

Ramapo College of New Jersey Semester in South India

**INTD 409 FIELD STUDY SEMINAR AND INDEPENDENT
FIELDWORK IN SOUTH INDIA (4 credits)**

Spring 2014

Faculty:

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Course Description

This course is primarily an independent study project and the culmination of the Ramapo semester program in South India. Students will receive training in ethnographic research methods, complete a literature review, and then conduct field research. Field study projects may examine a range of topics that relate to the themes of the first three courses: Indian social structures; sustainable development; or social movements. Some possible topics include social change, poverty, sustainable development, water issues, environment issues, contemporary Indian theatre, inter-religious conflict resolution, women's issues, child labor, alternative education, and art and society.

Course Goals

- Students will deepen their knowledge about one area of Indian society through conducting library and ethnographic research.
- Students will apply concepts and theories learned in the first three classes to understand and analyze part of Indian society.
- Students will gain experience in conducting participant observation, taking field notes, conducting interviews, and analyzing qualitative data.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- * Apply ethnographic research methods to do field research.
(Measured through final paper).

- * Conduct library research and write a literature review. (Measured through literature review section of final paper.)
- * Show proficiency in at least one of the content areas circumscribed by the first three courses. (Measured through final paper.)

Course Requirements:

Attendance:

Attendance is compulsory; exceptions may be granted due to illness, religious observance, etc.

Grade Distribution:

- 15% Proposal
- 15% Annotated Bibliography
- 20% Formal Presentation (20 minutes). Grade will be given by Fireflies faculty.
- 50% Final Paper. Paper to be sent to Ramapo faculty.

Approximate Timetable for completion of field study course requirements:

- February 14:
 - Submit project proposal brief in the morning
- February 16
 - Evening feedback meetings with Professor Vasishth (3 groups of 5)
- Feb 16 -March 5
 - Contact organizations, determine location of research and resources needed to complete research.
 - Visit documentation center in Bangalore and use library.
- March 5:
 - Submit Field Research Project proposal
- March 16:
 - Submit annotated bibliography
- March 20- April 10:
 - Conduct field research. *Each student should aim for 4 to 10 days of field research.*
- April 11-16: Writing of paper
 - Analyze findings from field research and write final paper.
 - Prepare formal presentation of final research paper to classmates and faculty. Send outline of presentation to Ramapo faculty.
- April 17-18: Presentation of papers
- April 19: Papers due.

Final papers are to be 20 pages long, double-spaced and should follow this outline:

- a. Introduction – statement of paper thesis
- b. Literature Review and core research questions.
- c. Methodology
- d. Discussion and analysis of field data
- e. Connections between field data and literature review. How do your research findings uphold, extend or challenge the findings of other scholars?

Additional Information

This course follows standard Ramapo College policy for Electronic Forms of Communication, Academic Integrity and Students with Disabilities. For details, please refer to the Academic Review Committee portion of the Ramapo College Website at <http://ww2.ramapo.edu/facultystaff/fa/arc>.

FIELD STUDY PROJECT

TEMPLATE AND GUIDELINES

The Field Study Project is an independent study project on a topic of your interest. For this project, you will need to submit a research proposal- explaining your topic. The proposal will seek to integrate field research methods that you have learned in class and the literature on the subject to address your questions.

The proposal has several components as detailed below:

Research Proposal:

A complete research proposal includes:

1. **Title:** The title of your project.
2. **Research Question:** You need 3-5 questions only. Developing these accurately is key to having a good research project. These questions should provide the framework for your research project, be central to the topic, and reading the questions should make the FOCUS of your research very clear. You will discuss this as part of the introduction to your paper.

Your research question should be a specific question that you will answer in your research project. It will provide the framework of your research and will outline the central theme of your project. For instance if you are interested in food security: your project could ask--

“ Why should women’s empowerment be central to policies on food security?”

or

How can food policy in India address the twin goals of right to food and sustainability through the millet campaign?”

You may add sub questions to further clarify the main question.

Your next steps for the research will be defined by the question. Hence, it’s important to pay sufficient attention to the drafting of the question.

3. **Rationale:** a justification for your research project; the significance of the topic in relation to current research in the field. Why is this question important to the discussion on your subject? For instance, if your focus is on women’s empowerment and food security, you may need to explain to the reader why this is the central question concerning food security in India.

This section will also operationalize the terms of your research and explain theories/concepts/frameworks influencing your research. For instance, terms such as food security, sustainability have specific meanings and these need to be clearly explained to the reader.

4. **Literature Review:** a short review or annotation of 8-10 sources including journal articles/books/credible online sources, etc. The proposal should also include a reference list, using APA/MLA/Chicago style of citation.

5. Methodology: Explain the type of research and methods selected (ethnographic, textual analysis etc.) and reasons for making this selection. Link your choice of methods to your research questions.

As much as possible, include details regarding how the data will be collected. Here you will outline the methods you will use to collect the data, identify how you will collect data for the purpose of your study: including questions such as where you will conduct field work, who you will interview, how will you conduct the interviews, what kinds of question you will ask to gather data etc.

Guidelines for completion of the field study final paper:

PAPER

Open with a strong introduction – about 2 paragraphs, must include thesis, possibly even research questions.

Literature Review – Should highlight the research on the topic available so far, point to gaps in research, and lead to the questions – the fact that you are asking these research questions is an outcome of what is known and what needs to be known.

Requirements – 12-15 sources, 3-5 of which should be peer-reviewed journal articles. Other sources: books, book chapters, newspaper and magazine articles, credible internet sources (no blog or other questionable sites), films/TV shows etc (besides the ones used for primary research).

Methods – details to include:

Who are the people you interviewed (individuals and/or focus groups, reason for selection of sample population, sample questions asked, description of data collection process. In its final version, the anticipated and real challenges to the data collection process should be included as part of a reflection. [The conclusion includes the next extension to this aspect of writing about the methods – limitations of the data collected.]

Analysis and Discussion – organize by themes. Why these themes were selected or how these themes emerged from your research. Provide supporting evidence with quotes from interviews. THEORY/paradigmatic framework – what used, why, explain and make the connections! Your analysis is the most important part of the project – your grade is greatly influenced by the connections you are able to make between your data and the issues/concepts addressed through this research and the theoretical framework or guiding principles that this research is based on. It is very important that you distinguish between your position (should come much later – in the conclusion) and evidenced data. If you do insert your voice, be sure to acknowledge the distinction, and any opinion needs to be supported by evidence. Most importantly, what does the data reveal to you? How does the data support or contradict your thesis, research questions, and main arguments.

Conclusion – This should NOT read like an afterthought, instead there should definitely be a strong punch-line, with a summary, a restatement of the thesis, and what additional questions you may have at the completion of this research. What else needs to be studied and why?

Include a brief discussion of shortcomings/gaps in this research, and scope for future research. If there is a *one most important lesson/theme (can be more than one)* to be learnt from this study, what is it and why. You should revisit your research questions, reasons why you conducted this research, and to what extent did the data/themes reveal what you had set out to explore.

Criteria for Evaluation:

1. Successful completion of all required components.
2. Ability to demonstrate a clear understanding of the theoretical material used to illuminate the topic. Ability to use theoretical material discussed in class and outside sources to illuminate, clarify, and explain examples.
3. Relevance, appropriateness and clarity of real and hypothetical examples.
4. Clear identification and analysis of major issues and arguments pertaining to the chosen topic.
5. Clarity of analysis along with clear vision of purpose and outcome of study.
6. Ability to demonstrate, through a strong literature review and conclusion, the relevance of topic and findings to the field of study.
7. Appropriate organization of all material so it is coherent, readable, clear, concise and adequately and appropriately referenced. It is imperative that sources are cited both in the text and in an appropriate bibliography.
8. Ability to write clearly, precisely and in grammatically appropriate English.