Memory and Social Activism Through the Arts
Seminar
LACB 3000 (3 Credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Argentina: Memory and Social Activism Through the Arts

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description
Both before and since the collapse of the dictatorship, Buenos Aires has been the scene of intense artistic work. In recent decades, the State and corporate funders, as well as alternative projects, NGOs and groups working on the city streets, have propelled an unparalleled collective production of artistic work which has allowed people of multiple generations to work through the horrors of the past and advocate for social change in an extraordinarily inclusive manner. From street corner murals to large museums of international renown to tiny galleries, theatres, and bars, the city exudes creativity and intellectual engagement. In this seminar, which forms the core of the program, students will explore Buenos Aires to ask how has art offered recent generations of porteños (Buenos Aires residents) diverse means of voicing discontent and of advocating for a more just future? How do contemporary artists and publics in Argentina work through the past and reimagine the present through art (whether on canvas, in sculpture collections or on street walls)? How are artists using new technologies and new mediums to develop and extend their messages, and bring Buenos Aires’ concerns into dialogue with global issues?

This seminar will consider the international scenario of the women’s movement for the extension of rights. Students will be challenged to consider the artistic dimensions of social activism in movements such as NiUnaMenos and VivasNosQueremos, accompanied by groups of artists working on these themes. The seminar will be experiential in nature and take students into museums, trauma and memory centers, and through Buenos Aires' most interesting graffiti-filled streets. Students will interact with a range of emerging and established artists and community leaders and consider the important role of the arts in Buenos Aires’ political and social life. Students will keep a personal logbook as well as a collective blog, with their field notes, images and reflections on the experience. The first three modules will deal with memories of the traumatic past, and the last three will focus on contemporary issues and debates.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

• Analyze how residents of Buenos Aires have made sense of the violence of the dictatorship and the period of State Terrorism through the arts;
• Analyze how art is also being employed to promote social transformation and change.
• Critically examine how photography in particular has provided a means to document and resist oppression.
• Discuss how the current generation of young artists uses new mediums to resist other
forms of oppression and inequity and to advocate for social change.

- Interrogate the role of murals and street art in Buenos Aires
- Compare artwork/movements in Buenos Aires
- Analyze with the example of new types of participatory art forms/performances in the provincial city of Córdoba.

**Prerequisites**
None.

**Language of Instruction**
Taught primarily in English.

**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 I: Introduction to Buenos Aires and the theme of art and memory**

Students will explore Buenos Aires asking how the beautiful and the terrible co-reside in this most favorite and graceful Latin American city. They will learn about Argentina’s experiences of State Terrorism in the period from 1976-1983, examine public signage and visit the Parque de la Memoria and Ex-ESMA and other key sites of memory. How were urban residents disappeared yet kept practically in front of everyone’s eyes? Why was it so hard for many residents to acknowledge what was happening? What does it mean to walk through these spaces today as a porteño, as a foreigner? They will also begin the study of art and how artists have employed creative means to provide ways to document, remember, and work through the terrifying events of the past. With over 30,000 disappeared, how do survivors, descendants and others honor their memory?

**Key themes, lectures and visits:**

- Lecture. State Terrorism, the Dictatorship, and After.
- Guided visits: Parque de la Memoria, Museo de la Memoria, Plaza de Mayo followed by a debriefing discussion.

**Assignment:** Initial response map.

**Module II: Photography and memory workshop**

This week students participate in a week-long workshop on the uses of photography in Argentina regarding the memories of the recent past. Led by experts on this theme, students will take part in discussions, participate in visits with photographers and film makers giving special importance to use of photographic images as a privileged materiality for cultural memory, and its relationship with other arts

Students will create short photo-essays on topics of personal intellectual interest.

**Key themes, lectures and visits:**

Lecture. Narrative images: Using photographs in literature / Victoria Daona

Collage and memory: Lucila Quieto

Group panel discussion. How to represent the invisible? The presence and absence dilemma: which are the different ways art promotes to represent absence?

**Assignment:** Flash photo essay.

**Module 3: Field trip to Córdoba: Province, memory and resistance**

Week three takes students outside of Buenos Aires to provincia to consider the role of art in another large but provincial city in Argentina. This excursion will take place over the course of five days with a focus around a visit to the **Archivo Provincial de la Memoria**, an archive that collects information, testimonies, and documents pertaining to human rights violations during the seventies. You will also walk around the streets of the **Cordobazo**, one of the most significant civil uprisings in Argentinean history. During this week, you will witness different temporary and permanent artistic exhibitions as well as visiting artist’s studios whose works are related to the memories of the recent past.

**Key themes, lectures and visits:**

- Presentation of the activities for the week Museo de Antropología
- Before the seventies: memories from the Cordobazo
- La Colectiva visit
- APM: Archivo de Extremistas
- APM: Vidas para ser contadas / fotografías del pasaje
- Artist’s talk: Lucas Di Pascuale | Gabriel Orge | Lucas Chami | Colectivo Manifiesto

**Assignment:** Choose one of the artists you have met during the week. Interview or/and review one of their works.

**Module 4: Contemporary art practices in the city: Art and Gender**

This week students consider the use of art an expression of both resilience and resistance in other areas of concern beyond memory. With the end of the dictatorship in the 80s, artists took to the streets as one strategy of reclaiming freedom of public expression. The street art scene has been characterized by solidarity and a common commitment to the defense of democracy since its inception. Some artists will use the street to ask questions; others to advocate for solutions and actions. With globalization, street art also finds itself located between the local and national history and the wider world of new modes/spaces of artistic production and shared social concerns.

Lecture. Contemporary art practices in the city.

- Eloisa Cartonera project
- Fábrica de estampas
- Art colectivos: SUB Coop, Muralismo nómade en Resistencia, etc.

**Module 5. Multiplicity and inequality through art practices: Art and Social Activism**
Students will meet participants of ongoing art projects at Villa 31 and La Cárcova. Students will explore how NGOs have employed art as a means to create a non-violent culture in these spaces. Students will consider the potential relationship between art and non-violence in some of Buenos Aires’ more challenged and less beautiful spaces as they partner with an NGO in a service experience. *Lectures to be conducted in situ.*


Villa 31 visit / Debriefing activity

Biblioteca Popular La Cárcova visit

Film debate. 13 puertas (Rubio, 2013)

Assignment: Critical opinion piece on art and social transformation referencing the experiences and themes of this week.

About keeping a journal

Each day you are here, you will be involved in new, different, or in some way, intense experiences. Keeping a journal enables you to process, systematically, the data from those experiences in the culture-learning context. Writing in a journal is a very useful way of maintaining an on-going reflection of your experiences. There are many ways to keep a journal. At one extreme, you may be making lists of things that happened during the day such as the restaurants and museums you visited. At the other extreme, you may write essays that report and then go on to analyze, interpret, and even evaluate the “contents” of a journey, as well as drawings, poems, maps, or whatever you need to put the experience down in paper.

Your journal should consist of write-ups of observations from all aspects of the program: homestay, excursions, classes, artworks, chance meetings, etc. The journal is an essential link between your experiences and your learning process. The journal is also the place to develop your skills in recording field data and provides a format to process everyday observations. Writing up experiences is not as simple as jotting down impressions. Notes are in fact the product of your re-engaging an experience, working out what you feel it means for you, and then putting it down. Far from an objective depiction of a real world “out there”, our notes are always a product of who we are at the time of writing.

Your notes are also a key part of your short-term memory of things lived. As such, their “life” begins with the writing; subsequently they should be reviewed, amended, added to and further reflected upon. The journal will also become an essential link to your past once you leave, or part of your long-term memory. No matter how intense or unforgettable the experience, you’re incorrect if you think you will never forget it. Write it up.

Some of the objectives of writing a journal are:

- It enables you to keep a record of what you experience and learn.
- A journal facilitates active learning, helping you improve skills of observation, reflection, and evaluation.
• Writing in a journal can help you facilitate cultural adjustment by enabling you to write about frustrations and difficulties you experience; describe people you meet and your interactions with them; and to record the insights you gain.

• A journal can help you summarize, analyze, interpret, and evaluate learning experiences such as lectures you hear, articles you read, and field excursions you take.

There are no journals better than others, the important thing is that you write, draw or glue something in it every day. Remember your journal will also be part of your final evaluation, so it is important to keep it updated!

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

For each week there is a project/assignment. Timely completion of all assignments is expected, and late hand-ins will be penalized one grade level per day late (An A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, etc.). All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality and depth of understanding, formation of an opinion/interpretation, use of examples, references to readings and experiences, and standards of good writing (style, citation, punctuation and grammar, etc.)

**Description of Assignments:**

Course evaluation includes the weekly assignments and participation. Details and further requirements to be provided onsite.

Module 1: Map and response paper.
Module 2: Flash photo-essay.
Module 3: Art review/interview
Module 4 and 5: Critical opinion piece.
Module 6: Revisited map
Final Assignment: journal presentation and oral examination with AD

**Assessment:**

- Map and position paper. 10%
- Flash photo-essay. 20%
- Art interview/review (Córdoba) 10%
- Assignment modules 4 & 5 20%
- Revisited map 10%
- Final interview & journal 20%
- Participation 10%

**Grading Scale:**

- 94-100% A
- 90-93% A-
- 87-89% B+
- 84-86% B
- 80-83% B-
- 77-79% C+
- 74-76% C
- 70-73% C-
- 67-69% D+
- 64-66% D
- below 64 F

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.