



## Research Study

This interdisciplinary pilot case study seeks to identify, explore, and analyze the motivations, expectations and experiences of students, related to their participation in an international field school (India, 2014). \* This study was approved by the Mount Royal University Human Research Ethics Board.

## Methodology

- Qualitative case study, N = 27
- Pre and post-departure questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Analysis of student reflective narrative assignments
- Thematic analysis of transcripts

## Course Framework

For 6 course credits (International Community Development and Intercultural Communication), 27 social work, journalism, public relations and psychology students lived and worked in teams at the Sri Ram Ashram to consider aspects of life at the ashram.

## Student Voice - What They Learned

### Why the ashram?

*"Such an eye opening experience. The ashram is not just about traveling, it's the people, the connections, and everything that goes around it."*

*"It's an incredible experience that you can't get anywhere else in the world."*

### Relationship to academic course work?

*"It relates to the two courses we are taking...it's about the connection, learning how these children have grown up!"*

*"It lends itself well to both classes. It's like everything is more intense and accelerated here. Everyone can learn a lot from it."*

## Host Organization

Sri Ram Ashram is dedicated to providing a loving, supportive family environment for orphaned and abandoned children, who become permanent members of the Ashram "family." <http://sriramfoundation.org/>

## Preliminary Faculty Observations – What We Learned

1. It is important to initiate and maintain ongoing relationships with host organizations.
2. Develop and use tools that encourages student reflection at all stages of the experience and engages them fully with peers and hosts.

## Next Steps

1. **Theoretical:** Continued thematic analysis and dissemination of findings.
  2. **Practical:** Development of a field school manual for best practices.
  3. **Transformative:** Field School course work has led to development of undergraduate students' emerging research agendas.
- Note:** MRU India field school participants are presenting academic works at SWESD 2014.

## References

Available upon request.