Course Description
This course introduces students to the concepts of field research, research methodology, and research ethics, particularly in the context of the Netherlands. Students will learn skills in observation and (oral history) interviewing, gathering and organizing data, and conducting research while observing the ethics of local value systems. They will also learn how to develop contacts, find resources, and select and refine a topic for their Independent Study Projects. Each student engages in a Community Voluntary Experience (CVE) with a local NGO or grassroots organization through which they have the opportunity to interact with grassroots leaders and local communities, contacts that may be valuable for their Independent Study Projects. The course includes three modules. The first module focuses on experiential learning and positionality in field-based research. The second module introduces the components of research methods and ethics in the Netherlands and walks students through the particulars of fieldwork on gender and sexuality. The third module is constituted of an oral history workshop that teaches students how to incorporate an analysis of life stories and personal narratives into their Independent Study Project. The seminar will also prepare students for their community voluntary experience, in which they engage in voluntary work with a local NGO or grassroots organization. This course encompasses 45 academic hours for 3 credits and includes classroom and field-based learning.

Expected Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of the impact of the researcher’s positionality on the research process and final project;
- Demonstrate awareness of various methods of qualitative research, including feminist and queer theory methods;
- Use research skills and techniques, such as formulating research questions, reviewing relevant literature, locating research subjects, and conducting interviews in strict observance of local ethics and value systems;
• Show understanding of techniques used in conducting oral history interviews and analyzing personal narratives;
• Demonstrate ability to volunteer and work constructively with a local association or grassroots community;
• Produce a field study journal, a practice interview reflection paper, an Independent Study Project proposal, and an application for review of ISP research with human subjects to be approved by the Local Review Board/SIT Institutional Review Board.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English. Students are exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits.

Course Schedule

*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

MODULE 1: Experiential Learning and Positionality in Field-based Research

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in a study abroad context. Students learn how to relate to local communities and individuals. Most particularly, this module allows students to discover the power of experiential learning, and use it as a tool to connect to local communities and individuals, and develop into reflexive researchers who are attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research.

In this module, students will also conduct a Community Volunteer Experience (CVE). SIT is committed to creating respectful and reciprocal relations in the communities where we work, study, and live. The community volunteer experience is designed to connect students to the communities and individuals they would like to study for their Independent Study Project (ISP). The CVE also allows the student to create a field based research set up and further their learning and knowledge about gender and sexuality through working with activists and community leaders firsthand. Throughout the semester, students will meet with the CVE coordinator to create a work plan for their CVE.

Session 1: Field Study Session: Doing Field-Based Research in a Study Abroad Context

This session provides an introduction to field-based research in a study abroad context. Students explore how experiential learning can be used as a tool to explore and interact with their new cultural environment and reflect on their own positionality in relation to the host community, most particularly their homestay neighborhood and homestay family. In order to enhance skills of observation and experiential learning, students are assigned to build on an ‘experience collection’ in which they connect to the new environment, make observations through a gender and sexuality lens with the help of all the senses (sight, sound, smell, etc.), collect items, pictures, overheard conversations, small interviews, time observations, etc., and keep a journal. At the end of the semester, students are invited to create their own portable ‘experiential museum’ from their experience collection and their field notes, that will reflect their unique way of experiencing and perceiving a new city and a new culture, and the ways in which they succeeded in ‘making the unfamiliar familiar, and the familiar unfamiliar’.

Required reading:
Session 2: Field Study Exercise: Homestay Neighborhood Exploration
In this field study exercise, students are asked to explore their new cultural environment, most particularly their own homestay neighborhood through a gender and sexuality lens. The aim is to examine if and how the physical, social, and cultural aspects of the homestay neighborhood challenge any preconceptions the student might have held of the Netherlands. Students are asked to keep on exploring their own neighborhood throughout the semester, and add items to their ‘experience collection’, and eventually to the ‘experiential museum’.

Required reading:

Session 3: Field Work Session: Duo excursion: exploring the Netherlands
In this session, students are randomly assigned to a city in the Netherlands that they will explore in pairs. Students are invited to explore the new city through a gender and sexuality lens, and add their findings to their experience collection, and eventually to the ‘experiential museum’. The aim of the duo excursion is to have the opportunity to see a different part of the Netherlands and visit a new city that hopefully will challenge the idea that the progressiveness and relatively free culture you find in Amsterdam is representative of the entire country. In this sense, this field excursion will make students aware of the cultural diversity in the Netherlands. Also on this excursion, students are invited to add items to their ‘experience collection’ and ultimately to their portable ‘experiential museum’.

Session 4: Field Work Session: Reflections on Positionality and Representation
This session builds on students’ field exercise experiences and experiential explorations of Amsterdam and the Netherlands. In the first part of this session, students will present their portable experiential museum to their peers. In the second part of this session, students are encouraged to reflect on that experience collection and explore how their own positionality may impact their unique representation of the host culture. From there, we broaden the discussion by looking at how their positionality may shape their own research, most particularly their research question and focal point, their relation with the research subjects, their approach in data collection, and the representation of their research subjects in their final ISP. The session is followed by a gathering where colleagues, friends, and hosts are invited to visit the experiential exhibition.

Required reading:

Recommended reading:

Module 2: Research Methods and Ethics
This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community. The module will also walk the students through the preparation process of their ISP proposal, the LRB process, and the application for review of research with human subjects.

Session 1: Introduction to Research Methods and Ethics and Research Design: Selecting Topics and Formulating Research Questions
This session will provide an overview of the module on research methods and ethics. It will highlight the characteristics of qualitative research, as well as the main elements of conducting a research project, and walks students through the different steps of writing a research proposal. Special attention will be given to choosing a research topic and formulating a research question. We will also look into referencing according to the SIT guidelines. We will furthermore look into effective ways of literature searching.

Required reading:

Recommended reading:

Session 2: The Final ISP Proposal and Research Methods
The purpose of this session is twofold. First, we will readdress the research topic and research question, so as to prepare for the final ISP proposal. In this context, special attention is given to how to contextualize the research topic and research question by referencing and reviewing existing literature. Second, we will analyze the interconnectedness between the research question and the choice of the appropriate qualitative research methods.

Required reading:

Recommended reading:

Session 3: Research Ethics
This session uses concrete examples of social science research to address and discuss the ethical dimensions of doing research. We will look into ways of protecting the rights of research subjects, such as their right to give or refuse consent, and their right to remain anonymous. Special attention is given to the protection of ‘vulnerable’ research groups, such as minors and marginalized groups. In a similar vein, we will also discuss the issue of unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched, both during the research process as well as in representing research subjects in a final research paper. We will end this session by discussing SIT’s Human Subject Review Policy and the application for review of research with human subjects (the IRB form), the LRB process, the consent form, and the ethics form.

Required reading:

Recommended reading:

**Session 4: Individual ISP consultation**

Students have the opportunity to discuss their final ISP proposal with the RME lecturer or the academic director in order to provide a solid basis for rewriting the final ISP proposal.

**Session 5: Analyzing Data & Writing the ISP Research Paper**

The purpose of this session is twofold. First, we will look at various ways of data analysis, with particular attention to intersectionality as a tool for analysis. Secondly, we will analyze the different elements of writing the ISP paper, with particular attention to literature review and theoretical framework.

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**MODULE 3: Oral History Methodology**

Since the 1970s, oral history in Europe and the U.S. has grown to become a key component in community histories, social sciences, anthropology, and queer and feminist studies. Oral history continues to be an important means by which non-academics and ‘minority’ groups can actively participate in making their history heard. Practitioners across a range of academic disciplines have developed oral history into a way of recording, analysing, and archiving narrated memories or life stories.

**Session 1: Introduction to Oral History Epistemology and Methodology**

This first session deals with the historiographical emergence and uses of oral history, with particular reference to the investigation of voices and stories not always accessible to other historical or sociological approaches. Students will touch upon theoretical and methodological issues, such as memory and narrativity, and the subjective nature of personal narratives, which will be further explored in the sessions.

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Session 2: The Art of Oral History Interviewing**

At the heart of Oral History is the interview. Being a good listener and a good interviewer is the key to a good oral history analysis. This session explores how to prepare and conduct an oral history
We will discuss practical matters around oral history interviewing, such as interview ethics, interview techniques, and questioning techniques.

We will pay further attention to ethical issues surrounding a qualitative interview, most specifically the intersubjective nature of oral history interviewing. By critically assessing footage of personal narrative interviews, students will develop an awareness of their own role as an interviewer and what skills they need to develop in order to become an ethical interviewer. In a similar vein, we will look into the ethics of interview questions. We will explore the type of questions that are needed in several stages of the interview in order to establish a safe and ethical interview situation. Students are invited to conduct a pilot interview, write a short practice interview reflection, and prepare for a group discussion in class.

Required reading:

Recommended readings:
class, students will be able to develop and enhance their skills in analyzing their interviews and representing their research participants in an ethical way.

**Selected sample readings (one article to be assigned):**
Students are required to review and discuss one of the following articles (to be assigned in class):


**Session 5: Conducting Oral History Analysis**
In this last session, students will bring to class their own oral history analysis and receive review and discuss each other’s analysis under the guidance of the module coordinator. We will also take time to discuss the successes and challenges in the ISP research process and review the ISP rubric of assessment.

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Experiential Museum</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory completion of CVE</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice interview assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISP Proposal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Description of Assignments:**

**Experiential museum (20%):** In order to enhance skills of observation and experiential learning through fieldwork, students are assigned to build on an ‘experience collection’ in which they connect to the new environment, make observations through a gender and sexuality lens with the help of all the senses (sight, sound, smell, etc.), collect items, pictures, overheard conversations, small interviews, time observations, etc. and keep a field journal. At the end of the semester, students are invited to create their own portable ‘experiential museum’ from their experience collection and their field notes, that will reflect their unique way of experiencing and perceiving a new city and a new culture, and the ways in which they succeeded in ‘making the unfamiliar familiar, and the familiar unfamiliar’.

**Practice Interview Assignment (15%):** Students are asked to conduct a practice interview with one of the members of their host family. They are asked to write a small reflection (2-3 pages) about their role and attitude towards their research subjects, and the skills they brought to the interview to establish an ethical and safe environment for the interviewee. Students are also encouraged to explore how their own positionality along lines of gender, sexuality, race, and class affected the set up and wording of their questionnaire, and consequently the outcome of the interview.

**ISP Proposal (30%):** Students write an ISP proposal in preparation of their ISP. In the initial proposal, students practice their skills in explaining their field of inquiry, formulating an initial research question, and explaining their initial research set up. They are required to include at least 3 readings
that reflect the broader field of research in which their own research is situated. In its final version, students further develop their ISP proposal by working on a first draft introduction, choosing a focal point, establishing a research question, and describing their research design and methodology. In the final proposal, students must include 5 readings that reflect their field of research and/or theoretical framework. Final ISP proposals must be submitted with the application for review of ISP research with human subjects.

**Satisfactory Completion of Community Volunteer Experience (CVE) (25%)**: Students complete 24 hours of a Community Volunteer Experience and hand in a 2-3 page CVE report with the CVE coordinator. Students are graded by the CVE coordinator and the site supervisors in consultation with the Academic Director on the basis of their performance, commitment and pro-active attitude, and on their reflections on their CVE included in the CVE report.

**Participation (10%)**: The RME module coordinator and the oral history module coordinator assess students' participation in class. Participation includes:

- Attendance: promptness to class and positive presence in class
- Active listening: paying attention in class, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes
- Involvement in class discussions: either in small or large groups
- Group accountability during classes
- Taking leadership roles: leading and guiding discussions in a productive direction as assigned by the lecturer

**Grading Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 64%</td>
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**Expectations and Policies**

- **Show up prepared.** Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- **Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements.** This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- **Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer.** These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- **Comply with academic integrity policies.** (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- **Respect differences of opinion.** (Classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

**Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.