

## Archives and Evidentiary Practices Specialization

### Description

The new *Archives and Evidentiary Practices Specialization* (hereinafter: Archival Specialization) is a program initiated by the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives (OSA) and organized jointly with the Department of Legal Studies and Department of History at Central European University (CEU). It is based on the long experience of the faculty and staff of OSA in running a contemporary archives and research center, and in teaching various archival courses at the aforementioned departments.

Many students come to CEU already with some experience and interest in or willingness to learn more about the archives. Yet, our experience is that graduate students studying law, history or human rights know little about current trends in archival thinking, have less and less interaction with primary archival sources during their academic work and possess superficial information on important matters related to their use as legal and historical evidence. This recognition lead us to believe that they would benefit greatly from learning on the roles and functions of the archives, and from gaining or upgrading their knowledge in documentation and information management, as well as their skills in conducting archival research and evaluating findings.

OSA is in a unique position to launch a specialization which would address these needs, and constitute an attractive and useful component of the prospective students' MA degree upon graduation. The Archival Specialization is designed to reflect OSA's special professional skills and competencies, both as an academic unit and an archival service provider within CEU. All of the practical training and coursework will be organized in small groups and led by dedicated instructors in an archival environment; therefore the program will be only partially measurable in credits.

OSA is an international archival repository collecting and preserving documents dealing with the history and afterlife of Communism and the Cold War, of the political and cultural resistance against repressive regimes, as well as of human rights movements and violations, and mass atrocities worldwide. It is also a laboratory of archival experiments on new ways of assessing, contextualizing, presenting, and making (public) use of its own holdings. At the same time, it is developing innovative tools for online archival storage, management and research, and visualizations of its varied collections and datasets.

The aim of the program proposed by OSA is to provide students fascinated by the complex problems of the archives with both theoretical grounding and practical skills in working and pursuing research in a contemporary and innovative archives setting. Throughout the program, they will explore a number of relevant topics including the basic historical, legal, political and societal aspects of archives, from recordkeeping through documentary evidence to justice and memory-making; free, open and equal access to archives and information; ethical use of private data; open source solutions and standards, and digital archives; collection development in a

permanently changing technological environment; new archival storage and research tools; archival activism; and community and participatory archives. During a series of seminars, hands-on workshops, discussions and practical archival activities, participants will be able to make full use of the unique collections and facilities of OSA.

The knowledge and skills acquired during this specialization will open up for them additional avenues of pursuing a career not only in their chosen field but also in archives, libraries, and museums or in the multidisciplinary arena of the digital humanities.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the Archival Specialization, students will be able to orient themselves within the realms of the rapidly changing archival profession, information management, human rights documentation and evidentiary practices in the archives. They will possess knowledge that will enable them to understand the necessity and role of preserving recorded information, as well as some of the fundamental problems related to archiving; to critically approach and analyze documents of the recent past; to locate and understand archival evidence and turn them into reliable legal evidence in a court environment; or to reuse and recontextualize information from various archival sources in constructing new human rights and historical narratives. Ultimately, they will be able to make use of archival documentation in setting the historical record, in strengthening the presence of marginalized groups in archives, and in promoting democratic societies, transparent and accountable governance, respect for human rights and fight against impunity.

Students will have the necessary skills to use digital archives for research and online platforms to store, manage and share digitized archival sources; to record and manage information about human rights violations in standard formats; to use modern data management (and analysis) tools to generate and safely transmit human rights reports; and to handle the documentation of human rights and civil society organizations, and to use them for advocacy purposes.

Upon completing the Archival Specialization, they will also be able to meaningfully reflect on a variety of archival collections, roles and functions, and to perceive the archives as a place of preservation, discovery, intriguing structures and complex processes involving politics and memory.

### **Definition**

This is an Archival Specialization in contemporary archival theory, thinking and practice, information management, evidentiary practices and documents relating to the recent past (post-WWII).

### **CEU Degree Programs Introducing the Specialization**

Department of Legal Studies

Master of Arts in Human Rights Program

Master of Laws in Human Rights Program

Department of History

Master of Arts in Comparative History (one year)

Master of Arts in Comparative History: from 1500 to the present time (two years)

### **Eligibility**

Students enrolled in the *Archives, Evidence and Human Rights* (AEHR) course offered by OSA

Since this is a course cross-listed at the Department of Legal Studies and the Department of History, their students are primarily eligible to apply. Nevertheless, the Archival Specialization remains open for interested students from other departments as well.

### **Structure (credits and duration)**

The specialization is composed of three credit-bearing elements.

#### **1. Archives, Evidence and Human Rights** (3 credit course)

The first part of the Archival Specialization consists of the *Archives, Evidence and Human Rights* course, which is scheduled for the Legal Studies Modules (LMS) II-III (or the fall semester.) The course offers an introduction into archival history and theory, and aims at developing the students' **research and critical evaluation skills** by familiarizing them with online resources, research methodology and source criticism. It also strives to teach students to use archival records in constructing historical and human rights narratives; to evaluate and assess the usefulness of their findings; to analyze the authenticity and evidentiary value of archival documents; and to define the archival practices necessary to perform in order to introduce textual and non-textual documents as evidence into investigations and legal proceedings.

The course has been taught to the Legal Studies and more recently to History students for over ten years by a core team of instructors, including Iván Székely, András Mink and Csaba Szilágyi. The course is open for students from other departments as well.

<http://legal.ceu.hu/courses/archives-evidence-and-human-rights>

Students can apply for the Archival Specialization towards the end of the fall semester, in early December of the respective AY, after completing the AEHR course. A maximum number of five students will be accepted by the teaching team of the course.

#### **2. Archival practice** (3 credit, 30 hours)

The second part of the program includes a supervised **practice** in the archives' professional activities.

Students will have to spend a maximum of 30 hours at OSA from January to February to familiarize themselves with the various stages of the archival workflow and the 'invisible'

processes of creating the archives. It is conceived as a guided individual discovery of the archives under the supervision of assigned staff members, from the processing area to the AV studio, and from the electronic catalogs to the digital repository. It includes the following stages:

- Archival workflow: from appraisal to reference services
- Textual documents: physical preparation and arrangement, preservation and processing
- Audiovisual materials: conversion and preservation, processing and copying
- Digitization: workflow, creation of digital collections, and digital curation
- Archival management system: cataloging, databases, metadata models and archival descriptions
- Library: cataloging and integration of library material
- Outreach: reference services, education, memorialization, exhibitions and other public programs

### 3. **Advanced coursework** (3 credit, 30 hours)

The third and last part of the program is one piece of advanced coursework, which brings in **archival theory and thinking** in order to structure and contextualize students' experience as researchers and practitioners. In May and June, students will attend lectures, seminars and workshops on the following topics:

- The role of archives (long-term preservation, distribution, reuse, memory, social justice, advocacy and activism)
- Introduction to current archival practices (acquisition, appraisal, physical arrangement, cataloging, description, and digitization)
- Human rights documentation (specialized archives, sensitive information, evidence, documents of mass atrocities, judicial and forensic records)
- Information management (data models, archival management systems, information forensics, online representation)
- Archival research and documentary practices (strategies, evaluation and source criticism, and online resources)
- Forensic evidentiary practices: examining archival documents (authenticity and probative value); preparing and introducing archival material in legal proceedings
- Privacy, access, restrictions, copyright
- Crowdsourcing, user generated and participatory archives
- Education (using archival resources)
- Public programs (exhibitions, online exhibitions, performances, public history programs and other outreach activities)

The coursework also includes several hands-on workshops with actual archival documents, combined with class discussions on case studies selected from the 20-year practice of OSA. These are related to specific archival issues, theory and societal roles, including appraisal, physical arrangement and description, cataloging, sensitive data in human rights documents,

creation of online research and document management tools, public history projects, and memory work in the archival space.

### **Assessment**

Grading in the 3-credit AEHR course is based on class participation and a take-home essay produced after conducting individual consultations and research on predefined topics in the archives.

Assessment of the archival practice and the advanced coursework parts of the program is based on their completion as certified by the assigned supervisors. The assessment of the entire program will culminate in a 90-minute written exam on issues of archival research, practice and theory performed in-class after the advanced coursework is over.

The *Archives and Evidentiary Practices Specialization* will be awarded to those students who successfully complete all parts of the program.

### **Faculty and Staff**

Core faculty and staff include:

István Rév, Professor of History / Director, OSA

Csaba Szilágyi, Archivist / Head of the Human Rights Program, OSA

Iván Székely, Social Informatist / Senior Research Fellow and Counsellor, OSA

András Mink, Historian / Research Archivist, OSA

In addition to the above-named staff, participants in the program will work and study with other OSA faculty and staff representing various areas of the archival field: theory and research, archival practice, audiovisual collections, human rights, data analysis and management, access and administration, reference services, records management, and public programs.

On occasion, we plan to invite guest instructors and speakers from schools of archives, library and information science, as well as like-minded organizations and partner institutions, including the Documenta: Center for Dealing with the Past (Zagreb), Humanitarian Law Center (Belgrade), OSCE Archives (Prague), the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (Amsterdam), the National Security Archive (Washington DC), the Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research (Columbia University, New York), and WITNESS (New York).

Compiled by Csaba Szilágyi | Head of the Human Rights Program, OSA

September 12, 2016