



JSAA ELECTIVE COURSE BLURB

SEMESTER & YEAR	SPRING 2026	ELECTIVE TYPE (DEPARTMENTAL / CROSS ELECTIVE)*	Cross Elective
COURSE CODE	TBD	ELECTIVE MODE (SEMINAR / STUDIO / WORKSHOP)	Seminar
NO. OF CREDITS	5	PREREQUISITE COURSE(S) (IF ANY)	
COURSE NAME	Re-imagining historic houses: Curation, Interpretation and Community Engagement		
AFFILIATED PROGRAM(S) (select as applicable)	Architecture / Interiors / IDE		

* Departmental Electives are only open to JSAA students and Cross Electives are open to all JGU students.

Faculty Bio

Dr. Schmidt is the founding director of the Centre for Historic Houses of India (National Expert Heritage Body) and Associate Professor of Architectural History, Design History and Heritage Management at OP Jindal Global University. She received her D.Phil. from the University of Oxford (John Lowell Osgood Prize; Michal Wills Scholar) where she was also tutor. In 2025 she was a fully funded Attingham Scholar at the prestigious Attingham Summer School for Historic Houses and Collections. Her research focuses on historic interiors, material culture and the encounters between Europe and South Asia. She has lectured and published internationally, was Sylvia Naish Prize Lecturer (Institute of Advanced Study, University of London).

For her work she has received numerous awards including the JP Morgan Chase Force for Social Good, the Wadsworth Atheneum Award for Services in European Decorative Arts, the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes grant (German National Merit Foundation), DAAD, English Heritage Grant for studies in Building History, Cambridge University, the Ian Karten Award at the University of Oxford and a fellowship at the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture – New York.

Course Descriptor

This course examines the interpretation and curation of historic houses and understands these sites as dynamic places of culture, community and education. Although India has some of the world's highest numbers of UNESCO World heritage sites and historic buildings of great importance, many of them remain empty shells, stripped of life and meaning. This course invites students to re-imagine such spaces as places of living history and culture. We will study interpretation programmes and exhibitions of specific sites – such as properties managed by the National Trust or English Heritage in the UK, by private owners and other organisations such as the Foundation for Prussian Palaces and Castles in Germany, the Newport Mansions, Greater Hudson Heritage Network and others.

We will examine palace museums, concepts of interpretation, and curatorial practice to rethink how empty historic interiors can be made legible, relevant, and engaging for diverse audiences. In this context we will also consider audience analysis tools such as the Morris, Hargreaves, MacInture Culture segments.

Through case studies, site visits, and applied assignments, students will design tools such as heritage trails, games, and participatory exhibitions. We will explore how research translates into cultural or educational programmes. The course emphasizes skills in curation, interpretation, audience engagement, and critical heritage studies. By the end, students will have developed both conceptual and practical strategies for connecting historic houses with communities and making them meaningful in the present.

Key Learning Outcomes (Based on Blooms / Solo Taxonomy)

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

LO1	Students will be able to define and explain key concepts in historic houses, monuments, museums, interpretation, and audience engagement in global and Indian contexts.
LO2	Students will be able to analyze and compare global models of historic house museums (Asia, Europe, US) and apply frameworks to evaluate Indian cases with particular emphasis on audiences (culture segments)
LO3	Students will be able to critically assess the limitations of current management of Indian historic houses (for example, ASI conservation-only model) and propose alternative curatorial and interpretive approaches that consider community relevance and audience needs.
LO4	Students will be able to design and develop innovative heritage interpretation tools such as games, trails, exhibitions, or activity booklets that are tailored to specific audience segments.
LO5	

Assessment & Evaluation System

Write a brief summary of assessment and evaluation systems, including activities, exercises, and assignments.

- Short written assignment (terminology and contextual analysis of a selected house)
- Criteria: Accuracy of definitions, clarity of explanation, contextual relevance

- Comparative case study presentation (group work). Criteria of evaluation: Depth of comparison, use of theoretical frameworks, clarity of oral presentation, inclusion of audience engagement strategies
- Students will create an assessment system of historical houses evaluating visitor engagement and education tools and strategies in form of an excel spreadsheet. In addition to an essay they will write a short research essay to highlight the strength of the specific historic site
- Students will create teacher's handout, develop a heritage trail and activity related to one site

References/Citations (if any)

Black, Graham. *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*. Routledge, 2005.

Brochu, Lisa. *Interpretive Planning: The 5M Model for Successful Planning Projects*. 2003.

Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*. Columbia University Press, 2004.

Herz, Rebecca Shulman. *Looking at Art in the Classroom: Art Investigations from the Guggenheim Museum*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2010.

Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Smith, Laurajane. *Theorizing Museum and Heritage Visiting*. In *Museum Theory*. Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Vagnone, Frank, Ryan, Deb, and Cothren, Olivia. "The Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums: Evaluation Methodology for Historic House Museums." *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (2015): 97–111.

Wong, Liliane. *Adaptive Reuse: Extending the Lives of Buildings*. Birkhäuser, 2016