



Field Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
India: Sustainable Development and Social Change

Course Description

Organized around three modules, Field Methods and Ethics equips students with the methodological tools to apply theoretical concepts learned in other courses to cross-cultural field studies in rural and urban India. This course teaches students the theoretical foundations necessary to conduct ethically sound research in India, and enable them to develop research skills by practicing fieldwork within the framework of the Indian social and cultural environment. It helps them understand and apply research ethics while conducting a one-month Independent Study Project (ISP) that may involve human subjects in a cross-cultural setting. It will prepare students to integrate and apply classroom learning from language and thematic seminars to out of class experiences finally tested through the execution and successful completion of the ISP.

Students are asked to identify a potential ISP topic based on a theme from the semester that is of particular interest to them. They will learn how research projects can emerge from specific intellectual interests, recognized knowledge gaps in existing bodies of literature, or personal or community-related experiences that have broad social implications. During the course, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and gender identity will be addressed as these areas contextualize students' scholarly research interests and potential ISP topics.

Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on the development of a feasible and culturally appropriate proposal for the ISP, which is expected to combine primary and secondary sources in a written and oral presentation. Critical reflection is stressed throughout the course, and students are encouraged to be self-reflective regarding their position as student researchers in India.

Course Structure

This course contains three modules: Theoretical Foundations and Fieldwork Methods and Skills, Ethics and Sensitivity in Cross-Cultural Study and a Field Practicum.

Theoretical Foundations and Fieldwork Methods and Skills

*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.

This module will introduce students to basic research theory by focusing on orientalist histories in India and critiques of these with additional reflection on cross-cultural description, interpretation and evaluation. Students will then be introduced to fieldwork methods by analyzing those methods most widely used by past students while completing their ISPs. Students' capacity to develop a competent and ethically sound ISP proposal will be enhanced by training them on proposal design; locating relevant and evidence based secondary information; conducting literature reviews; and practice in the synthesis and analysis of primary and secondary information.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this module it is expected that the student will be able to:

- Apply field work methods: participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, group discussion, mapping, individual interviews, small scale survey, case studies
- Develop a feasible and realistic ISP proposal that will yield an interesting and academically rigorous project beneficial to the community and/or organization studied
- Locate relevant, credible and evidence-based secondary data, and perform a critical literature review
- Demonstrate the ability to gather, compile and analyze information gathered from primary and secondary sources including note-taking, transcription and field journals

Ethics and Sensitivity in the Cross-Cultural Context

This module asks students to develop an awareness of issues of power and representation that arise in the process of completing fieldwork. Topics addressed include ethics in conjunction with consent, confidentiality and reciprocity. Students will be made fully aware of SIT's IRB/LRB process, consent, confidentiality, and reciprocity. By reflecting on thematic lectures on Indian society and culture and learning from field visits, students will be oriented to understand the influences of social and cultural values on their research process. This will bolster their awareness, responsiveness, and sensitivity for doing an ethical study project in the field while taking into consideration the dynamics of caste, class, gender and power relations in rural and urban Indian setting.

Learning Outcomes:

- Integrate knowledge of the ethical dimensions of working with human subjects to design an ethically sound and culturally sensitive study
- Demonstrate application of research ethics with sensitivity and awareness in order to assess the impact of a researcher on local cultures being studied while conducting a cross cultural study
- Identify the sensitive issues, information, topics and socio-cultural dynamics in the Indian context

Field Practicum

This module encourages students to apply classroom learning in their search for information in an outside context. During this module, students will engage in mapping, group discussions, participant observation, transect walk and individual and group interviews that will occur during workshops and excursions. These activities will allow students to gain a solid understanding of the process and application of fieldwork methods. Maintaining a field journal from the beginning through the end of the semester will chart the development of their cross-cultural learning. Writing assignments in the course will enable them to develop critical analysis and writing skills and since the field process will be actively reflected in regular debriefing, synthesis and thematic conclusions, student will gather an in-depth understanding of conducting cross-cultural field studies ethically and sensitively.

*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.

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate application of in-class theoretical knowledge and field work methods in out of class settings
- Identify and analyze socio-cultural and research dynamics
- Integrate Hindi language skills and information from both the thematic seminars in order to extend and deepen interest in, knowledge of and integration into Indian social life
- Work effectively with a foreign language, interpreters and informants in conducting cross-cultural field study.

Course requirements:

Students are expected to take responsibility for active engagement in the course. It is expected that they will meet the following:

- Attendance, active and meaningful participation in lectures and outclass activities.
- Demonstration of written notes for all classes and academic activities including site visits
- Demonstration of reading and watching assigned required reading and audio-visual resources
- Timely planning and completion of all assignments

Course Assignments

Three formal written assignments will provide the opportunity to practice skills essential for conducting fieldwork, and to assist in the development of writing skills. The Foundations of Fieldwork Exercise (D.I.E), Three Interview assignments and ISP proposal are required for the completion of this course. Designed to help students develop orientation and observation skills in an experiential manner, the Foundations of Fieldwork Exercise is based on the D-I-E (Description, Interpretation and Evaluation) method. "Drop-off", a unique SIT activity forms the basis of the fieldwork exercise. The Three Interviews assignment is based on the student's selection of a particular topic, preparing interview questions and actually conducting formal interviews with a required end outcome of a paper written based on the interviews and the process of conducting them. The third assignment, the ISP Proposal and Work Journal, is a chance for students to practice the skills that will be necessary to conducting their ISPs in the development of a formal research proposal.

Evaluation and Grading

| | |
|--|------------|
| (1) Foundations of Fieldwork - D.I.E Exercise (20%) and Rough Notes (10%) | 30% |
| (2) Three Interviews Assignment | 30% |
| (3) ISP Proposal (20%) and Work Journal (10%) | 30% |
| (4) Attendance, Participation, Completion of Assigned Readings | 10% |

1. Foundations of Fieldwork- Description, Interpretation and Evaluation Exercise

*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.

This two part assignment requires students to compile rough field notes and transcribe them in the D-I-E format based on observations taken during two excursions: to a local *basti* in Jaipur and to the local vegetable market.

Rough notes: Students must bring a notebook both to the *basti* and local vegetable market and record in as much detail as possible all observations about the location, the local residents/shopkeepers, the key development issues and questions that are both subjectively observed and, if appropriate, articulated in group interactions. Students should record all sensory information in a rough stream-of-consciousness form. These notes are not expected to be polished; students need not employ complete sentences and proper grammatical constructions. Instead, these notes are simply a tool for honing the each student's observation skills and leading students to note the subtle details that can provide the foundation for to important research insights and revelations. The rough notes for both visits should be written in the same notebook and clearly labeled. Evaluation criteria include: comprehensiveness of notes; labeling of time, places, and identification of speakers; and detailed variety of observations.

D-I-E transcription: **D-I-E** is a tool or system for discerning among neutral facts, interpretation of such facts within specific social-cultural contexts, and subjective evaluations of such information from passionate and opinionated positions. Correctly used, the D-I-E system can be a useful aid for fieldworkers to organize data, distinguish facts from personal ideas, interpret possible meanings of events and situations, and critically examine their own subjective, emotional or biased reactions. For this assignment the student must chose **one** significant event, incident or observation from each excursion and transcribe it in the D-I-E format.

2. Three Interviews Assignment

Students should select a single topic about their ISP or another 'sustainable development and social change' topic of interest and compose 2 sets of 10-12 questions – one in Hindi (translated with the help of the Hindi Instructors) and one in English. Using these two distinct sets of questions, students should conduct one Hindi and two English interviews about their topics. Two of your interviews must be conducted outside the Homestay and you are not allowed to interview any staff members at Jaipur. Advanced planning is needed. Students should include transcripts of both sets of interview *questions* as appendices to the paper. Please bear in mind the limitations and possibilities of language in composing your Hindi questions by rephrasing and rethinking your English questions in a manner appropriate to your language level. Try to make the most of the language skills you have.

3. ISP Proposal and Work Journal

Students are required to develop a detailed ISP proposal before execution of the study. Developing successive versions of the ISP abstract and proposal; self-evaluation of progress; preparation and follow-up for meetings with AD/ISP Supervisor; Hindi Instructors; ISP contact person; ISP logistics; words learned in Hindi relating to the topic, etc. and Work Journal are components that will be looked at for final grading.

Evaluation for the ISP Work Journal emphasizes your attention to process, and degree of preparation for each of your formal meetings. The following points of evaluation are also to be noted:

- Effort made in meeting all assignment deadlines
- Consistency of entries demonstrating a steady pace of progress

*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.

- Development of project in relationship to your objectives
- Evidence of preparation for and follow-up from your formal meetings over the semester
- Integration of Hindi language learning where appropriate

ISP Proposal

The primary components of the ISP project proposal are:

- Title of the project (even if it changes later, give your proposal a title)
- Abstract: In 150-200 words, single spaced, the abstract should succinctly state the topic of investigation, research themes, research questions, study site, field work methods, significance or scope of your study
- Background/Introduction - In this section, you focus on introducing your ISP topic, hypothesis/expectations/theoretical models, definitions of key terms and ideas, study site, your reason for choosing that particular topic and study location; the objectives of your study; research themes; research questions you expect to investigate although the ideas you present in this proposal may change once you begin the actual field study, and sources of data (750-1000 words).
- Literature Review: This is an analytical summary of previous work in your field. You should do an in depth literature review of the secondary sources that you will use as background research on your topic. The information from the literature review can help you in forming your background/introduction section as it will help you to identify your research themes, formulate your research questions and identify field work methods and provide justification for your choice of topic, study area/location. The literature review should include 7-8 sources that demonstrate appropriate background research into published materials on your topic and explain the key theoretical points of each work listed so as to illustrate their importance for the ISP project.
- Methods: You should elaborate on the field work methods clearly stating the methods and explaining how you plan to carry out the study and analyze your findings
- Itinerary for the field study period: Please be as specific as possible, including dates and places where you plan to conduct your field study, and any/all contact information that you have for each location and date. If at any time we cannot contact you because you have failed to give us accurate and up-to-date information on your whereabouts, you may be subjected to penalties ranging from probation to dismissal from the program, depending on the severity of the situation (1 page).
- Timeline for the field study period. Unlike the itinerary, the timeline should focus on what you plan to do at each stage of your field study. This, again, is likely to change once you begin field study, but you should set specific short-term goals that will lead to the completion of the final project (1 page).
- Budget for the field study period. The budget should include your total projected expenditures for travel, room and board, along with any additional costs associated with hiring translators, material purchases, and typing and binding charges. Each item should

*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.

have a separate line, and the total projected expenditures must be clearly located at the bottom of your budget (1 page).

- Information about your ISP Advisor: You must have an ISP advisor. ISPs unsupported by the assistance and evaluation of an ISP advisor will not be accepted. If you are unable to finalize your ISP advisor before leaving Jaipur, please list as many alternate ISP Advisors in your ISP Proposal as possible, along with notes on contacts for an ISP Advisor to be located in the field (as many pages as necessary).
- Bibliography
- Several other forms must be submitted to your AD/ISP Supervisor before leaving Jaipur, please see ISP Semester Timeline for details.

Expectations

With the exception of journals and field notebooks, all assignments should be typed and double-spaced. Spelling and grammar are part of grading criteria; careful proofreading and editing are essential parts of the writing process. Compliance with a standard format of citation for both primary and secondary sources; and, most importantly, concise and logical argument is needed.

Readings

- American Anthropological Association. (1998). *Code of ethics of the American anthropological association*. Retrieved from <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>.
- Ahuja, R. (2001). *Research methods*. Jaipur: Rawat.
- Desai, V., & Potter, R.B. (2006). *Doing development research*. London: Sage.
- Glesne, C. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (pp. 1-48). Boston: Pearson.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2005). *Multitude: war and democracy in the age of empire* (pp. 127-129). New York: Penguin.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism western conceptions of the orient* (pp. 1-28). New York: Vintage.
- Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies* (pp. 42-57). London: Zed.
- Wilson, K. (1993). Thinking about the ethics of fieldwork. In S. Devereus & J. Hoddinott (Eds.), *Fieldwork in developing countries* (pp. 179-199). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Winchatz, M. R. (2006, February). Fieldworker or foreigner? Ethnographic interviewing in nonnative languages. *Field Methods*, 18(18), 83-97
- Wong, P.T.P. "How to Write a Research Proposal?" Retrieved from http://www.meaning.ca/archives/archive/art_how_to_write_P_Wong.htm

*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.