2009 EXPLORATION SEMINAR:
INDIA – HIMALAYAS INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Scope
The India-Himalaya class is part of the UW Exploration Seminar that is being offered through the College of Built Environments’ Urban Design and Planning Department. The program was first offered in 2008 when the participants focused on conducting a general reconnaissance of the region focusing primarily on Johar Valley—a mountainous remote region in the state of Uttarakhand (India). This year’s program will continue to build on the work produced and the networks established in 2008. The focus of the 2009 program is integrated community planning and development focusing on a variety of topics including planning and design, ecotourism, health and education among others. The first half of the program will aim to familiarize students with the various institutions and organizations in the lower Himalayan areas to understand a range of approaches used in rural development work. This will be achieved by interacting with communities and the organizations & institutes through day trips/hikes, field seminars and workshops. The second half of the program will be based in a village in the upper Himalaya: Sarmoli. Students will participate in the community based tourism program managed by (predominantly women run) households in the village. Students will have an opportunity to understand the specifics of this program and explore ways in which the current model could be expanded to other villages, and also include microfinance and cultural heritage preservation. Students will engage in a week long hike to remote villages around Sarmoli to assess the portability of the Sarmoli model.

Uttarakhand State, India indicating areas of the Exploration Seminar

Date: April 17, 2009
Objectives
The overarching long-term objective of this work is to establish a sustainable development model in the area that includes ecotourism, local heritage and microfinance integrated with livelihood strategies. In the recent years the region is experiencing growing tourism that is emerging as a powerful new force, and promises to bring economic benefits to the communities, but at the same time, threatens existing cultural and ecological patterns of the region.

Students participating in the program can expect to gain:

1) **Rural Development**: familiarity with rural and mountainous regions in India through the interactions with local experts and institutes/organization
2) **Cross Cultural Communication**: understanding methods of working in environments with sparse expert data and non (and limited) English speaking populations
3) **Community-based Sustainable Development**: familiarity with the range of planning and design issues around sustainable development, community based tourism, microfinance and historic preservation.

Methods
The program is flexible by design to meet the needs and interest of a diverse student body. Participants will rely primarily on fieldwork supplemented by some readings on relevant topics. You are encouraged to share with the seminar group research methods from your discipline and to explore topics of interest to you. Given the fact that we will be situated “in the field,” the focus of the work is to frame meaningful issues and questions through reflective and descriptive account. In this regard, the group work will mainly rely on “case study” as a way to incorporate multiple methods including survey, participant observation, unstructured interviews and focus group. As it is defined, a case study is “an empirical inquiry that -investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”(Yin, 2003, p 13, see the seminar reading list).

COURSE WORK

All students will be responsible for understanding the contents of the readings in the course bibliography **prior to arriving in the field**. This is important for you to gain an understanding of a region that is geographically and culturally unique. The course readings are organized into topic areas and will be available electronically (one course binder will be on reserve in the Architecture Library).

Assignments and Grades

1) **“Think piece” (20%); Due by Aug 20 via email**
In the “think piece” discuss your reaction to (at least) three reading topic areas. Try to reflect on the readings in regard to method, ethics and your own study area of interest. In addition to individual insights, you are encouraged to present questions and challenges of the readings to the anticipated field experience in India. The think piece is not a summary of the readings instead it is meant as a way to get you to think about topics that interest you in the context of the fieldwork. The emphasis is on developing questions and directions to explore based upon your reaction to the reading(s). The think pieces will be compiled and circulated via email. You should review the compiled document before you arrive in Sonapani. There will be a discussion around it in Sonapani where we will use
the document to determine overlapping research interests and approaches. The think piece is expected to be about 500 words in length.

2) **Field Notebook (30%); Due Sep 17**

   A. **Sonapani** During the first week in Sonapani you will have an opportunity to explore the region, participate with local experts and visit different institutions and organizations active in that area. Keep a daily log of events and activities using text, photos, sketches or other materials. Synthesize the information to explain how the approach of each institution or organization in rural development 1) is similar and/or unique, and 2) demonstrate strengths and weaknesses, particularly around a topic of interest to you (ex. education, health and sanitation, architecture, tourism, etc.)

   B. **Homestay-Sarmoli** During the week of homestay in Sarmoli, record your (unobtrusive) observations of the homestay experience in your Field Notebook. These observations should be from both perspectives as a traveler/participant and as a researcher.

   C. **Trek (Virtual/Visual Diary)** Along the trek, record your observations as a traveler instead of a researcher in your Field Notebook. You can focus on one theme that is of interest to you (ex. the trail, people encountered on the trek, landscape/environment, flora/fauna, etc.) or the overall experience. The emphasis is on your individual/group experience as trekkers. Observations could be made via text (summaries, poetry), sketch, doodling, photographing or filming. When we return to Sarmoli, there will be a discussion session after the hike for people to present their reflections.

   (NOTE: Field Notebook will be turned in at the end of the seminar. This is not a personal journal.)

3) **Homestay Family Profiles; (20%) ; Due Sep 10**

   With your homestay partner, develop a profile of one homestay family. During the week at Sonapani, the seminar group will develop the specific details of the profile from samples that will be provided. The goal is to have a profile that captures the host family and homestay experience and that may be utilized for promotional activities in the future.

4) **Sarmoli – Focus Area Field Report (30%); Due Sep 21**

   In small teams, investigate the Sarmoli Homestay Program and broader Sarmoli/Munsyari community context in one of the following focus areas: 1) Built Environment (vernacular architecture, landscape, etc.) 2) (Eco)Tourism (includes specific analysis of homestay program) 3) General Livelihood (could include education, health) and 4) Organizations/Institutions (local government, NGOs, other stakeholders). The final product will be a written report (with graphics, visuals, etc) that draws upon the course readings, experiences during the week at Sonapani, the time in Sarmoli, and the trek. More discussion and details will occur during the week at Sonapani.

**COURSE WEBSITE**

1) The course website, http://courses.washington.edu/kumaon, is to serve as a portal for all course related information including but not limited to health, travel and safety related information.

2) Built Environment Group photos 2008 is to be used as an image database for the seminar at http://www.flickr.com/photos/himalayasimage/..

Date: April 17, 2009
COURSE SCHEDULE

Pre-Trip Schedule

1) Orientation Classes (Spring 09): Gould Hall, Room 208 J, from 5 – 6:30 pm.
   A. April 17: Introduction and Logistics. Please review the course website and the 2008 Exploration Seminar report.
   B. May 8: Methods (and Logistics): Please review the articles posted in the Methodology folder of the course readings.
   C. May 29: Ethics of Research (and travel): Please read the articles posted in the Ethics of Research folder in the course readings.

2) Pre departure Meeting (Summer 09)
   In mid-August, a pre-departure meeting will be held to review final preparations, logistics, etc. Date, time and location TBD.

SCHEDULE in India (tentative)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>All participants should be in Delhi on this date, by Noon, at the location (to be) specified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>Depart Delhi for Sonapani</td>
<td>Via overnight train.</td>
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<td>August 29</td>
<td>Arrive Sonapani</td>
<td>From train, transfer to vehicles for drive to Sonapani – Himalayan Villages</td>
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<td>August 30 – Sept 5</td>
<td>Sonapani</td>
<td>Visit local NGOs, day treks and visits to surrounding communities (Nanital, Almora)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 5</td>
<td>Depart Sonapani for Sarmoli</td>
<td>Via vehicle – day drive to Sarmoli</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 5-10</td>
<td>Sarmoli</td>
<td>Homestay experience and local community exploration.</td>
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<td>September 11-16</td>
<td>Depart Sarmoli for trek</td>
<td>Trek with overnight stays in villages along route. Return to Sarmoli.</td>
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<td>September 16-17</td>
<td>Sarmoli</td>
<td>Wrap up work in Sarmoli</td>
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<td>September 18</td>
<td>Drive to Sonapani</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 19-20</td>
<td>Sonapani</td>
<td>Wrap up assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 21</td>
<td>Depart for train to Delhi</td>
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