Service Learning in Buenos Aires

Course Information:
Instruction in English, fieldwork requires advanced Spanish abilities

Course Description:
In association with the Buenos Aires Housing Department, which oversees the planning and construction of subsidized housing for thousands of families living in informal settlements or villas, this hands-on course will contribute to a long-term oral history project that records and disseminates the narratives of this large-scale relocation. The high standards in civic engagement and participatory decision-making found along the process may become a model for other communities, both in Argentina and in the region. This course is therefore relevant to students with an academic interest in grassroots development, media and the arts, urban anthropology, migration studies, and intercultural negotiation. Using the ethnographic method of participant observation, they will learn how to become more present listeners and to record the stories they collect on the ground. In order to facilitate their full immersion and peer learning, international students will work along local students in an ongoing exchange of points of view and visions for the city of Buenos Aires.

Course Content:
Students will be provided with basic concepts of oral history, such as life narratives, community narratives, and cultural memories. In order to conduct interviews, they will become familiar with the ethics and responsibility of an oral historian. The course will also include guest lectures by local experts, as well as the analysis of case studies on how other major cities in Latin America have integrated their informal settlements: the favela-barrio in Rio de Janeiro, and the innovative policies in Medellín. The capstone project will consist of a short film or podcast co-produced by the students, and the collaborative curation of a multimedia exhibit at the local community center.

Learning outcomes: By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Meet the challenges of producing a project abroad
- Improve their capacity for active and reflective listening
- Situate the uses of storytelling along a conflict continuum
- Critically and holistically examine causes of and solutions for current social issues, e.g., immigration, access to education and health care, human rights, poverty, and violence, from a global perspective and from the perspective of the inhabitants of the target community

Sample syllabus. Final syllabus will be available on-site.
Course Requirements:
Methodology & Participation: Students must actively participate in class and prepare the assigned materials for each session. In addition to this, they are expected to make a critical contribution to the class discussion, including an informed set of questions for every field study and guest lecture.

Field journal: A thick description of what the interviewees experience on the field studies, which may include mapping, photography, etc. as well as reflections about the student’s own development as an active listener and an observant participant. Each entry should be 2 pages long, focusing on issues discussed in class.

Capstone project: Under the instructor’s supervision, students will conduct research, gather and edit oral testimonies with the guidance of a professional crew, and organize a multimedia exhibit to present the final results. On the final session, students will discuss with their Argentine peers the lessons learned throughout the production journey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>15 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Journal</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone project</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 1
Introduction to Oral History.


Class 2
Ethnography in the city.


Film viewings: León, Federico. Estrellas (2007).
Class 3
Polyphony and civic engagement.


Field study 1: Rodrigo Bueno (Buenos Aires).

Class 4
From settlements to neighborhoods.


Film viewings: Cabrera, Sergio. La estrategia del caracol (1993).

Class 5
The interview as a conversational narrative.


Field study 2: Rodrigo Bueno (Buenos Aires).

Class 6
Case studies: Rio de Janeiro and Medellín.


Film viewing: Caffé, Eliane. Era o Hotel Cambridge (2016).

Class 7
Narrating the present.


Field study 3: Rodrigo Bueno (Buenos Aires).

**Class 8**
**Down to earth: from global agendas to local assemblies.**


**Class 9**
**Public art and active citizenship.**


Field study 4: Rodrigo Bueno (Buenos Aires).

**Class 10**
**Presentation of capstone projects.**
**Final exam.**

*The instructor leading this course* earned his Ph.D in Spanish and Portuguese from Yale University. He was anchorman for the Deutsche Welle TV Journal in Berlin (1992-5) and is the author of *El descubrimiento de África en Cuba y Brasil* (Madrid, 2001). With 30 years of international experience in education, project management, and media, he directed the IES Abroad programs in Barcelona, Rome, and Rio de Janeiro. Together with faculty and students, he produced audio documentaries about the Roma population in Europe, as well as the film documentaries *Stolica* (Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2013) and *Travessia* (Brazil, 2015).