

Shanghai: Perspectives on Contemporary China

Independent Study Project (ISP) Course

Fall 2018

Instructor

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Credits

Required course; 4 semester credits

Course Syllabus

Course Description

As part of the ACM Shanghai program, students will be required to complete an Independent Study Project (ISP) over the course of the semester. The ISP is a research project based on a topic of your choosing, with regular meetings and input from your program director, culminating with a final paper. Central to the project is the experiential aspects of your topic choice and methodology. That is to say, while your topic and academic perspective should be at a level that reflects your status and achievements as a college student, you also need to incorporate and reflect on the lessons of your *experience* in China — what did you learn/experience from the process of executing your project, and how did it inform either the outcome or your interpretation of the results of your efforts?

Students will be expected to continuously work on their projects throughout the term, and demonstrate your progress through short writing assignments, presentations, and discussions of your “to-date” thoughts/observations. This ISP will be an exercise in independence and initiative — while you will regularly check in with and get advice from your instructor, its success depends on the amount of effort and care you put into it.

With such open-ended possibilities for your project’s subject matter, planning ahead will be necessary. Students should have at least two ideas for possible research topics in mind *before* coming to China. Additionally, English-language resources in China are very limited. So, it will be convenient if you bring some source materials along with you that are related to the topics you have in mind, if you can.

If you have difficulty choosing your research topic, please refer to some of the suggested themes listed below for inspiration (project topics need to be more specific):

- **Art/Culture:** literature, film, music, dance, fine art, folk art/indigenous art, mass media, web culture, art businesses/trade/marketing, art law/copyright
- **Social life:** daily/family life, housing, romance, marriage, inter-generational issues, gender issues, childbirth, childcare, education, youth culture, etc.
- **Economy:** tourism, international trade, infrastructure, employment, migration workers, etc.
- **Health:** healthcare, diet, access to medical professionals, infectious disease, aging and elder care
- **Government:** political involvement, international relations, law
- **Environmental Issues:** urban/rural, pollution, water, geography

Human Subjects Protection

The students who plan to involve human subject participants in their research—most likely in the form of an interview — must inform the ACM faculty director (me) and complete a certification process. There are a number of steps to the process, and is a non-negotiable ACM requirement. All ACM colleges recognize the process, so there is no need for additional review from your home campus. The process is as follows:

- Complete the on-line tutorial, which will take approximately an hour. You can find the tutorial at this link: <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/>. Once completed, you will receive a certificate. Please print it and file it away in a safe and accessible location along with other personal files.
- You will finalize your proposals in class at ECNU by 9/30.
- The instructor will review your proposal to confirm that the appropriate protection is afforded the project's human subjects.
- After instructor approval, the proposal must be posted to an online folder that is shared with the ACM ethics review committee. The committee will review the proposal. *Please note:* A complete proposal will include the Student Plan for Protecting Human Subjects, interview material the student will use (e.g. survey or questionnaire), and a consent form for participants.
- Once this process is completed and you have received approval, you may begin conducting your research.

Course Schedule

Note: Dates listed are subject to change.

Week 1

Class meets on Wed., 9/13:

- Informally introduce project proposal ideas with the class
- Discuss and explore project topics
- Group discussions based on complementary projects

Week 2

No group/instructor meeting this week;
Independent field work based on your topic;

Progress Report #1 (Due: 10pm, Wed., 9/20)

Week 3

Continue Independent Field Work;

Class Meets on Wed., 9/27:

- Discuss challenges and successes with site visits
- Finalize project topics

Progress Report #2 (This is actually a formal project proposal. If you intend to use human subjects, see the process outlined in this syllabus [in the “Human Subjects Protection”] for obtaining permission to do so. (Due: 10pm, Wed., 9/27)

Week 4

No class (national holiday)

Week 5

Continue field work and research;
Individual student/instructor meetings: Wed., 10/11

Progress Report #3 (must include academic sources)

Week 6

Class meets on Wed., 10/18:

- Presentation #1
- Class Q&A session (presentation workshop/critique)

Week 7

Individual student/instructor meetings: Wed., 10/25;

Revisit fieldwork sites with revised objectives based on Q&A session; Work with instructor on exploring new academic sources for projects

Progress Report #4 (should address revisions to project)

Week 8

Class meets on Wed., 11/01:

- Presentation #2 (after revisit, take suggestions into account)
- Class Q&A session (presentation workshop/critique)

Week 9

Begin writing ISP Project draft;

Individual meetings with instructor by appointment;

Complete Project introduction draft (2 pages) (Due: 10pm, Wed., 11/08)

When writing your introduction, keep the following in mind:

- What are the essential questions of your study?
- What, specifically, is your thesis?
- What has been/will be your strategies for both conducting the project and articulating (writing) your paper?
- Are you properly introducing the content that will be in the body of the paper?
- Does your writing appropriately engage current scholarly literature and theories on your topic?

Week 10

Continue writing;

First half of project: due by Tuesday, 11/14

Individual meetings with instructor on Wed., 11/15

Week 11

Individual meetings with instructor by appointment

Rough draft of complete ISP (Due by Fri., 11/24)

Week 12

Class meets on Wed., 11/29

- Peer review: bring a hard copy of your paper to class. We will exchange papers and get peer feedback.

Week 13

Presentation #3 (Final)

Week 14

Final written project due: electronically at 10pm, Wed., 12/13

Assessment

Your final grade will be based on the following:

1. Specific to China
2. Project Proposal (15%)
3. Progress reports (20%)
4. Presentations#1 and #2 (10%)
5. Final Presentation (15%)
6. Final Essay: 12-15 pages long (40%)

Final grade conversions:

A = 93-100%	A- = 90-92.9%	B+ = 86.7-89.9%	B = 83.4-86.6%
B- = 80-83.3%	C+ = 76.7-79.9%	C = 73.4-76.6%	C- = 70-73.3%
D+ = 67.7-69.9%	D = 63.4-66.6%	D- = 60-63.3%	F = -59.9%

ACM Policies on Academics

A complete listing of ACM policies can be found in your student handbook.

Class attendance and participation

You are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips.

Academic honesty

Actions of dishonesty are destructive to the well-being of the academic community, and ACM staff respond to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course.

ACM Policy on Non-Discrimination

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest does not discriminate in the operation of its educational programs, activities, or employment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, marital status, or disability.