



Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 (4 Credits / 120 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
India: Health and Human Rights

Course Rationale and Objectives

The Independent Study Project (ISP) is an opportunity for in-depth study of a topic related to health and human rights within the Indian context. In conducting the projects, students employ field research, developed through the Field Study Seminar (FSS) to deepen knowledge gained from the Health and Human Rights (HHR) seminar as well as from contacts made in the home stay or larger community. Students are encouraged to apply their Hindi language skills in areas such as organizing their daily needs, traveling, or working with a translator to gather data. In the process, students hone their skills in managing and learning from the unexpected, while designing a substantive academic fieldwork project and independently seeing it through to completion, with the support and guidance of an advisor. If appropriate to their undergraduate course of study, the ISP may form the basis for a senior thesis, or it may be a chance to learn formally about a new topic of interest.

In the first month of the program, students submit a substantive fieldwork project proposal, which includes primary and secondary sources, a literature review, a discussion of methods and project significance and integrates advice from the AD/ISP Supervisor and ISP Advisor. Successive drafts of the proposal are worked on in conjunction with the ISP Advisor and AD, who approves the final proposal before the project begins. It is assumed that most students will be conducting fieldwork on this scale for the first time. Accordingly, evaluation for the ISP includes consideration of the process involved in designing and executing a project of this scale through the ISP Work Journal, which provides a means to assess students' learning over the entire semester.

The major course objectives of the ISP are:

- to apply the skills and knowledge gained from other SIT coursework
- to produce field-based scholarship of superior quality that utilizes primary resources available only in India

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- to develop perseverance and self-confidence as field workers/ practitioners as well as sound ethical sense in conducting a cross-cultural and field-based study

ISP Research: Ethics and Location

SIT conforms to US based university standards and federal guidelines for human subject research. Therefore the ISP topic must conform to the norms of academic ethics and policies related to human subject research. This means, for example, that a student cannot pursue a topic that would put the student or subject in danger, or is illegal, or is a topic that is too culturally sensitive for the student's level of scholarship (certain issues of religion, politics, or gender, may be too volatile for an undergraduate study). If a student wishes to work on a topic that the Academic Director has questioned, the student may appeal his/her proposal to the Institutional Review Board. The IRB is made up of the Academic Director and two local university scholars. No research may be done on a topic that has been declined by the IRB.

As our program is based in North India, it is generally expected that research sites be in Hindi-speaking areas of the North, unless a special case is negotiated with the AD/ISP Supervisor. The choice of site for the ISP must also be approved for safety reasons.

Students often significantly revise the ISP sites and topics as originally proposed before the program, or they develop a new topic stemming from the lectures, discussions and field trips of the SIT semester curriculum. However, radical changes of site, topic or type of ISP are not permitted after week seven. Research projects and performances hastily cobbled together will lack the sophistication expected of the ISP, and may not be considered adequate for a passing grade.

The choice of topic has one very important constraint: students must conduct fieldwork in India that they could not do at their home university. This means that information gained from primary source data should be used as much as possible. Students are expected to use resources available to them in India, both people and places, including libraries, NGOs and other facilities, such as the American Center library, British Library, Teen Murty library in Delhi and AIIS Gurgaon Campus to name a few. Students are not expected to have the skills necessary to conduct primary research in Hindi, but are encouraged to integrate Hindi into their projects as much as possible. Students are discouraged from reliance on Internet sources, which are often quirky, inaccurate, or biased. Only major academically recognized web site references will be accepted.

Evaluation

The ISP is evaluated on the basis of content organization and development of ideas, and creativity and depth of analysis in both oral and written presentations. Special emphasis is placed on the students' abilities to use local resources in an appropriate manner. Comments and evaluations of the ISP Advisors are integrated into the final evaluation when final ISP grades are assigned by the AD/ISP Supervisor.

<p>(1) ISP Proposal (15%) and Work Journal (15%): Preparation and follow-up for meetings with AD/ISP Supervisor (3), ISP Contact Person (2), Hindi Instructors (2), ISP Advisor (4 meetings of 2 hours); successive versions of the ISP abstract; self-evaluation of progress, words learned in Hindi relating to the topic, etc.</p>	<p>30%</p>
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(2) ISP Final Paper: approximately 30 pages of written content. It should be footnoted where appropriate and include a full bibliography. If illustrations are necessary for clarity they must be included with full citation. Correct citation is expected.	50%
(3) ISP Final Presentation: 20 minutes (15 minutes for presentation, 5 minutes for questions)	20%

Participation is not the same as attendance. All students are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the seminar. This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, and note taking.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge and information. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Respect - culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Late papers will be marked down one step (B- to C+, e.g.) for each day they are late.

1. **All written assignments are to be typed and handed into your AD/ISP Supervisor's box.**
2. **All components of the course (see below) must be completed satisfactorily to receive a passing grade.**
3. If your chosen ISP site is far away from computing facilities, **please be sure to factor writing, editing and proofreading time into your ISP itinerary.** Three writing days are given as a grace period during week 15, but they are meant for consolidation rather than composition of the ISP Final Paper and Presentation.
4. **If documentation of a medical emergency is produced, extensions for meetings and written work may be negotiated.** If make-ups granted due to illness are not completed within the agreed upon time, a grade of zero will be recorded for that assignment. Unexcused late assignments will not be accepted.
5. Conducting an ISP is also about time management. Allow for serious obstacles or the possibility of illness, and plan accordingly. Keep in mind that photocopying and binding of your ISP must be arranged at least one day prior to the final deadline.

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ISP Component Detailed Descriptions and Criteria for Evaluation

(1) ISP Work Journal (15%)

This is the reservoir of all your fieldwork and the planning for the project. The extent to which you can use the ISP Work Journal is limitless, but as a minimum, it should include records of preparation and follow-up for your formal meetings over the semester and progressively refined versions of your ISP Abstract. Some other suggestions:

- names and locations of contact persons, especially possible ISP advisors and other ISP resources
- site plans, grids, maps, drawings, photographs, recordings
- notes from interviews conducted in the field relevant to your ISP
- statistical or other hard data, whether gathered in the field or through appropriate readings
- vocabulary items, phrases or excerpts from written or oral works in Hindi relevant for your ISP

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
- 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

(2) ISP Final Proposal (15%)

The primary components of the ISP project proposal are:

- Abstract: In 150-200 words, the abstract should succinctly state the research question, topic of investigation, the approach unique to your analysis, and its wider significance.
- Introduction and discussion: here you present the topic to be explored in the ISP. This should introduce the main question behind your field study, and it should also discuss some of the sub-themes and questions that you expect to investigate, although the ideas you present in this proposal may change once you begin the actual field study.
- Methodology: your main fieldwork methods should be elaborated as well as the rationale behind them.
- Literature Review: The literature review should include 4-5 sources which demonstrate appropriate background research into published materials on your topic.
- 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).

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- 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 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 Delhi, 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).
- Several other forms must be submitted to your AD/ISP Supervisor before leaving Delhi - please see ISP Semester Timeline for details.

(3) ISP Final Paper (50%)

The Final Paper should be approximately 30 pages of *analytical written content*, exclusive of secondary material such as photographs, maps, bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. It is expected that the ISP Paper be **rigorously edited** so that it exhibits the following attributes: freedom from grammatical errors and typos; compliance with a standard format of citation for both primary and secondary sources; and, most importantly, concise and logical argument. Start writing longhand versions well in advance if your ISP site is distant from computing facilities. Evaluation includes the following criteria:

- Critical analysis of topic and clarity of presentation
- Use of primary resources and demonstrated cross-cultural communication skills
- Use of appropriate secondary sources in support of information gained from primary sources
- Concise use of language purged of 'filler' phrases/adjectives
- Quality and clarity of argumentation, analyses and conclusions
- Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation

The primary components for the ISP Final Paper are:

1. **Separate Title page** - Should include your ISP Title, in capital letters, located just above the middle of the page. In a neat column to the lower left-hand side of the page:
 - i. Your Name
 - ii. Academic Director/Supervisor
 - iii. Project Advisor's Name and Institution (or description)
 - iv. School for International Training
 - v. India: Health and Human Rights Program
 - vi. Semester and Year

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2. **Table of Contents** - Your Table of Contents should contain the main headings and subdivisions in each section, with page numbers. It should provide the reader with an analytical view of the material covered by the study, together with the order of discussion. The Table of Contents should also include your Bibliography (required), Appendices (optional) and Glossary (optional).
3. **Introduction** - Length can vary considerably according to the topic and your style of writing. Aspects of your ISP that might be covered include objectives of the study, research questions, field study methods and a brief statement of findings.
4. **Body of paper** - In most cases you will want to use section headings, and possibly sub-headings, to maintain a strong sense of the organization of your paper.
5. **Conclusions** - Your conclusions should demonstrate how your ISP fulfilled the objectives outlined in your introduction, and summarize the main outcomes of your study. If your study raises new questions for further research, you should also discuss these points in your Conclusions section.
6. **References and Endnotes** - You must acknowledge all sources of information, including quotations, ideas or statements taken from readings, lectures or interviews. Unless you have used page-by-page footnotes, your endnotes should be cited on a separate page. You can use full footnote or endnote style each time you cite a work, and should follow acceptable academic standards. Please follow a manual of citation for guidance.
7. **Bibliography** - Include all primary and secondary resources used. Primary resources (usually consisting of personal communications) and secondary (textual) resources should be listed under separate headings. Please follow a manual of citation.
8. **Recommendations for further study** - A short list of recommendations on how your study might be expanded upon, or be used as the basis for future ISPs. Please include contact information where possible and appropriate.

Optional sections of your ISP

- **Acknowledgements**
Although acknowledgements are not obligatory, they are always much appreciated by faculty, advisers, supervisors, contacts, family and friends.
- **Appendices**
Appendices should include any information that is relevant to the study, but not part of the main body of the text, such as statistical data and genealogical charts.
- **Glossary of non-English terms**
Non-English terms can be cited in *Devanagari*, however, Romanized transcriptions must also be given. You may alphabetize in either script. Please italicize words of foreign origin.

(4) ISP Final Presentations (20%)

The Final Presentation should not be more than 20 minutes total, and should summarize the contents of the ISP Final Paper and discuss your research process. Students are welcome to use props (themselves included), photographs, images, posters, and so on.

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It may be helpful to think of the ISP Final Presentation as though you are teaching a class to a group of semi-specialized listeners. Rather than simply giving a speech keyed to the pages of the ISP Final Paper, try to teach listeners about the topic and include information and background that you may take for granted. You may wish to make a handout with specialized Hindi vocabulary items. Do a dress rehearsal so that your timing is within the 20 minute frame.

Evaluation includes the following criteria:

- Organization, clarity and accessibility of presentation
- Use of appropriate examples and personal experiences
- Clear explanation of ISP strategy and implementation
- Ability to field comments and questions

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, academic warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process.

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