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Independent Study Project (ISP)

ISPR-3000 (4 credits)

South Africa: International Relations in the Global South

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 carries a total of four credits. Although students have indicated a tentative topic before arriving at the program site, these will most likely change as the semester proceeds, in consultation with the academic director (AD) and academic coordinator (AC). A local advisor, who specializes in the student's particular field of interest, must be selected by the student, and approved by the AD. All topics must be finalized and approved by the AD, and advisors selected and confirmed before the project commences. Meetings will be held throughout the semester with the AD and senior staff members to finalize the topic, select an appropriate advisor, and identify potential sources of information.

Learning Outcomes
The Independent Study Project course comprises 185 hours (4 credits). Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Select, design and implement an individual project that investigates a dimension of South African life and culture relevant to the theme of the program;
- Effectively utilize a field study format; and
- Develop self-confidence and an understanding of experience-based learning.

Requirements
- 3 – 4 meetings with a project advisor/s and at least two with the AD/AC
- Completion of approximately 120 hours of field work toward the completion of the ISP
- A 20-25 minute oral presentation on completion of the project
- A paper of about 40 typed pages presenting findings of the project, including methodology, results, discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

All aspects of Research Methods and Ethics seminar link directly to the ISP, providing ideas on techniques to be used in gathering and interpreting information, and the opportunity to practice these in assignments. **A key feature of the ISP is that it needs to be based primarily but not exclusively on primary sources (e.g. oral histories, interviews, observation, and documents generally not available in the USA).**

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Assessment
In conjunction with the academic advisor, the Academic Director evaluates student performance if the ISP. Assessment of the written work and oral presentation is based on the accuracy of the information conveyed; the breadth and appropriateness; the depth of analysis and insight; the level of cultural sensitivity displayed; and the quality of expression. Special emphasis will be placed on the student's ability to integrate primary and secondary sources and to present the findings in a clear, organized and well-synthesized format. The final grades are determined by the Academic Director in the following proportions:

Assignment	**Percentage**
Written ISP	80 percent
ISP Presentation	20 percent

Please note that a separate ISP Handbook will be distributed ahead of the ISP period offering detailed information on requirements and expectations.

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.

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.

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- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

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+

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64-66%	D
below 64	F

Grading Criteria
All grades assigned will take into account the students´ special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence. In terms of class participation, an “A” grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all academic seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of the students` participation will be monitored and taken into account.

Student research (Independent Study Project, Field Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Statement of Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISP/FSPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive, copy, or convert the ISP/FSP for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archives my ISP/FSP in the permanent collection at the SIT Study Abroad local country program office and/or at any World Learning office. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad has a non-exclusive, perpetual right to store and make available, including electronic online open access, to the ISP/FSP. Students retain all ownership rights of the ISP/FSP product and retain the right to use all, or part, of my project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP and FSP form.

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.

Credit Hours: School for International Training (SIT) adheres to the standard that 1 credit hour equals no less than 45 hours of coursework. The calculation is based on the standard 50-minute academic hour. The number of credits each course carries determines how many total hours each course involves in a semester. Of the 45-hours for 1-credit hour, one third is designated for direct faculty instruction. Direct faculty instruction includes all learning activities led by the faculty whether in the classroom or in the field — lectures, guest speakers, site visits, hands-on field activities, etc.

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The full policy on credit hours can be found here.

AI Usage: SIT's policy on Generative AI and Academic Programs is included as an addendum to the academic integrity policy.

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.

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