

Guidelines for Self-Designed / Special Reading Immersion Courses

Students may propose a Special Reading Course to fulfill their Contextual/Cross Cultural immersion course requirement.

Approval Procedures

- Make an appointment with the Director of Contextual Learning for an initial conversation.
- Identify a PSR faculty person who is willing to offer a special reading course for your immersion.
 - The course must include eight to ten hours of pre-immersion preparation studies.
 - The content of the preparation study is to be determined by the faculty.
 - The student and faculty member will meet prior to the immersion to discuss learnings from the preparation studies.
 - The student and faculty member must meet at least once post-immersion.
 - An integrative paper or project must be completed within two weeks of returning from the immersion.
 - The faculty must give a letter grade, as this is a required course for Master of Divinity students.
- Self-designed immersion proposals must be submitted to the Director of Contextual Learning for approval at least 90 days prior to the date the immersion is to begin. Sooner is preferable.
- Your proposal will be reviewed by the Director of Contextual Learning and the Academic Dean. The Academic Dean determines approval for the course.

After Approval Procedures

- You must register for Special Reading course number **SRC9999**.
- Immersions where there is opportunity for group reflection are preferable.
- Students will be expected to meet all requirements for participation as specified by the immersion sponsoring organization. These include securing passports and visas as necessary, following recommended health precautions and safety recommendations, and completion of the itinerary or schedule of activities.
- For national and international immersions, you must submit the ***Waiver of Liability and Assumption of Risk*** form and the ***Medical Information for Immersion Trips*** form. See appendix of this handbook for all forms.
- For national and international immersions, you must provide proof of medical insurance.
- **PSR Master of Divinity students may apply for financial aid for immersion courses** using the ***Financial Aid Application for Immersions*** form found: <http://www.psr.edu/contextual-learning>.
- All forms must be received by the Director of Contextual Learning.

Note: All Self-Designed/Special Reading course Immersion Application forms should be submitted to the Office of the Director of Contextual Learning.

Self-Designed/Special Reading Immersion Design Content

- Your immersion experience should be designed to facilitate a process of learning by which you engage directly with the host community.
- Therefore, the proposal design should develop from a dialogue with the hosts and provide for experiential learning around a cultural inventory that includes:
 - a. **Historical life:** What is the history of this country? Has this country been under foreign domination? If this country has been colonized, how has this affected the people, the culture, and the religious and socioeconomic situation?
 - b. **Economic life:** What are the characteristics of the systems of production, distribution and consumption? What patterns of ownership, capital, resources and decision making are identifiable? Who owns? Who controls? Who pays? How does the economy produce group solidarity? How does it produce social conflict? What is the relationship between the local and global economy?
 - c. **Social life:** What are the patterns of social relationship and the demographic characteristics of the immersion context? Do people relate to each other in terms of race, class, ethnicity, age group, sex group, and so forth? What is the basis for inclusion/exclusion in social groups? What are the dominant social problems? What is the general outlook on life held by different social groups?
 - d. **Cultural life:** What are the predominant values of the cultural group? What cultural themes manifest the group's consistent pattern of thought and behavior? Who influences the system of meaning out of which people live? What cultural knowledge are people using to generate behavior in their environment and organize a meaningful self-identity? How is cultural identity expressed in art forms?
 - e. **Political life:** What is the relationship between political life and the system of beliefs constitutive of the local culture? What is the nature of political leadership? Who has a voice and decision-making power? What role do religion, the media and/or popular culture have on political life?
 - f. **Religious life:** What is the religious climate of the local group? Are categories of thought religious, secular, or both? How does religion give expression to the cultural group's needs and concerns, dreams and desires? How are religious belief and practices expressed by people in the local setting? What religious symbols play a role in the construction of group and self-identity?

Self-Designed/Special Reading Immersion Proposal Content

- Brief description of the immersion.
- Proposed dates.
- Description of the sponsoring host, if applicable.
- Plans for how you will be exposed to the six aspects of culture (see “Immersion Design Content” section of this handbook.)
- A day-by-day plan for your time that includes the experiences, the persons and the places to which you will be exposed.
- A clear identification of the culture to be experienced, how this culture is cross-cultural for you, and why it is appropriate for you to be immersed in it.
- Indication of how this experience will enrich and resource your current or future ministry, including a list of planned activities in which you will share your immersion experience with others.
- A plan for how you can be an ongoing advocate or in partnership with the persons or organizations to which you were exposed upon your return from the immersion.

Please refer any questions to the **Director of Contextual Learning, Room 125 in Holbrook.**

**Self-designed / Special Reading
Immersion Course
Application Form**

Please complete and submit this form to the Director of Contextual Learning with your immersion proposal.

Name: _____ **PSR Box No.:** _____

Address: _____

Phones: _____

Email: _____

Proposed place for Immersion: _____

Dates of Immersion — **Start:** _____ **End:** _____

Special Reading Course Faculty: _____

Sponsor of Immersion (if applicable): _____

Do you plan on applying for PSR financial aid for this immersion? _____

Signatures:

Student: _____ Date _____

Faculty: _____ Date _____

Approval by Academic Dean: Yes _____ No _____

Academic Dean: _____ Date _____