

Identity, Commemoration, and Agency ICHR-3500 (4 credits)

International Honors Program (IHP) **IHP Cultural Heritage: Legacy, Identity, and Curating the Future** **Nepal, Ghana, Netherlands**

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

Course Description

Identity is not fixed; rather it is a transient notion that is under continual construction in negotiation with the past, present, and future. Neither individuals nor societies can claim clear memory. Instead, what happened in the past is hazy, contested, and repeatedly mutating every time it is re-rehearsed. This ongoing enactment is in the hands of a myriad of creators; artists, tour guides, gift shop stockers, landscape architects, and museum curators are but a few of the producers entering into conversation with the public, tourist and local alike, to decide what a place is and what it means.

This course examines the slippery process of codifying and commemorating the past, with a particular eye to the way the past can be marshalled to promote an idea of the present that meets the needs of a contemporary market. We are especially interested in the way stories are claimed by governments, organizations, and special-interest groups as we discuss the idea of agency. Who owns the narrative around slavery, the Holocaust, religious practices, and marginal identities? How are these experiences incorporated into broader narratives to create larger corporate identities? Through site visits, lectures, readings, and copious discussion, we will explore these questions in order to nuance our understanding of the intersection of commemoration and identity.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Assess the roles commemoration and cultural institutions play in a community's cultural sustainability, in a theoretical, academic, as well as in a practical, legal context;
- Critically analyze terminology such as indigenous, native, natural, and authentic when discussing cultural heritage, particularly with regard to the role of curation in the development of a cultural identity.
- Apply knowledge about cultural heritage and relations to past and present to develop papers examining how memory is constituted, honored, preserved, and reified.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary in various languages related to course content in each program country.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

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: Identity, Commemoration, and Agency in Nepal

In this module, we will explore the melding and divergence of traditions and identities in Nepal as well as the tension between commemoration and erasure of history. We will look at commemoration or lack thereof of recent events such as the 2001 Royal massacre or the 10-year civil war (1996–2006), from which Maoist insurgents emerged victorious, bringing the monarchy to an end. How are granular identity politics honored in the mobilization of cultural heritage in the salad bowl democracy? Students will learn about the identity of Himalayan Nepalese populations and Tibetan refugees who, despite their common cultural heritage, are divided by occupation and political injustice, even "cultural genocide". On an excursion to the Nepali Terai, we will call into question the politics of nationalistic claims to Buddha's birthplace in a country with an underrepresented Buddhist minority, and we will also study Indigenous agency in development and conservation as well as the agency of Indigenous populations in development and conservation in Chitwan National Park.

Session 1: Conflict and commemoration

Lecture: Conflict, calamity, climate, and China—*Kunda Dixit*

Required readings:

Dixit, K. (Winter 2012). A New Himalayan Game. *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 34:1.

- Dixit, K. (2006) *A People War: Images of the Nepal Conflict 1996-2006*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Publication Nepa-Laya.
- Dixit, K. (2009). *People After War: Nepalis Live with Legacy of Conflict*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Publication Nepa-Laya.
- Dixit, K. (2009). *Never Again: Testimonies from the Nepal Conflict 1996-2006*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Publication Nepa-Laya.

Session 2: Dark tourism

Visit: Narayanhiti Palace Museum (site of Royal massacre)

Required reading:

Thapa, M. (2005). "The coup that did not happen," & "We want democracy." In *Forget Kathmandu: An elegy for democracy*. Penguin, Viking, 8–47, 293–300.

Session 3: Cultural genocide

Lecture: Tibetan and Himalayan Identity in Nepal

Required readings:

Human Rights Watch (HRW). *Under China's Shadow: Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal*. 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/04/01/under-china-s-shadow>

Falcone, Jessica, and Wangchuk, Tsering. "We're not Home: Tibetan refugees in India in the Twenty-First Century." *India Review*. Vol 7, Iss. 3 (2008).

Mulmi, A. R. (2021). "Neither Nepal nor China," & "A fence in the Himalaya." In *All roads lead to north: Nepal's turn to China*. Context, an imprint of Westland Publications Private Limited.

Session 4: Tradition as oppression

Lecture: Muluki Ain, the Nepali Caste system

Required readings:

Bista, D. B. (1991). *Fatalism and development: Nepal's struggle for modernization*. Sangam Books.

Gellner, D. (2007, May 19). Caste, Ethnicity and Inequality in Nepal. *Economic and Political Weekly*. https://www.academia.edu/925707/Caste_Ethnicity_and_Inequality_in_Nepal

Pradhan, R. (2002) Ethnicity, Caste and a Pluralist Society. In Dixit, K.M. and Ramchandaran, S. *State of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Himal Books, 1–21.

Session 5: Identity, agency and sacred landscapes

Excursion: Lumbini

Required readings:

Gellner, David N. "Politics of Buddhism in Nepal." *Economic & Political Weekly* LIII, no. 3 (January 20, 2018): 17–20.

Roy, Arundhati. (2017). *The Doctor and the Saint: caste, race and "The Annihilation of Caste," the debate between B.R. Ambedkar and M.K. Gandhi*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 11–22 & 139–149.

Session 6: Indigenous agency in conservation
Excursion: Chitwan National Park

Required readings:

Eubanks, C., & Sherpa, P. Y. (2018). We are (Are we?) all indigenous here, and other claims about space, place, and belonging in Asia. *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, 4(2), vi–xiv.

<https://doi.org/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.4.2.00vi>

Warren, T., Baker, K.J.M. (2019, March 4). WWF Funds Guards who have tortured and killed people. *Buzzfeed News*. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/tomwarren/wwf-world-wide-fund-nature-parks-torture-death>

Robertson, T. (2018). How Chitwan was opened. *Nepali Times*.

<https://archive.nepalitimes.com/article/Nepali-Times-Buzz/how-chitwan-was-opened,4159>

Stevens, S. (Ed.). (2014). *Indigenous peoples, national parks, and protected areas: A new paradigm linking conservation, culture, and rights*. University of Arizona Press.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sit/detail.action?docID=3411888>

Module 2: Identity, Commemoration, and Agency in Nepal Amsterdam and the Netherlands

Joods and Homos

In the Netherlands we will examine the way the Dutch use the commemoration of World War II to build their national identity, focusing particularly on the memory of Jews and homosexuals. The concept of liberal tolerance and acceptance are key components of the way the Dutch understand themselves and project that identity to the rest of the world. Students will visit key sites in the commemoration of the “Tweede Wereld Oorlog,” as the Dutch call the Second World War, including museums, monuments, and the sleek and modern center of Rotterdam, a once beautiful city leveled by the Germans in the last century. We will ground the module in the theoretical concept of memory studies, examining the way history is created in the present and used not only to recall the past, but to explain the present, and shape the future.

Session One: Finding Meaning in Memory

Required reading:

Wulf Kansteiner. (2002). Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory. *History and Theory* 41.2, 179–97.

Session Two: Memory of the Tweede Wereld Oorlog

Visit to the Holocaust Memorial & the Versetzmuseum

Required reading:

Duindam, D. (2018). Prologue and The Dynamics of Sites of Memory. *Fragments of the Holocaust*. DeGruyter, 9–44.

Session Three: Commemorating the Holocaust and the Dutch Jewry

Visit to the Hollandse Schouwburg & the Anne Frank House

Required reading:

Duindam, D. (2012). Stage, Performance, Media Event: The National Commemoration of the Second World War in the Netherlands. In Agostinho, D., Antz E., and Ferreira C. (Eds.). *Panic and Mourning*. DeGruyter.

Session Four: Sites and Situations

Visit to Camp Vught National Monument

Required reading:

R. Van de Laarse. (2013). *Beyond Auschwitz? Europe's Terror Landscapes in the Age of Postmemory in Memory and Postwar Memorials*. Palgrave, 71–92.

Session Five: Other Wars, Other Fronts

Visit to the Homomonument

Required reading:

Zebracki, Martin. (2021) "Gay Monuments in Queer Times: Amsterdam's homomonument and the politics of inclusive social practice," *Sexualities* 0.0 1–33.

The Stedelijk and the TWO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe5CW4fpgGI>

Session Six: Destruction, Reconstruction, Commemoration

Visit to Rotterdam

Dominik R. (2021). "Commemoration of Destruction and Celebration of Reconstruction. The Evolution of Rotterdam's Approach to the City's History, 1945–2019," in *Conflicts Over Use of Urban and Regional Spaces in the Time of Climate Changes: Good Management and Planning Practices*. M. Czerny and C.A.S. Mendoza (Eds.). Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 30–42.

Module 3: Identity, Commemoration, and Agency in Ghana

In Ghana we will scrutinize the role that intra-country migration plays in shaping identities while building community, with a particular focus on how women contribute in both historical and contemporary contexts. Students will observe ethnic festivals and related ceremonies that commemorate the establishment of various kingdoms in Ghana; visit art galleries and museums that curate creative and historical perspectives; interact with market queens; and visit a range of businesses such as bakeries, collectives, tech-startups, restaurants, and transport services that are mainly run by women.

Session 1: Festivals

Lecture—*Nana Ansah Kwao IV*

Visit to Akwamu Adumasa

Session 2: Food

Visit to Fiona's & Dejael Bakery

Required reading:

Quagraine, F. A. (2020). Are small women entrepreneurs resilient? Highlighting the roles of entrepreneurial competencies and motivation. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, 25(3), 361–377.

Session 3: Art

Visit to Gallery 1957, Nubuke Foundation, & Artist Alliance

Required reading:

Ankomah-Graham, K. and Oduro-Frimpong, J. (2020). “The Sustainability of Contemporary Art Spaces in Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda” in *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World*. Edited by Carin Kuoni, Jordi BaltàPortolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses. Amsterdam: Valiz, 161–184.

Session 4: Commercial

Visit to Pagsung Shea Butter Collective

Required reading:

Session 5:

Visit to Soronko Solutions & Incas Diagnostics

Required Reading:

Session 6: Queer Identities and Communities

Lecture—*Kwame E. Out*

Required Reading:

Otu, K. E. (2021). Queer slacktivism as silent activism? The contested politics of queer subjectivities on GhanaWeb. *Sexualities*, 24(1-2), 46–66.

Group discussion: Synthesis & Debrief

(60 minutes x 9, see assignment below)

group 1: From USA to Nepal

group 2: Nepal midway

group 3: Nepal & beyond

group 4: From Nepal to The Netherlands

group 5: The Netherlands midway

group 6: The Netherlands & beyond

group 7: From the Netherlands to Ghana

group 8: Ghana midway

group 9: Ghana & beyond

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Group discussion: synthesis and debrief (15%)

Objectives

- To enable the group to reflect on what we have learnt from various parts of the course, to integrate knowledge gained from a variety of sources, including field trips, and to share insights;
- To provide a forum for discussion of course readings;
- To give you practice at facilitating discussions and making presentations.
- To engage critically with distinct threads from among the semester themes

How it works

In the first week of the semester, you will be assigned to one of nine groups. Each group will be assigned one group discussion to facilitate during the semester. These discussions will be guided by faculty but run by students. The group discussions will last for 60 minutes and will **foster debate or discussion** about what we have learnt in synthesis in each of the four courses, since the previous meeting and will integrate what we have learnt that week in workshops, lectures, **field trips** and **readings** with what we have previously covered in the semester. Each group will moreover be assigned a distinct thread from one of the semester themes, to be addressed in the discussion **but not as the theme of the entire discussion**.

When it is your turn to facilitate a discussion, you need as a group, to **identify the most important topics (check the learning goals) that are suitable for class discussion** (don't pick so many topics that there isn't adequate time to discuss them all). At the meeting, the facilitators should first identify the topics to be covered in the meeting. They should then encourage and direct group discussion of the topics, ensuring that every member of the group is **given space to speak**, and indeed the **everyone does make a contribution**, however small. Facilitators are scheduled to **meet with a relevant faculty member** for the 15 minutes just prior to their session in order to review the questions you will put to the group. Please feel free to approach any faculty member already prior to starting your preparation for your own meeting in order to review the topics to be discussed. We reserve the right to include critical questions or topics if they are absent from your list. **It is important to allow sufficient time for discussion of the readings.**

Grading

Synthesis and debrief discussions make up 15% of the course grade. The quality of your contribution to the discussions throughout the semester is worth 7.5% and your facilitation of your session is worth another 7.5%. As a participant, you should come to group discussions with notes from the readings including a sentence summarizing the author's main message. You should contribute to the discussions but not dominate them, your contributions should be informed and you should respect other's opinions but not be afraid to disagree.

The criteria for evaluating the facilitators are:

- Your introduction identifying the topics to be discussed (5%)

- Your identification and framing of the important issues to be discussed from lectures, workshops, fieldtrips, etc., and the quality of the questions and prompts you used to initiate and direct the discussion (40%)
- Your identification of the important issues contained in the readings and your facilitation of the discussion of those readings (35%)
- Your facilitation of the group discussion (did you get everyone involved in and enthused about the discussion? Did you use any innovative approaches? Were you able to control the discussion and get it back on track when it wandered off the topic? Did you manage the time well—so that all topics were covered?) (20%)

Curatorial projects (75%)

Small group curatorial project—Nepal (25%)

Individual curatorial project—the Netherlands (25%)

Whole group curatorial project—Ghana (25%)

Objectives

The curatorial projects are designed to help you to reflect upon, **analyze and synthesize** what you are learning from excursions, field trips, lectures, seminars, readings, formal and informal discussions and your own observations and to **take on the role of ‘curator’** to present an exhibit/archive/experience that reflects our course theme[s].

How it works

In each country, you will be asked to reflect in an essay on aspects of the fieldwork you have carried out and **to relate this to what you have previously learnt and observed** in the three thematic courses. Your essay needs to be succinct, well organized and to show that you are thinking about what you are experiencing and that you are synthesizing what you learn from disparate sources. You will also **curate an exhibit/archive/experience** related to or inspired by your essay topic. Exhibits can be tangible, i.e., a physical or digital art or photography exhibit, or intangible, i.e., dance, song, food etc.

The first project, which you will complete in Nepal, will be a small group curatorial project. This will entail a 1,000-word **minimum** contribution to a paper prepared in collaboration with a small number of you program peers and a related exhibit curated by that small group.

The second project, which you will complete in the Netherlands, will be an individual curatorial project. This will entail a paper with a 1,600-word **minimum** and a related exhibit curated individually.

The third project, which you will complete in Ghana, will be a whole group curatorial project. This will entail an individual paper with a 1,000-word **minimum** and an exhibit curated through collaboration with your entire cohort.

Grading

These three curatorial projects will each comprise **25% of your Identity, Commemoration, and Agency grade, together totaling 75% thereof.**

Students should note that topics for curatorial projects as well as their field study journal are open. Students should not feel they are limited only to topics explicitly explored in the courses but should feel free to use each project and paper to explore a variety of topics. To reinforce and emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of these Curatorial Project assignments, the weight given in evaluating the projects and papers in each country will be split equally between the grading of the four courses in that country.

Preparation, participation, and contribution to group learning (10%)

In this seminar, great emphasis is placed on the students' active participation in their own education. This element is worth **10% of your Identity, Commemoration, and Agency** grade. Your grade is allocated on an assessment of your timely attendance and informed participation in all activities, including field trips; your adherence to codes of conduct and conditions of participation; and your general contribution to the maintenance of a positive learning environment throughout the course.

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance—promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening— paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions—either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability—positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect—culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

Group discussion: synthesis and debrief	15%
Small group curatorial project (Nepal)	25%
Individual curatorial project (the Netherlands)	25%
Whole group curatorial project (Ghana)	25%
Preparation, participation, and contribution to group learning	10%
	(100%)

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components

and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

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

Program Expectations

- 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.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the

course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.

- **Personal Technology Use:** Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Course Communication:** Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, we will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Classroom recording policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.