

**RHAB 4800/5250 or CJUS 4870/5800
STUDY ABROAD: Drug Policy and Treatment in Thailand
(July 7th, 2025 – July 22st, 2026)**

Faculty Leader:

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DESCRIPTION:

This course will be conducted in Thailand during Summer 2026. During this course students will discover Thailand's revolutionary approach on drug policy, treatment, and trafficking. For 14 days, while studying abroad in Thailand in a course focused on drug policy and treatment, students will get a unique opportunity to explore a different cultural perspective on a global issue. Thailand has implemented innovative approaches to drug policy, balancing prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs in ways that differ from Western models. By immersing themselves in this environment, students can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes in combating drug abuse, as well as the social, legal, and medical responses to addiction. This experience not only enriches their academic knowledge but also fosters a broader cultural and global awareness, helping them develop critical thinking skills that are applicable in fields such as public health, social work, and international policy. Studying in Thailand also enables students to network with experts in the field, collaborate with peers from around the world, and leave with a new appreciation for diverse approaches to complex issues.

The course will include lectures and group discussions led by faculty and guest speakers from Thai governmental and non-governmental organizations. The course offers rich cultural learning experiences that are derived from touring historic sites, engaging with modern day city learning about harm reduction policies and services, and public and nonprofit organizations. Students will observe the impact of cultural and societal attitudes on the availability of harm reduction and treatment services, criminal justice policies, and the overall process of psychosocial adaptation of individuals with an addiction-based disability. The group will tour three major Thai cities of Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Pattaya.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Objectives of the course are to:

1. Develop an understanding of the broad economic, political, social and cultural dimensions influencing drug policies and treatment in Thailand and making comparisons with what you know about the same in the U.S.
2. Develop an understanding of the myriad roles played by the Office of Narcotics Control Board in creating drug policy, regulating drug use, and providing treatment access across Thailand.
3. Investigate factors that impact the recovery under the cultural and social norms prevalent in Thailand.

4. Observe interventions and services developed for individuals with substance use histories that incorporate consideration of their cultural perspectives as well as recognition of external cultural barriers.
5. Identify and compare criminal justice policies regarding drug use in Thailand with those of the U.S.
6. Enhance cultural intelligence quotient among students when providing services to individuals with substance use histories.

RATIONALE FOR TRAVEL:

Traveling to Thailand will offer students the unique experience of understanding the challenges of providing harm reduction services to individuals with substance use disorders in an Asian nation firsthand. The interactions with multi-sector groups charged with substance use policy development, implementation, preparedness and management in Thailand, cannot be duplicated in a closed classroom setting in the US and are hence extremely valuable. Students will also gain a deeper understanding of the impact of a person's cultural and societal attitudes on his/her psychosocial adaptation to substance use disorders. Immersion into another culture can help promote mindfulness of the struggles of individuals operating in a non-dominant culture and thus promote students to provide culturally sensitive services to persons with substance use disorders and other disabilities who are members of various cultural diaspora within the US.

ASSIGNED READINGS:

The following readings are suggested for this course:

- Please see the attachment titled "UNT 2026 Readings" shared via email

COURSE PERFORMANCE AND ASSESSMENTS:

1. Active Participation (Grading 20%)

Our partners in Thailand and your professor have put months into planning and setting up meetings with important subject matter experts and agencies in Thailand. Yet, local government agencies, nonprofit organizations or guest speakers may sometimes be required to change their schedules due to extenuating circumstances, or the traffic congestion and inclement weather. We may then be required to make alternative plans, so be prepared to be flexible. You are expected to attend every session and be punctual throughout this study abroad program. It is critical that you are prompt and prepared for departure so that we can arrive as scheduled for our daily tours/ visits. It is important to present yourself (dress and behavior) appropriately at all times. You are representing not only yourself but also your family, your university, and your country.

Missing an activity or being late, being rude to your classmates, driver, guide or faculty member will result in a warning the first time and a letter grade reduction the second time. Please let the faculty leader know directly if you cannot make it to a site visit or lecture due to ill-health. Being engaged means that you have a positive attitude, are actively listening, asking relevant questions, taking notes and giving your undivided attention and respect to the speakers. The tour guide, or one of the faculty members may deliver short lectures during "drive time" on extended day journeys. You are expected to be attentive at those times as well. If you have difficulty understanding someone because of their accent, it is ok to politely request that they repeat themselves.

I encourage all of you to become familiar with our speakers of the day. This information can be found in the document shared via email titled "UNT 2026 Speakers"

2. Travel Diary/Journal: (Grading 50%)

You are expected to note down your thoughts for the day in a travel journal. You may begin journaling the minute you step on the plane at DFW International Airport till the moment you return. The purposes of this assignment is firstly to illustrate your knowledge and changing perspectives of the cultures and people of Thailand: differences between people in rural-suburban-urban contexts; differences in cultures across cities; clothing, food, housing, language, colors and living practices and; Secondly to demonstrate your understanding of the challenges of harm reduction and criminal justice practices in Thailand and your understanding of the roles of nonprofit, private and local government organizations in resiliency and capacity building. You will do this successfully by reading all articles listed above and making comparisons between what you know about harm reduction practices in the US and what you read and see in Thailand. In this way you will try to gauge what lessons are transferrable between these two great democracies of the world.

Record your thoughts “as you go” or you may find that you cannot keep all the information as clearly delineated as you would like. It is required that you carry a smaller notebook/journal with you at all times instead of carrying a large journal. Be sure to take a photograph or two at each site visit and cultural visit, but seek permission before doing so. Try to ensure that these photographs are taken in work settings and not staged if possible. Include these photographs when you type up the journal for final submission.

Each day’s journaling should include the following subheadings:

a. Professional appointments/ site visits

Entries should include, but are not limited to names, titles, organizational mission, date, speaker details, a brief narrative relating to your learning experience on capacity building, resilience, harm reduction, criminal justice, highlights about speaker’s breadth of knowledge etc.

b. Cultural experiences in Thailand

Give a brief description including the date, where, what you saw at various venues, on the bus or metro rides, walking on the streets, bargaining for gifts, buying tea at a local stall etc. Differentiate between cultural activities in the different cities. Take every opportunity to engage people in conversations, have your photograph taken with the local people. Include photographs that exemplify the culture: food, colors, ancient monuments, farmlands, and the overall rhythm of the nation. Enter your favorite photograph and a caption in the Study Abroad Photography Contest and make us proud by being a winner!

3. Discussion Leader (Grading 10%)

Every evening, one of you will serve as a discussion leader. As a discussion leader you will begin by reading your journal entry for the day followed by your take home message from the day’s experiences. Be sure to share the primary emotion that you came away with that day, be it empathy, joy, sorrow, pleasure, anger, surprise etc. and explaining why that was so. Be sure to read the suggested articles so that you can formulate questions and arguments, backed up by research and your personal observations. Ask your classmates questions, draw out comparisons between what is known about these issues in the US and what you saw in Thailand, what changes could be made, what lessons can be learned on either side, what policies are transferrable and what are not, what are the challenges etc.

For GRADUATE STUDENTS: This assignment will include an additional component. You will research the agency/site assigned to you and present answers to the following questions prior to our group visit to the agency:

1. *Agency’s establishment*
 - a. *How long, by whom, locations?*
2. *Mission/Vision*
3. *Types of clients helped*

4. *Funding sources (if any)*
5. *Service Projects/Programs*
6. *Comparable agencies/services in the US, Texas, and DFW area*
7. *Interesting tidbits of information*
8. *Other relevant information that you think would be vital to know before visiting the site.*
9. *Questions you want to ask the agency representative during the visit.*

4. Professional Development Paper (Grading 20%)

Submit a typed reflection essay of 4-5 pages (12" Times New Roman font, 1" margin all around) about this study abroad experience in Thailand and describe how you have grown personally and professionally. Begin by elaborating on what you knew about Thailand? What expectations you came with? Were these expectations met? What was unexpected and unbearable? What was exciting, joyful and empowering? Identify your most valuable learning experiences and memories, underscoring what you will share with your family and friends. With your permission we would like to share some of these reflections with the study abroad office and future study abroad participants. Turn this reflection essay in PDF format via email at the due date

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS - DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION AND HEALTH SERVICES POLICY ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Notice of this policy shall be given in all public administration classes each semester, and written copies shall be available in the public administration departmental office.

DEFINITIONS

The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism "as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying other's tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one's own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty."

PENALTIES

Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of "F" in the course. In the case of graduate departmental exams, the minimum penalty shall be failure of all fields of the exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the departmental faculty in the case of departmental exams.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, papers, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Curriculum and Degree Programs Committee. Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary course work may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Curriculum and Degree Program[s] Committee in the case of either graduate or undergraduate students. This committee, acting as an agent of the Department, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if they determine that the case warrants it. In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case.

APPEALS

Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

POLICY ON DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

The Department of Rehab and Health Services, in cooperation with the Office of Disability Accommodation, complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request during regular office hours before the 12th class day of regular semesters (4th class day of summer sessions).

Adopted 1977, revised 1993.