**Syllabus: Museum Audience Research**

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Museum Audience Research</th>
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<td>Programme in Museology with PM-HSE-RA</td>
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| Lecturers / authors | A. Ryumina Dr. Annette Loeseke and Drs. Joke Bosch |

**Background / setting**

**Museology: Visitor studies**

**Core idea**
The module Museum Audience Research is designed to give students a general idea of the how and what of getting to know your audience and using that knowledge as a basis for a museum’s policy and practice. After this unit you will have had an encounter with the various types of visitor studies there are. You will know how to organise a survey and you will be able to understand the meaning and the consequences of visitor studies. In the 4 units an overview will be provided of some history, aims, strategies and research methods of empirical visitor and reception studies through lectures, case studies, group work and assignments.

The 4 units are built with the following elements:
- lectures and seminars (introduction to visitor studies; research methods; practice-to-theory approach)
- presentation of case studies (results of recent visitor studies)
- exercise: small-scale visitor study or mock visitor study based on provided data (group work)
- preferably excursions and workshops in the museums
- workshop on segmentation strategies and their potential for developing new products: lifestyle groupings, culture segments, visitor types, learning style types, reception-centred exhibition formats (group work)

Some basic literature needs to be studied. Please, make sure you’ve read the allocated texts and that you prepare the assignments. We encourage all students to actively participate in the lectures, discussions, trainings and excursions.
Set-up
As an introduction to Visitor Studies the Reinwardt Academy offers four study units to this course:

1. **Introduction to Audience Research**
   This unit will provide an introduction to visitor studies and an overview of the history, aims, strategies and research methods of empirical visitor studies. We will explore visitor segmentation strategies as well as the impact of exhibition design and spatial layout on visitors’ reception and engagement with an exhibition or museum display.

2. **Methods: observation and tracking**
   Observing our visitors and tracking their behaviour in exhibitions of on our website. The most natural and basic way of finding out what visitors do. How can we observe visitors and what can we learn from our observations? We look at how to track visitors in an exhibition.
   - Observations and Tracking Studies
   - Interviews and interviewing
   - Reliability, validity etc.

3. **Methods: surveys**
   Surveys can be done in numerous ways. We can question visitors, non-visitors. In this unit we will look at how to use surveys. What is the strategy to follow and which questions need to be answered before we ask our audience for information or their opinion.
   - Questionnaire design
   - Problem description and demands
   - Tracking studies
   - Instruction for assignment
   - Museum visit, mystery guest

4. **Exercise audience research and / or workshop and closing discussion**
   It is planned to run a small-scale visitor study (observation/tracking studies and survey) in the museum or do a mock visitor study building on provided data from a recently conducted visitor study. It is also planned to run a workshop and experiment with exhibition formats and segmentation strategies (lifestyle groupings, culture segments, visitor types, learning style types, exhibition models).

Assignment
A. for session 2: observation/tracking:
   - preparation of a tracking map (a room or gallery in a museum of the student's choice)

B. for session 3:
   - preparation of another tracking map
   - write an observation (of visitor behaviour in a gallery of the student's choice) and define possible problem description based on the observation.

C. for session 4: exercise visitor study / workshop / closing discussion:
   - Outline a visitor study (suggesting a range of appropriate methodologies) for responding to (fictive) complaints by museum visitors: research plan and suggestions for improvement.

Always use a style guide. Instructions can be found at for example:
- [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
- [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20110928111055_949.pdf](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20110928111055_949.pdf)

Aims & Objectives, competencies
Aims & Objectives:
- to present and discuss principle research methods both qualitative and quantitative
• to explore visitor segmentation categories as tools for analysis and product development: culture segments, visitor types and learning style types
• to explore how exhibition structure, design and space layout impact on visitors’ reception and engagement with an exhibition or museum display
• to discuss how empirical visitor research can inform curating, exhibition development, programming, and education and learning

Competencies:
• Anticipating needs: The ability to discover and address the needs and expectations of the public and serve the public interest.
• Public promotion: The ability to engender public respect and appreciation for the museum, and to stimulate and motivate people to use the museum’s programmes, products and services.
• Evaluation: The ability to assess performance and results and identify steps to overcome obstacles, improve performance and results.

Results / Outcomes
During the course of the workshop, we will discuss how empirical research can inform curating and programming, and explore strategies for developing new products (exhibitions, events both on site and online) that aim to address today's pluralistic audiences and changing reception practices. On completion of the workshop, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of empirical research methods, and critically discuss theoretical and practical implications for addressing diverse audiences.

Assessment
3 individual assignments
Assessment criteria:
• structure of the written text
• logical flow of the argument
• clear and consistent presentation of ideas

Deadline for the assignment is one day in advance of the next unit. Not meeting the deadline for writing the paper will result in failing to pass this course.

Do take into account the following guidelines:
- Standard typeface (e.g. Arial 12)
- Please send in your assignments as an appendix in a Word or Pdf document.

Time investment
28/ 20/16 hours (3h Thu + 6-7h Sat, 4 sessions) lectures, workshops, fieldtrips
8 hours reading and studying literature
80 hours for 3 assignments (9 hours + 9 hours + 20 hours) (s. description assignments)
152 hours (4 ECTS)

Instructions
Please prepare meetings by thoroughly studying the required literature. Making notes and photographs during lectures and workshops is strongly recommended. Students are required to be actively participating during the lectures, discussions, trainings and excursions.

Sources / literature

Mandatory reading:

Unit 1:

Unit 2:
- Verhoeven, Nel. 2015. 'Doing Research'. chap. 3: Demarcating the Research Topic, pp. 75-104;
- Verhoeven, Nel. 2015. 'Doing Research'.chap. 5: Qualitative Data Collection Methods, pp. 135-155;

Unit 3:
- Verhoeven, Nel. 2015. 'Doing Research'. chap. 4: Quantitative Data Collection Methods, pp. 111-130;

Unit 4:

Supplementary reading:

Schedule

| UNIT 1, week 38 Introduction to Visitor Studies | - Introduction (Definition; Theory of visitor studies in museums; Arguments of desirability of visitor studies; Critical analysis of visitor studies)
|   | - Purpose / Aim and scope of visitor studies (visitor studies/market research; museum departments involved)
|   | - Visitor types (e.g. John Falk)
|   | - Motivation / Reasons for visiting |
- Measuring satisfaction  
- Non-visitor analysis  
- Segmentation  
- Types of visitor studies and types of research  
- Frequently used techniques  
- Case studies (optional)  
- Instruction for assignment  

Please read text(s) before unit 1:  

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<th>UNIT 2, week 42</th>
<th>Methods: observation and tracking</th>
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| - Observations and Tracking Studies  
- Interviews and interviewing  
- Reliability, validity etc.  
- preparation of a tracking map for the visitor study (exercise) in week 46 |

Please read text before unit 2:  
- chap. 3: Demarcating the Research Topic, pp. 75-104;  
- chap. 5: Qualitative Data Collection Methods, pp. 135-155;  

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<tr>
<th>UNIT 3, week 46</th>
<th>Methods: questionnaire design</th>
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| - Questionnaire design  
- Problem description  
- Tracking studies  
- Instruction for assignment  
- Museum visit, mystery guest |

Please read texts before unit 3:  
- chap. 4: Quantitative Data Collection Methods, pp. 111-130;  

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<th>UNIT 4, week 48</th>
<th>More exercise visitor study and/or workshop and closing discussion</th>
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| - Visitor study exercise in the museum (questionnaire/survey and tracking studies/observations)  
- Data collection and analysis  
- workshop on implementing findings (depending on time)  
- Case studies  
- Closing discussion |

Other procedures / final discussion