



KIIS Berlin-Barcelona Program, Summer 2027

ART 494 Topics: The Living Museum: Art and Memory in Barcelona & Berlin

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description:

What does it mean for a museum to be alive? This intensive four-week field course uses Barcelona and Berlin as living laboratories for that question. In Barcelona, we encounter institutions animated by modernist art, civic identity, and community memory. In Berlin, we confront museums built around absence, trauma, and contested ownership. Moving between them, students develop a critical vocabulary for analysing how museums come alive — or fail to — for different publics, in different political moments, and with different kinds of objects.

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze how architectural space, label language, and object selection construct meaning for living visitors
- Apply key theoretical frameworks to specific institutional examples encountered in the field
- Evaluate contested curatorial decisions — restitution, decolonisation, dark heritage, digital futures — with nuanced, evidence-based argument
- Conduct field-based research including structured observation, visitor interviews, and comparative close reading
- Develop and defend a personal position on what makes a museum alive — responsive, relevant, and responsible to its publics
- Design and present an original curatorial proposal that animates something currently inaccessible, suppressed, or inert

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

This class will explore the way institutions construct and animate meaning through curatorial decisions, architectural design, historical context, and community engagement. We approach the topic through an art historical social history perspective. We will consider religion, politics, culture, and environment and how it impacts the development of museums in Barcelona and Berlin, cities and countries with deep contested histories. As such, we will consider audience, who is invited in, who might feel excluded, in how the museums identities are constructed. In both cities ideas around memory and remembrance are deeply felt and built in their exhibitions and urban spaces.

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement:

Depending on the KIIS institution, this course might fulfill an Arts & Humanities distribution and/or a Cultural Distribution. At Berea College, it would fulfill the Humanities and Beyond the Borders General Educational distribution requirements.

6. Required Readings and Materials:

The course will use online sites such as Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, Getty Foundation, and Khan Academies, as well as articles from JSTOR and online sources created by the cities of Berlin and Barcelona.

7. Graded Assignments:

Site analysis assignments/ field journals	25%
Comparative analysis essays	25%
Curatorial proposal and final presentation	30%
Reflections and presentations	20%

Site Analysis/filed journals:

Visual analysis assignments will focus upon exhibitions and museums visited in class and program excursions.

Comparative analysis essays:

Comparative analysis assignments explore different approaches to curatorial decisions, site context, as well as community engagement at different museums.

Curatorial proposal and final presentation:

A proposal that will identify a museum for the exhibition or a site for a monument, present a vision for its execution, write promotional material, accompanying text, and include a model of the layout.

Reflections and presentations:

These assignments connect readings to class material and experience of sites.

8. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

9. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

10. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Deborah Wilkins (270-745-5396 / deborah.wilkins@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu) or Joshua Hayes (270-745-5121 / joshua.hayes@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/eo/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.