



THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Directed Research SFS 4910

Syllabus

The School for Field Studies (SFS)
Center for Andes-Amazon Studies (CAS)
Iquitos, Peru

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.



COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that they may present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!

Course Overview

The aim of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to apply the scientific method to address local social and environmental issues. Students will be prepared to identify hidden assumptions and separate fact from interpretation, cause from correlation, and advocacy from objectivity. Through Directed Research students will contribute to a growing body of scientific research that informs local conservation, development and resource management decisions.

This course will give you an intensive practical field experience conducting research in tropical areas on a topic of immediate relevance to specific clients working in the context of tropical ecology, conservation biology, and political ecology of the Amazon region. Students will go through all steps of the research process: identification of relevant questions within the ecological and political/cultural context of the region; research design and proposal writing; field data collection; methods of qualitative or quantitative data analysis; and presentation of results to interested parties and the scientific community. To achieve this, students will integrate the information provided in the core courses of the SFS Program and will apply it to the problem at hand under the guidance of a faculty member. In their research projects, students will use concepts and methodologies learned in class, field lectures, and field exercises to deliver technical reports and present to a local audience.

Assessments

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Proposal/Literature Review	10
Research Skills & Application	30
Research Paper	30
- Draft (10)	
- Final (20)	
Oral Presentation	20
Contribution to public presentation	5
Reflective assessment	5
Total	100

Assessment Descriptions

Research Skills and Application (30%): Your Directed Research Skills will be graded throughout the semester by your supervisor. Your final grade will depend upon your attendance at all DR activities, active involvement and competencies in field data collection, data entry, and group participation/support.

Project Proposal/Literature Review (10%): The main objective of the *Literature Review* is that students familiarize themselves with previous research and publications in the area of their chosen Directed Research project. The literature review should draw upon a large literature base (where possible) – firstly to review the current status of research in the field, and then to build a background and justification for research that still remains to be done.

Research Paper (30% total): The most important deliverable of the Directed Research project will be a research report written in the form of a scientific manuscript or professional manuscript as customary for each field. You will be required to hand in a draft that includes the introduction, methods, and

results and a final version that improves on the draft given faculty feedback and the discussion section. The research paper rubric will be handed out separately.

Oral Presentation (20%): An oral presentation with accompanying visuals will be delivered to an audience composed of all Center SFS staff and students. Presentations will be 12 minutes long and must include a stream of slides (e.g., in Microsoft Office PowerPoint) and a script, both to be handed in at the end of the presentation session. Emphasis will be made on setting the context (introduction) and in the results, implications, and conclusions. Font and colors should be selected in a way that enhances meaning and information, and attention should be paid to the visual design and composition of figures and images. The correspondence of visuals with the idea presented, plus the logical flow of ideas and sections within the presentation will be evaluated, as well as the selection of appropriate font sizes and figure colors.

Contribution to Public Presentation (5%): SFS strives to produce information that local authorities and the public can use to manage their natural resources. Presenting research results in the local language to the public is therefore critical to SFS's mission. Every group of students working under a professor is expected to put together a public presentation based on their individual research results. The presentation has to communicate the significance, goals, and main findings of every group in a way that is accessible and inspiring to a general audience. Not all students have to present but all have to participate in the production of the public presentation and their individual contribution to the final result will be evaluated.

Reflective Assessment (5%): At the end of the DR period, each student will write a brief one page reflection that self-assesses their DR experience. Students should reflect on challenges faced, goals achieved, their time management, and what they might improve or have learned for the future.

Grading Scheme

A	95.00 – 100.00%	B+	86.00 – 89.99%	C+	76.00 – 79.99%	D	60.00 – 69.00%
A-	90.00 – 94.99%	B	83.00 – 85.99%	C	73.00 – 75.99%	F	0.00 – 59.99%
		B-	80.00 – 82.99%	C-	70.00 – 72.99%		

General Reminders

Plagiarism - Using the ideas and material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. A grade of zero will be assigned if anyone is caught cheating or aiding another person to cheat actively or passively (e.g., allowing someone to look at your exam). All assignments unless specifically stated should be individual pieces of work.

Deadlines - Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated for several reasons: They are a part of working life to which students need to become accustomed and promote equity among students, and deadlines allow faculty time to review and return assignments before others are due.

Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period. Late assignments will incur a 10% penalty for each day that they are late. No assignment will be accepted after three days.

Participation - Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one activity can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the program is mandatory because your actions can significantly affect the experience you and your classmates have while at SFS. Therefore, it is important that you are prompt for all land and water-based activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and directed research, and simply get involved.

Course Content

*Course content does not include the DR field work component.

No	Lecture Title and Description	Type	Time (Hrs)	Readings
DR 1	Introduction to DR Course objectives, design, pace, selection of topics, evaluation, professors' interests.	L/D	0.5	
DR 2	Methods of Scientific Inquiry We'll review inductive and deductive inquiry approaches and how they may be used when formulating and answering research questions (from identifying research questions to generating hypotheses) in different fields.	D	1	
DR 3	Quantitative Research Basic statistical concepts will be introduced focusing on the basics of descriptive and inferential statistics: statistical distributions, uncertainty, formal hypothesis testing. Practical examples will be provided.	L/LAB	2.0	
DR 4	Professional & Academic Writing We will discuss the expectations of professional writing in the natural and social sciences and introduce the format we expect reports to be generated at CAS.			
DR 5	Qualitative Methods In this class we will introduce the use and practice of qualitative methods in social research, and will explore the parallel issues of voice, representation, and power in the practice of qualitative research.		1	
DR 6	Research Ethics In this class we will discuss what constitutes plagiarism and data integrity, and will survey opinions on the humane treatment of people and other research subjects. (Mitigating negative impacts & consent)	D	1	plagiarism.org http://iacuc.yale.edu/
DR	Presentation Techniques	L	1	Optional:

No	Lecture Title and Description	Type	Time (Hrs)	Readings
7	How to make (almost) anyone interested in what you have to say: slide design, delivery, knowing your audience. Answering questions and critique.			Olson, R. 2009
DR 8	Directed Research Topics & Selection for Spring 2019	L	1	
DR 9	Time & Project Management How to set priorities, realistic benchmarks and final goals for doing research projects within a timeframe. How to manage your workflow to meet deadlines. Work timetable will be explained.	L/D	1	
DR 10	DR team meetings: Proposal Planning Instructions regarding specific proposal requirements will be given and how to use available information resources (databases. etc.). Identification of specific research questions will be workshopped with students.	D	1	
DR 11	Risk Management in Field Research Groups will meet individually with the SAM and their advisor to discuss and analyze most common risks in their DR projects. Emphasis will be given to planning for risk mitigation and a group plan will be brainstormed.	D	2	
DR 12	DR Skills Workshops Project specific skills for data gathering, analysis and data management will be workshopped within each DR group (surveying, interview design, statistics etc.)	D/LAB	0.5	
	Total (hrs)		12	

Optional Course Readings

Garcia-Yi, J. and U. Grote. (2012). Data Collection: Experiences and Lessons Learned By Asking Sensitive Questions in a Remote Coca Growing Region in Peru. *Survey Methodology*, 38(2): 131-141.

Olson, R. (2009). *Don't be such a scientist*. Island Press.

Sagan, C. (1994). *Demon hunted World: Science as a candle in the dark*. Random House.

Russell, Bernard. (2000). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.:Sage Publications