



China

Chinese Culture and Ethnic Minorities

Credits 16

Program Base Kunming

Language Study Mandarin

Homestay Kunming, 2 weeks

Rural Visit/Homestay Shaxi, 4–5 nights

Educational Excursions Dali, Lijiang, Tibetan areas of Zhongdian and other less visited rural minority locations, Beijing, and the Great Wall

Independent Study Project 4 weeks

Prerequisites None

Chinese Culture and Ethnic Minorities Seminar

ASIA 3000 / 4 credits / 60 class hours

An interdisciplinary course conducted in English, with required readings, examining China's cultural complexity and the key social, historical, and cultural factors shaping and sustaining China's minority communities. Lecturers are drawn from institutions such as Yunnan Nationalities University, The Yunnan Arts Institute, The Yunnan Traditional Medicine Hospital, and the Lijiang Dongba Cultural Research Institute. Lectures and discussions for this course generally include the following topics:

Social Issues and Humanities

Regions, provinces, and autonomous regions of China; environmental systems management; recent economic reforms; the relationship between state and free-market economies; health care systems and traditional medicine; acupuncture; *taiji*; social structures of daily life; women in the workplace; calligraphy, painting, and musical traditions; relationship between art and poetry; function and heritage of architecture in traditional Chinese cultures.

Minority Issues

Origins and classification of China's ethnic peoples; government policies regarding minority nationalities; education and assimilation; oral and literary traditions; customs and indigenous spiritual practices; shamanistic heritage of the Naxi; reemergence of Dongba culture; matriarchal systems among the Moso; role of women among the Hui; influences of Bai and Tibetan culture in northwestern Yunnan; environmental ethos of the Dai people of Xishuangbanna; representation of China's "peripheral peoples."

History and Religions

China's entry into the modern era and the development of the People's Republic; political trends in modern China; Chinese foreign policy; role of foreign trade zones; China's "open door" policy;

influence of religion on Chinese culture; traditional religious systems of minority nationalities; religious heritage of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in Chinese historical development.

Educational Excursions

The program includes a two-week excursion to visit different minority regions, including the Bai areas of Dali and Shaxi, the Naxi ancient town of Lijiang, the Tibetan areas of northwestern Yunnan, and other seldom visited remote minority communities. In addition, there is a final study tour to Beijing and the Great Wall.

Intensive Language Study: Mandarin

CHIN 1000-3000 / 6 credits / 90 class hours
Emphasis on speaking and comprehension skills, as well as introductory reading skills, through classroom and field instruction. Based on in-country evaluation, including oral proficiency testing, students are placed in beginning, intermediate, or advanced classes. Language instructors are certified in teaching Chinese as a foreign language and use a variety of interactive communication-based language teaching techniques. Additional language study for credit is available during the Independent Study Project period in lieu of the traditional ISP.

Field Study Seminar

ANTH 3500 / 2 credits / 30 class hours
A course in the concepts of learning across cultures and from field experience. Introduction to the Independent Study Project. Material includes cross-cultural adaptation and skills building; project selection and refinement; appropriate methodologies; field study ethics and the World Learning/SIT Human Subjects Review Policy; developing contacts and finding resources; developing skills in observation and interviewing; gathering, organizing, and communicating data; maintaining a work journal.

Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 / 4 credits / 120 class hours

Conducted in Yunnan Province or in another approved location appropriate to the project. Sample topic areas: social customs of minority groups; evolution of the free-market system; philosophy and practice of *taiji*; investigation of family and religious practices of the Hui; Dongba shamans; textiles and handicrafts of the Naxi and the Miao; the structure of the extended family in the context of family planning; domestic tourism and its impact on Dali and Lijiang; the role of civil society in environmental management; calligraphy and brushwork. *Note: Students may pursue one month of additional language study in lieu of the Independent Study Project. Students who pursue this option spend the ISP period participating in intensive one-on-one language instruction.*

Homestay

Two weeks in urban Kunming and four to five days in the rural Bai community of Shaxi. Other accommodations during the program include hostels, educational institutions, or small hotels.

Access to Minority Cultures

Yunnan, home to 25 of China's 55 officially recognized minority groups, provides an exceptional opportunity to explore the complex diversity of the Chinese population and develop students' comprehension of key social, historical, and cultural issues. SIT Study Abroad students live alongside minority students at Yunnan Nationalities University, share homes with minority families, and learn from experts, often on-site at locations such as nongovernmental organizations, temples, or rural farming communities.