds, H.,G., G. (2015). "Designing Research" (Chapter 2), in: Guest, Greg & Namey, Emily (eds.), *Public Health Research Methods*, SAGE Publications, 33-49.

Bell, J. (2010). *Planning the Project*. In *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science* (5th ed.). Berkshire England: Open

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.

Session 2: Introduction to Advanced Libraries and Research Facilities of International Affairs

Students participate in two site visits of two distinguished libraries for research in, global health, and development policy. The first library to which they are being introduced is the United Nations Office in Geneva, which also contains the Archives of the League of Nations; the second library is the one of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, based at the recently established Maison de la Paix, which has become a major research and policy competence center of the international community of Geneva, and as the Graduate Institute also provides for a specialized department on Global Health. This Module further corresponds with a one-day field visit and training organized in the thematic course on Development Policy and Health (DPH) exploring Geneva's rich history and tradition linking Global Health with Humanitarian Action. Recommended links to the library search engines: At the Graduate institute : <http://libguides.graduateinstitute.ch/index.php> At RERO : network of the Geneva libraries : https://explore.rero.ch/en_US/ge/advanced/search At the UN Library : go to the « Global Search » page at <https://bit.ly/2TR6Trr>

Session 3 - 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:

Barakso , M., Schaffner, B., and , Sabet, D. (2014). The Research Question / Linking Theory and Inference". In: *Understanding Political Science Research Methods*, Routledge. 36-55; 56-80.

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.

Imel S. (2011) "Writing a literature review" chap 11 in Rocco T. *The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 145-159.

****Assignment Due: Research Question/Literature Review**

Module 2: Research Ethics, Power & Positionality

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 local and international 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.

Session 4 - 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 and opportunities of applying universal guidelines in different countries.

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>

Resnik, D. B. (2015). What is ethics in research and why is it important? National Institutes of Health. <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis>

Salinas S., S. Rance, M. Serrate, & M. Castro (2000). Unethical ethics? Reflections on intercultural research practices. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 8(15), 104-112.

World Medical Association. (2001). World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 79(4), 373. Jacobsen, K. H. (2012). "Primary Studies: Ethical Considerations" (Chapter 21), in: *Introduction to Health Research Method: A practical Guide*. Sudbury: Jones & Bartlet Learning, 2012, 151-168

*****Assignment Due: CITI Training***

Session 5 - Positionality & Power

Through this session, we examine how the field of 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. 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:

Alcoff, Linda Martín. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique*, no. 20, 1991-1992, pp. 5-32.

Bost, Suzanne. "Digging up the Relics of Colonialism." *Quiet Methodologies: Humility in the Humanities*. University of Minnesota Press, 2025, pp. 3-25.

Juan C. Moreno (n/d). Entering into the Realm of "the Other": A Few Suggestions for Crossing Boundaries of Human Difference. Office of Diversity and Inclusion, University of Minnesota Extension

Yip, S. Y. (2023). Positionality and reflexivity: negotiating insider-outsider positions within and across cultures. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 47(3), 222–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2023.2266375>

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).

Session 6 - 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 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.

Tolley, E.E. Ulin, P.R. Mack, N., Robinson, E.T., Succop, S.M. (eds.) (2016) Collecting Qualitative Data: The Science and the Art. In *Qualitative Methods in Public Health: A Field Guide for Applied Research* (pp.86-98). (2nd ed.). Wiley Josey-Bass.

Session 7 – 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.

Required Reading:

O'Leary, Z. (2004). The essential guide to doing research. London: SAGE. 194-207. Bryman A. (2012) Interviewing in Qualitative Research, in: Bryman: Social Research Methods (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University. 469-487.

Tolley, E.E. Ulin, P.R. Mack, N., Robinson, E.T., Succop, S.M. (eds.) (2016) Collecting Qualitative Data: The Science and the Art. In *Qualitative Methods in Public Health: A Field Guide for Applied Research* (pp. 99-120), (2nd ed.). Wiley Josey-Bass.

Session 8 - 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

****Assignment Due: Tool Design & Implementation**

Session 9 - Individual ISP Advising Sessions

The objective of the two individual ISP advising sessions is to allow students on a case to case basis to have an opportunity to discuss the ISP topic, the research question and the interactive research strategies with the Academic Director, the Academic Advisor and faculty, guiding them in the process of preparation of a coherent ISP final proposal. A third, collective/group meeting with the academic director and the academic advisor will be organized during the ISP period to discuss the research progress.

Session 11 - Conducting Field Research in Morocco

The objective of this workshop is to allow students to share best practices and to debrief on their experiences with the Group Field Research Projects in Morocco.

- Group Field Research Project: With the Integration of two Interviews during the Morocco Study Trip o Facilitated by the program advisor for Morocco, and prior to the departure to Morocco, students will split into groups and identify a topic for their respective group field research project, taking into account two corresponding experts or specialized agencies in Morocco whom they will contact and meet during the Morocco study trip. Themes may also relate to either the PGH or DPH seminars. They are encouraged to compile the results of their field research in a power point - or- Presi presentation which they will present in Switzerland upon return from Morocco during a group debriefing session. This session will also aim at the sharing of good practices among students in carrying out field research.
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Module 4: Data Analysis, Writing & Presentation

The module addresses the methods and challenges in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. It underlines the importance of interpretation in context and alongside theoretical issues of representation and language offers practical suggestions for strategizing writing. This module also equips students with the skills to effectively communicate public health research through both written and oral formats. 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.

Session 12- 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:

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

Session 13 - 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.

****Assignment Due: Research Proposal DRAFT**

Session 14 - 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:

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

Silverman, D. (2005). Writing a research proposal. *Doing Qualitative Research*, 139–146. Retrieved from <http://www.uk.sagepub.com/managementresearch/Easterby>

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>

Session 15 - 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>

****Assignment Due: FINAL Research Proposal**