

## Historical In/justice and Curating the Future

SJIR-3000 (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

Cultures deploy the past to explain their present and to help shape their futures; sites of cultural heritage are regularly the locus upon which this myth building is performed. Much of what we call history is but a catalog of ongoing atrocities. Violence, sporadic and ongoing, overt and covert, strategic and chaotic, tends to be what we invoke to demarcate places and eras; framing violence composes the narrative that we call our 'history.' Thus, explaining and commemorating violence and misery can occupy much of a curator's time.

In this course we will explore ways we talk about the past to build the future, often centering the discourse on conflict. We will pay particular attention to the questions around restitution of looted artifacts, preservation of 'indigenous' spaces, and the commemoration of mass violence. This course is not, however, simply a litany of misery. Here we will think through how to make sense of past injustice and use the power of memory to create a better future.

#### Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain impacts of historical injustices committed during the plundering of cultural artefacts on ongoing cultural negotiations of Indigenous and hybrid communities in Nepal, Netherlands, and Ghana;
- Synthesize information about ethics and politics of the restitution of artefacts and patrimony taken during the colonial era and beyond to prepare for a career in, or further study of, the fields of conservation and curation;
- Apply conceptualizations about the restitution of art and cultural artefacts into concrete projects as exemplified by a curatorial project appropriate to the program theme.

#### 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: Historical Injustice and Curating the Future in Nepal

In this module, we will study the fresh restitution of cultural heritage in Nepal, and correspondingly, the cultural heritage that continues to be stolen, lost or destroyed. How is history remembered in a multiethnic country made up from independent kingdoms and only "unified" at the end of the eighteenth century? Why are Tibetan singing bowls advertised as "ancient" and "spiritual" while contemporary Tibetan art is often criticized as representing outside influence? We will explore how the sacred landscapes of the high mountains or Buddha's birthplace are changed by moneyed mountaineers, UNESCO or National Parks. We will visit the lowlands of the Nepal Terai and analyse there the archive of terrestrial change and indigenous memory.

#### Session 1: Restitution of cultural heritage

Lecture & visit: Taragaon Museum & the Nepal Heritage Recovery Campaign—*Roshan Mishra*

Visit: The Patan Museum

*Required reading:*

Hagmueller, Goetz. (2001) "Introduction" in *Patan Museum: The Transformation of a Royal Palace in Nepal*. London: Serindia.

<http://www.asianart.com/associations/patanmuseum/report/page1.html>.

Lynn Davis, J. *Remembering the Lost Sculptures of Kathmandu*. [Exhibition & database].

<http://rememberingthelost.com>

- Sijapati, A. (2021, January 28). "Nepal's gods return from exile." *Nepali Times*.  
<https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/nepals-gods-return-from-exile/>
- Small, Z. (2021, October 2). "Met Museum to Return Icon to Nepal." *The New York Times*, C4.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgbe&AN=edsgcl.677558370&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Small, Z. (2021, November 3). "Citizen Activists Lead the Hunt for Antiquities Looted From Nepal." *International New York Times*.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgbe&AN=edsgcl.681014325&site=eds-live&scope=site>

### Session 2: The colonial archive

Visit: The National Archive, Kathmandu

#### *Required readings:*

- Cubelic, S., Michaels, A., & Zotter, A. (2018) "Studying Documents of South Asia: An Introduction." In *Studies in Historical Documents from Nepal and India*. Heidelberg University Press. <https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.331.454>
- "Āśā Archives (Āśā Saphūkuthi)" *Himml*. <https://hmml.org/about/global-operations/nepal/>

### Session 3: Toppling of anti-heroes

- Drayton, R. (2019). Rhodes Must Not Fall?: Statues, Postcolonial "Heritage" and Temporality. *Third Text*, 33(4/5), 651–666.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=140852518&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Somlai, Ivan G. (2020, July 27). "Air-brushing history by toppling statues." *The Nepali Times*.  
<https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/air-brushing-history-by-toppling-statues/>

### Session 4: Reclaiming Shangrila

Lecture: A journey from traditional to contemporary art—*Tsherin Sherpa*

Lecture: Cultural commodification and Tibetan singing Bowls—*Ben Joffe*

#### *Required readings:*

- Bajracharya, S. (2019, August 14). "The tale of the singing bowl." *The Kathmandu Post*.  
<https://kathmandupost.com/art-culture/2019/08/14/the-tale-of-the-singing-bowl>
- Basnet, S. (2016). The world beyond thangkas. *Nepali Times Buzz*. 8–14 July 2016. <https://archive.nepalitimes.com/article/Nepali-Times-Buzz/The-world-beyond-thangkas.3139>
- Burnett, K. P. (2011). Tibetan Buddhist Art in a Globalized World of Illusion: the contemporary art of Ang Tsherin Sherpa. In *Modern China Studies* 18: 2, 5–28.
- Joffe, B. (2015, October 21). "Tripping on Good Vibrations: cultural commodification and Tibetan singing bowls." *Savage Minds*. <https://savageminds.org/2015/10/31/tripping-on-good-vibrations-cultural-commodification-and-tibetan-singing-bowls/>
- Lopez, Donald. Jr. "Introduction" in *Prisoners of Shangri-la*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 1–13.

Pemba, D. & Harris, C.. “Conversing with Clare Harris, author of *The Museum on the Roof of the World*.” *Cerise Press: a journal of literature, arts & culture*. <http://www.cerisepress.com/05/13/conversing-with-clare-harris-author-of-the-museum-on-the-roof-of-the-world/view-all>

#### Session 5: Curating sacred landscapes

Excursion: Lumbini

Lecture: Lumbini Development trust—*Venerable Metteyya Sakyaputta*

Visit: Lumbini Museum

Required reading:

Allen, C. (2002). *The Buddha and the Sahibs: The Men Who Discovered India's Lost Religion*. John Murray, 256–279.

Dixit, Kunda. (2019, 17 May) “U Thant, Kenzō Tange and the Buddha’s birthplace.” *Nepali Times*. <https://www.nepalitimes.com/here-now/u-thant-kenzo-tange-and-the-buddhas-birthplace/>

McDaniel, J.T. (2017). Monuments and metabolism: Kenzo Tange and the attempts to bring new architecture to Buddhism’s oldest site. *Architects of Buddhist Leisure: socially disengaged Buddhism and Asia’s museums, monuments, and amusement parks*. University of Hawai’i Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0qv2.6>

#### Session 6: Indigenous memory & the terrestrial archive

Excursion: Chitwan National Park

Lecture: The Skin of Chitwan—Indigenous pasts, sustainable futures

Required reading:

McLean, Joanne (1999). Conservation and the Impact of Relocation on the Tharus of Chitwan, Nepal. *HIMALAYA: the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 4(2), Article 8. <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol19/iss2/8>

Robertson, T. B. (2018). DDT and the Cold War Jungle: American environmental and social engineering in the Rapti Valley of Nepal. *Journal of American History*, 104(4), 904–930. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jax429>

*The Skin of Chitwan*. [Online exhibition]. (2020) *Nepal Picture Library*. <http://skinofchitwan.nepalpicturelibrary.org>

### **Module 2: Historical In/justice and Curating the Future in Amsterdam and the Netherlands**

#### **Colonial Booty, Post-colonial Negotiation**

In Amsterdam we will explore the issue of plundered booty and historicizing the global trade in the early modern era. Our focus will rest primarily on things taken to the Netherlands from its former colonies, of course, but we will also consider the case of the Elgin Marbles, calling into question differing constructions of ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized.’ We will talk about how the materials were acquired, the beginnings of return and ‘incidental return,’ and the ongoing legal communication.

## Session 1: The Steal

### *Required reading:*

Jos van Beurden. (2017). Colonialism and Cultural Objects. Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects.

## Session 2: Colonial Objects

Site Visit: Rijksmuseum

### *Required reading:*

Jos van Beurden. (2017). A Neglected Issue in an Evolving World and On Colonial Cultural Objects. Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects.

## Session 3: Decolonize the Museum

Visit: the Scheepvaart Museum

### *Required reading:*

Mirjam Kooiman. The Dutch VOC Mentality: Cultural Policy as a Business Model. Decolonizing Museums. L'Internationale. 41 – 53.

## Session 4: Decolonize the Museum, part two

Lecture: *Simone Zeefuik*

Visit: the Tropenmuseum

## Session 5: Case study of Diponegoro's Staff and Kris

### *Required reading:*

Jos van Beurden. (2017). Ambiguities between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects.

## Session 6: Case Study of the Elgin Marbles

Keats, *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles*

### *Required readings:*

JH Merryman (2009). Selections. Thinking about the Elgin Marbles: Critical Essays on Cultural Property, Art, and Law. Kluwer Law International.

Vasiliki Kynourgiopoulou. (2010). National identity Interrupted: The Mutilation of the Parthenon Marbles and the Greek Claim for Repatriation. Contested Cultural Heritage, 155-70.

Emily Duthie. (2011). The British Museum: an Imperial Museum in a post-imperial world. Public History Review 18, 12-25.

## **Module 3: Historical In/justice and Curating the Future in Ghana**

This module interrogates the relationship between the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and contemporary social relations in Ghana, laying the foundation for an understanding of the concept of Afrofuturism. While Afrofuturism risks being processed as a spectacle, there are productive ways of approaching the concept, especially through diaspora studies. Apart from

hosting the two major slave castles on the West African coastline, Ghana's position as the hub for African Diasporic Relations has been highlighted by events such as PANAFEST and more recently the Year of Return, an initiative in 2019 that commemorated the docking of the first slave ship in Virginia. We use this context as basis to critique the problematic implications of one of the world's worst atrocities.

### Session 1: Talking/Not Talking and Atrocities

Introductory Lecture

*Required reading:*

Smith, V. E. (2016). Secrets of West African Slave Ancestry: Fante Strategies of Silence and the Didactic Narrative in Ghanaian Literature. *Journal of West African History*, 2(2), 109-131.

### Session 2: Contemporary Imaginations

Lecture—*Kwame Akoto-Bamfo*

Visit: Nkyinkyim

### Session 3: Tracing Northern Routes

Visit: Salaga Slave Market & Pikworo Slave Camp

*Required reading:*

Attah, A. H. (2019). *The Hundred Wells of Salaga: A Novel*. Other Press, LLC.

### Session 4: Transitions

Visit: Assin Manso Slave River

### Session 5

Lecture—*Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang*

Visit: Cape Coast Castle & Elmina Castle

*Required reading:*

Asempasah, R., & Saboro, E. (2021). Unsettling the coloniality of power: form, grievability, and futurity in Opoku-Agyemang's Cape Coast Castle: A Collection of Poems (1996). *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 8(1), 1993596.

### Session 6: Afro-Futures

*Required readings:*

Asante, G. A., & Nziba Pindi, G. (2020). (Re) imagining African futures: Wakanda and the politics of transnational Blackness. *Review of Communication*, 20(3), 220–228.

Osei, E. A. (2020). Wakanda Africa do you see? Reading Black Panther as a decolonial film through the lens of the Sankofa theory. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 37(4), 378–390.

### **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 Historical Injustice/Curating the Future 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 Historical Injustice/Curating the Future 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.