

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

### Chile: Public Health, Traditional Medicine, and Community Empowerment

*This syllabus is representative of a recent 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 Public Health Research Methods and Ethics seminar introduces students to the conceptual and practical tools for gathering primary data related to the program theme. Students will also gain the knowledge and skills that are essential to forming constructive relationships with organizations and/or individuals in Chile, which are necessary for completing the Independent Study Project. In particular, the course enhances students' skills at building rapport; initiating purposeful dialogue in the Chilean context; gathering, recording, and analyzing primary data; and writing a scholarly academic report. The course also pays particular attention to both Chilean and U.S. higher education ethical considerations that guide primary data collection and how these could be translated within the local cultural parameters of Chilean Public Health and Traditional Medicine. Broadly, the seminar introduces students to both qualitative and quantitative approaches of social science field research.

The course will critically examine ethical frameworks and case studies, while exploring decolonizing methodologies and addressing power imbalances in public health research in a Chilean context. We will explore the historical context of research ethics, the impact of colonialism on health and research practices, and strive to develop ethical approaches that promote equity and justice in a globalized world. The overall aim is to help students hone their experience-based learning processes and prepare them for the development of an Independent Study Project (ISP), which is largely based on the data gathered from primary sources.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

The Public Health Research Methods and Ethics course comprises of 45 instructional hours. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Reflect an acute sense of positionality and perspective and operate independently, using cultural sensitivity, language skills, and local networks of trust built over the course of the semester.
- Facilitate the process of identifying and investigating a research topic, selecting an appropriate methodology and choosing strategies for presentation of data in both written and oral formats.
- Apply appropriate decolonial methods and ethics during field research on the critical global issue of public health or traditional medicine belief systems in the context of Chile.
- Generate and integrate primary data gathered in the field and carry out valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions.
- Create an Independent Study Project proposal that is in strict observance of ethical academic standards and local values and that includes a research question, sample review of the relevant literature, outline of the research methods, and anticipated ethical challenges and ways of addressing them.
- Communicate effectively about Public Health Research Methods and Ethical considerations.

## **Language of Instruction**

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to Spanish language and indigenous vocabulary, related to course content through in-country expert lectures, field assignments, and activities. The field is central component of the course, and the course combines field assignments and activities with lectures, assigned reading, and discussion sessions.

Readings prepare students for field assignments, generate questions for class discussions and deepen students' knowledge and skills for primary data collection. Students are responsible for all the required readings and should be prepared to bring them to bear in class discussions.

Students may submit assignments in either English or Spanish and are expected to complete assignments by the due date. Assignments will be assessed on level of organization, analytical quality and depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence, where it is required, citation and formatting.

## **Instructional Methods**

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in experiential learning theory. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum. 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
- Learning 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.

The RME seminar contemplates a series of activities that will privilege this process and experiential learning cycle, including participatory introductory seminars, visits to health care centers, practical outings for meetings with organizations and communities organized in promotion projects and health care, etc. On the other hand, the evaluation process considers the possibility of applying innovative and creative learning techniques, such as the use of videos or multimedia, promoting learning from doing.

Finally, other space where it will be necessary to deepen will be the learning of technological tools to carry out research at a distance. Although face-to-face studies are always prioritized, it is contemplated to manage and use remote options at a distance, learning the advantages and possibilities that remote electronic resources can support social research. In this way, we consider that the pandemic moment could be an opportunity (if necessary) to learn to use research tools that allow mixing the resources of face-to-face work with virtual ones.

## **Required Texts**

Association of Internet Researchers – <http://www.aoir.org> – includes link to the Association's ethical guidelines, giving questions that researchers should address before designing research using data collected via the Internet.

Bernard, H. Russell (2011). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Domínguez, D. et al (2020) Virtual Ethnography. FORUM: QUALITATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH SOZIALFORSCHUNG. Volume 8, No. 3 September 2007

Emerson, R. M, Fretz, R. I, & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Gangopadhyay, J. . (2000). The ethical challenges of field research: A personal narrative. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, V (1), 34-38. Retrieved from: <https://ijme.in/articles/the-ethical-challenges-of-field-research-a-personal-narrative/>  
Hannerz, U. (2003) Being there... and there...and there. Reflections on multi-site ethnography. Sage Publications, (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi). V4(2):201-216.

Kohls, Robert. "The Values Americans Live By." Retrieved from: <https://homepages.se.edu/cvonbergen/files/2013/01/The-Values-Americans-Live-By.pdf>

Levy, D. (2000). The shock of the strange, the shock of the familiar: Learning from study abroad. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 1(1). 75-83.

Pinar, A. (2016). Second Language Acquisition in a study abroad context: Findings and research directions. *Colomb. Appl. Linguist. J.*, 18(2), pp.p 83-94.

Rybas, N. et al (2016) Developing Cyberethnographic Research Methods for Understanding Digitally Mediated Identities. FORUM: QUALITATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH SOZIALFORSCHUNG. Volume 8, No. 3, Art. 35 September 2007

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

Singer, M (2012). *Introducing medical anthropology: a discipline in action*. AltaMira Press, United States of America.

Sweitzer, Frederick H and King, Mary A (2014). *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional, and Civic Development in Experiential Learning*. Brooks / Cole, Cengage Learning. CA, USA.

Tuhiwai Smith, L 1999/2008. *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*. University of Otago Press. New Zealand. Introduction (pp. 1 – 18).

Virtual Methods – <http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/virtualmethods/vmesrc.htm> - site based on ESRC seminar series, containing archive of presentations with thematic index, list of useful resources, and advice on good practice in virtual methods.

### **Optional Readings**

Álvarez-Gayoy, J (2003). *Cómo hacer investigación cualitativa. Fundamentos y metodología*. Ed. Paidós, México.

Cassís Larraín, Adad José (2011), "Donald Schon: una práctica profesional reflexiva en la universidad", *Compas Empresarial*, Volumen 3, número 5, 2011.

Mesia M. (2007) Contexto ético de la investigación social. *Investigación Educativa* vol 11 N°19, 137 – 151. Enero – Junio 2007. ISSN 17285852.

Oyarce, Ana y Pedrero, M. (2006) Elementos para un diagnóstico epidemiológico con enfoque sociocultural. Guía básica para equipos de salud. Volumen 1. Ed. MINSAL. Santiago, Chile

Pedrero, M. (2010) Factores socioculturales en la identificación, prevención y tratamiento de la tuberculosis en población aymara de Tacna, Puno, Iquique y Arica. Informe Final (Inédito/ORAS-CONHU)  
(2015 a) Estudio comparado de la situación de salud de los pueblos indígenas en Chile. Informe final (Inédito/MINSAL)  
(2015 b) Diagnóstico y propuestas de incorporación de la variable pertenencia a pueblos indígenas en los registros de salud de la Región XV. Informe Final. (Inédito/SEREMI de Salud Arica y Parinacota).  
(2017) Lineamientos para el abordaje intercultural de la tuberculosis con los pueblos indígenas. Informe final (Inédito/OPS-Perú)

Ramírez, B. P., Ramírez, G. G. E., & García, N. K. F. (2016). El diario de campo como método autobiográfico en trabajo social. Documentos de trabajo social: Revista de trabajo y acción social, (58), 7-22.

Ramirez Hita, S. Usos y desusos del método etnográfico. Las limitaciones de las narrativas en el campo de la salud. En: Romaní, O (coord). Etnografía, técnicas cualitativas e investigación en salud: un debate abierto. Publicacions URV, Tarragona. España.

SIT Study Abroad (2023) Chile: Salud Pública, Medicina Tradicional y Empoderamiento de la Comunidad. Manual de Orientación. Trabajo de ISP.

SIT Study Abroad (2023) Métodos de investigación aplicados a la Salud Pública. (guía para estudiantes).

## 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: Experiential Learning and Positionality in Field-Based Research.

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in a study abroad context, with additional reflection on cross-cultural description, interpretation and evaluation. 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.

Session 1: reflections on the position as researcher and the process of cultural adaptation. Challenges and barriers for cultural adaptation. Introduction of initial ethical issues. Practical exercises, individual and collective. Historical Context of Research Ethics. Core Ethical Principles. The Role of the IRB, IRB Submission Process. CITI Training. Understanding "exempt," "expedited," and "full board" review for qualitative projects. Informed Consent. Confidentiality & Anonymity. Navigating multiple ethics boards. Cultural context of ethics.

Session 2: Positionality & Decolonization. Researcher subjectivity, positionality & power. Decolonizing and participatory approaches to research. Beyond individual consent: exploring community consent, collective decision-making, differing notions of autonomy. Data ownership, access & sharing. Reciprocity & benefit sharing. Researcher Safety & Well-being

Session 3: Tools for doing Field-Based Research in a Study Abroad Context (Participant and non-participant observation, systematic and non-systematic. Structured and semi structured observations. Cultural inventory, semi-structured interviews (among others).

## **Module 2: Foundations of Public Health Research**

Session 1: Introduction to Research, with a focus on Public Health Research. Overview of the goals research (description, explanation, prediction). Introduction to the cyclical nature of the research process (problem identification, literature review, research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, dissemination) Brief overview of different research paradigms: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Define public health research. Examine the role of research in addressing public health inequities in public contexts, particularly in relation to practice. Overview diverse research approaches and their applicability in local and global contexts. Introduce critical perspectives on power dynamics and knowledge production in the field of health. Explore the impact of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism on public health research.

Session 2: Introduction to Quantitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Research. Core principles of quantitative research: objectivity, measurement, numerical data, statistical analysis, hypothesis testing. Key concepts in quantitative research: variables (independent, dependent, control), operationalization, measurement scales (nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio). Introduction to quantitative research designs: surveys, experiments, correlational studies (brief overview of their basic structure and purpose). The role of hypotheses and research questions in quantitative research. Introduction to key concepts in qualitative research (e.g., meaning-making, context, lived experience). Core principles, goals, and historical development of qualitative research (and ethnography in particular). Introduction to key methods in qualitative research: interviews, focus groups, observations, etc. Introduction to mixed-methods research. Rationale and strategies for using mixed methods in health research. Exploring different mixed methods designs.

Session 3: Formulating Health Research Questions & Engaging with Literature: Identifying global health problems, translating them into researchable questions that are culturally sensitive and context-specific. Examining the role of local knowledge and community input in formulating research problems and questions. Characteristics of researchable questions .Aligning research methodology with research questions. Why conduct a literature review? Distinguishing between scholarly and non-scholarly source. Strategies for finding relevant literature.

## **Module 3: Introduction to the ISP.**

This module will describe the ISP processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP. The module will include a review and critique of past ISP papers. The module will also walk the students through the Local Review Board (LRB) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the application for Human Subjects Review (HSR application).

Session 1: General presentation of ISP. Critical Review of past ISPs. Introduction to the LRB/IRB Process and HSR Application Identifying an ISP Advisor.

Session 2: One-on-one Meetings with the Academic Director to Discuss Preliminary ISP Ideas.

Session 3: Preparing for the ISP. How to approach and develop rapport with research participants, how to work collaboratively with the ISP advisor, and logistics of the ISP period, including travel, materials, and timelines. Students will also review the ISP assessment rubric.

## **Module 4: Research Methods in Public Health**

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting quantitative and/or qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community.

First excursion to indigenous communities (northern & southern Chile)

Session 1: The health research agenda. The local and the global health agenda. Links between the health agenda, research and public policies. Orientations for Bibliographic review assignment.

Session 2: Practical interview preparation workshop. This workshop examines potential topics of interest and organizes and prepares questions for the practical activity.

Session 3: Practical visit and practical exercise for conducting interviews with healthcare personnel.

Session 4: Examining advances on the problem and objectives definition. The conceptual framework elaboration process: bibliographic notes and APA citation. Examining advances on building the conceptual framework: identifying key concepts and the conceptual framework as a network of key concepts.

### **Module 5: Ethics in public health research and standard processes for ethical conduct**

Ethical issues involved in scientific research in general and in the work in health field in particular. The historical development of ethics in scientific research. Basic concepts of informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, damage is analyzed in the light of practical experience in research in the field of health. Exploring institutional norms, issues of language, and expectations for ethical behavior while conducting research. The role of the Research Ethics Committee. Codes of ethics and institutional policies.

Session 1: The historical development of ethics in scientific research. Basic concepts of informed consent, privacy and confidentiality of information. Ethical dilemmas. Applying theory to the resolution of ethical dilemmas in the field. The role of the Research Ethics Committee. Discussion with members of an institutional Research Ethics Committee. Submitting the ISP proposal to the local Methodology and Ethics Review Board.

Session 2 (Week 8, 2 days activity (6 hours each day approx.)): Daily coexistence with the local cultural scene with indigenous communities.

### **Module 6: ISP in the Context of Chile – The ISP Proposal.**

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Chile. The module highlights the importance of applied methodology in the ISP experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student. Based on learning and engagement in the preceding course modules, this module focuses on ISP final proposal development and guides students through the development of the Human Subjects Review (HSR) application. This critical phase in the course involves both large student group meetings and individual student meetings with the academic director and staff and the ISP advisor.

Session 1 ISP proposal draft review and final orientations for submitting it to the Local Methodology and Ethic Review Board. Guided work in the ISP final proposal

Session 2: Meeting with ISP Advisors: the ISP in the context of Chile and the advisor's role.

### **Module 7: The research process: applying research methods and techniques.**

The research process is analyzed through a practical case. Defining a topic and research objectives, building the conceptual framework, collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative information. Research methods in the field. Data base design and the analysis

of basic statistical measures. Analysis of qualitative information. Writing the research report and presenting research results. Students will also review the ISP assessment rubric.

Session 1: Reviewing the research process steps and the ISP assessment rubric. The analysis of qualitative information.

Session 2: Writing the research report and presenting research results

Session 3 Individual meetings with program's ISP coordinator to discuss the ISP progress.

Session 5: Data base design and the analysis of basic statistical measures.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

### Cultural Biography (15%):

During the second week of the course, the elaboration of a brief autobiography is requested where they reflect on issues related to the student's life trajectory, and that make them position themselves - initially unconsciously - before the social and cultural reality that inhabits. As of this exercise, guidelines are established for what will be the researcher (or intern) approach for the ISP or internship period in the final stage of the semester.

### Practice Interview (10%):

Students are asked to conduct a practice interview. They are asked to write a small reflection (2-3 pages) about their role and attitude towards their research subjects and the skills they brought to the interview to establish an ethical and safe environment for the interviewee. Students are also encouraged to explore how their own positionality along the lines of gender, sexuality, race, and class affected the set-up and wording of their questionnaire and consequently the outcome of the interview.

### Data Analysis Exercises (10%)

Through this assignment, you will practice fundamental qualitative and/or quantitative data analysis techniques. You will use sample data such as interview transcripts, field notes, survey results, or secondary data. This assignment focuses on building your analytical rigor, demonstrating how to move effectively from raw data to interpretive findings, and understanding different analytical approaches.

### Field Work Journal (25%)

Students are expected to keep a work journal where they will document thoroughly all the activities and assignments carried out during the course. This will also continue during the Independent Study Project. The work journal is submitted for review and evaluation three times during the course of the semester.

### ISP/Internship Proposal (25%)

All students must develop a ISP or internship proposal. The ISP (research) proposal should address a theme related to the program, include research questions and objectives, theoretical framework, methodology, and comply with the ethical standards learned throughout the course. The internship proposal should include the objectives to be achieved during the internship period, a justification of the work and the organization selected, skills or areas in which the student can contribute to the work of the host organization, and an outline of the work plan to be carried out.

### 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](#).

### Participation (10%)

All students are expected to prepare for classes, attend and participate in all lectures, class discussions, field activities, and carry out all assignment

### Assignments

Cultural biography	15%
Practice Interview	10%
Data analysis exercise	10%
Field Work Journal	25%
ISP or Internship Proposal	25%
CITI Training	5%
Participation throughout the course	10%

### 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. Todo el proceso de participación será evaluado según los criterios descritos en una rúbrica que lo detallará. 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, 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	Excellent
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Above Average
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	
74-76%	C	Average
70-73%	C-	
67-69%	D+	
64-66%	D	Below Average
below 64	F	Fail

## STUDENTS EXPECTATIONS AND SIT POLICIES

### Individual and Community 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.**
- **Audience Considerations:** Writing for this class will be read by your classmates, me, and whomever else you choose. Do not make public what you wish to remain private. In keeping with accepted practice within the discipline, other students and other professionals who provide instruction and academic support for SIT may use writing from this course for instructional training and assessment. All identifiers are removed when student writing is used for these activities.
- **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. I reserve the right to mark you absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Course Communication:** Course documents and assignments will be posted on Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **Trigger Warning:** Some assignments you will encounter written by peers or published authors may delve into sensitive topics. The readings I've assigned handle these topics thoughtfully and artistically; I wouldn't have assigned them otherwise. Our classroom is a place where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics. That said, no student generated works should deliberately offend or disparage others, artistically or not.

## 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.