INSTRUCTOR: Liang Ding

CREDITS: 4

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Independent Study Project (ISP) is an essential part of the ACM China Studies Program and, for many students, one of the highlights. The ISP provides an opportunity for you to engage deeply with an aspect of Chinese culture that is of personal interest to you. The ISP requires substantial planning, organization, initiative, thought, as well as careful writing. In short, you should approach your ISP with the same thought and care you would give to such a project at your home school.

However, it is important to understand how the ISP in China may differ from an independent study project that you might do on your home campus. First, your time and resources will be limited in China, so you will need to develop a project that requires few library or other resources. And also, you will be expected to do some of your project planning before classes even start. The first week you arrive in China, you will be expected to submit your initial project proposal. During your first week in Shanghai, you will meet in both large and small groups with the Program Director to discuss your ideas for the ISP.

Once the semester begins, you will be required to meet with the Program Director at least once a week, and for each meeting you must prepare and turn in to the Program Director a brief written account, or journal entry, of the work you have accomplished that week (it can be done in Google document shared with the director). These journal style essays will document your progress and help you make the most of your weekly meetings.

While the program director may suggest readings and activities in order for you to explore your topic more thoroughly, you will also be expected to show initiative in finding your own sources and doing your own independent research. Because of limited access to libraries in China, you should find as many sources as possible before you depart for China.

Project Topics:

Students often find choosing a topic to be one of the more challenging elements of the ISP, but it need not be. Your topic choice will neither guarantee a good project, nor will it lead to a poor project. The topic only guides your work—and you are the one who will make it interesting and insightful. Here are some basic guidelines to follow as you develop your topic:

a) You have a great deal of latitude in developing the topic of your ISP, but the topic should be specifically oriented to some aspect of Shanghai or overall China. Possible topics include:

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<th>Arts and Culture in Shanghai/China</th>
<th>Economy of Shanghai/China</th>
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<td>• manufacturing industries</td>
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<td>• dance</td>
<td>• service industries</td>
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b) Please avoid politically and socially sensitive topics.

c) Whatever topic you choose, you must engage some aspect of Shanghai /China in an experiential way, such as by observing the workings of an NGO, conducting interviews or polls, taking lessons in music, or art, and so forth. If you plan on interviewing people, you must obtain human subjects research approval from the ACM (and your college in a few cases) before beginning this part of your project (see below).

d) The project can also be conceived as a creative work of art, music, literature, or film, in which case the work of art itself will constitute the bulk of the project. However, all such projects must be accompanied by a substantial written component that includes a discussion of the work itself, its artistic or aesthetic context, and its relevance to Shanghai /China.

e) Your topic should be feasible, so you must also think carefully about what you might reasonably accomplish in the available time. Keep in mind that you will have limited access to library and other resources.

**ASSESSMENT**
Your ISP involves a series of scaffolded assignments designed to help you stay on track and produce the best possible final study. Each of these different assignments will be evaluated by one or more of the following individuals: Faculty Coordinator and/or potential faculty adviser or local experts

1. 9/11. Preliminary ISP proposal based on reading and discussions with faculty director (5%)
1-2 pages describing what you might like to study in Shanghai. This short assignment should include:
   1) a topic or broad area that is of interest,
   2) a brief discussion of the readings (which could be from the scholarly or the popular press) that led you to this topic,
   3) one or more questions or objectives that you would like to explore related to this topic, and
   4) your preliminary thoughts on the research methods you might use to answer one or more of these questions.

2. 9/30. Revised ISP Proposal + Student Plan for Protecting Human Subjects (12%)
A 5 page proposal describing what you might like to study in Shanghai. This is an expansion and refinement of the preliminary proposal. This assignment should include:
   1) a title and discussion of why the general topic important,
   2) a discussion of the readings (which could be from the scholarly and popular press) that contextualize topic,
   3) one or more questions or objectives that you would like to explore related to this topic,
   4) the research methods you might use to answer one or more of these questions, or techniques you will use to achieve an objective,
   5) a plan or timeline for completing the research,
   6) a statement on how you will implement research projections for participants,
   7) a preliminary bibliography of sources and
   8) completed student plan for protecting human subjects (the last item is a separate document).

3. 10/30. Progress Report (5%)
The progress report should be 3-4 pages in length and discuss
   1) the work you have done to date,
   2) a discussion of what is going well and what has been challenging in your research to date;
   3) what have you found that was expected and what has been expected,
   4) an outline for your draft paper; and
   5) an expanded bibliography.

4. 11/27. Rough draft of ISP (10%)
See guidelines for paper structure below

5. 12/1-12/4. Peer review (3%) and Presentation (10%)
Peer review guidelines will be distributed in advance. Presentation should be 10-15 minutes in length, well organized and rehearsed.

6. 12/18. Final paper (55%)
The final paper should include:
   • title page
   • abstract (ca. 200 words) summarizing your topic, methodology, and results
   • table of contents
   • body of the paper: minimum of 25 double-spaced A4 pages, not counting images, tables, and figures
   • bibliography or listed of works cited, and appropriate citations (see below)
Final grades will appear in the form of a letter grade, according to the following scale. Each letter grade may be inflected by a plus or minus, except that there is no higher grade than A.

A Excellent 90-100%
B Good 80-89%
C Satisfactory 70-79%
D Passing 60-69%
F Fail 59% or lower

While criteria for evaluation of ISPs may vary somewhat according to the nature of the project, the following expectations are common to all projects:

- A strong, well-conceived research topic/question supported by a detailed, well-written exposition/argument.
- A clear articulation of the intellectual/disciplinary/theoretical context of the topic or question, bolstered by significant research.
- The experiential components of the project need to be analyzed according to the intellectual/disciplinary/theoretical framework that you have developed. To provide only a memoir of your experiences falls short of that expectation.
- A clear exposition of the cultural significance of the topic to the Shanghai region.

**Summer Preparation and Project Proposal**

A preliminary version of your project proposal should be developed over the summer in consultation with the ACM Faculty Coordinator if necessary. You will finalize your proposal in the first three weeks of the program in consultation with and by approval of the Program Director. The due date for preliminary proposal is 9/11, while the final project proposal is due 9/30.

**Human Subjects Protection**

It is likely that you will be observing, surveying, or interviewing people during your research, regardless of the project you choose. The United States has strict guidelines for research that involves human subjects, and as a student doing research as part of a program run through a group of US institutions of higher education, you must follow those guidelines. Actually, they are pretty simple if you are proactive. Here’s what you need to do:

1. Complete the on-line certification program for developed by the National Institutes of Health at phrp.nihtraining.com. It walks you through the history, purpose, and rules of human subject’s protection. The program is free and takes an hour or so. Be sure to print your certificate at the end and bring your certification with you to China.

2. If you plan to work with human participants—as interviewees, for example, or as members of a community you will be studying—read through the standards for protecting participants outlined in the attached document, “Protecting Participants in Research Projects.”

3. If you have conferred with your advisor on campus about a research topic, your advisor can help you review the ethical guidelines for research in your field. Most academic professional associations have codes of ethics that delineate appropriate research standards and cover various issues that pertain to field research; these are often posted on their websites. Many of these links can be found on line at: [http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm](http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm)

4. Once you arrive in Shanghai, we will work with you to refine your project and help you to prepare a proposal that meets research guidelines in the U.S. You will be required to complete the form, “Student Plan for Protecting Human Subjects.” A local review committee consisting of the Program
Director and one or more individuals knowledgeable about the research process and local cultural values will review students’ project proposals both for adherence to ethical standards and for cultural appropriateness.

Any project involving human participants will be forwarded to the ACM Ethics Review Panel consisting of representatives from ACM member colleges’ Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). The panel will review the project proposal as well as questionnaires and other survey instruments.

5. Several ACM members’ Institutional Review Boards have designated authority to the ACM Ethics Review Panel to approve students’ projects. However, colleges that are not part of ACM as well as a few ACM members require that projects that involve “vulnerable” populations (e.g., minors, educationally or economically disadvantaged populations) undergo a formal review by a student’s home school IRB. In such a case, you are responsible for communicating you’re your home school IRB and completing application materials. **Interviews and other work with human participants on a project cannot begin until the proposal has been reviewed and approved by either the ACM Ethics Review Panel or your home school IRB.**

**ACM POLICY 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 responds 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