Charlotte’s Majors: Linguistics, Italian

Program: UW in India, Academic Year

Academic Life: Every student takes an Indian History course and a Field Methods course together. The first looks at the culture, religion, and important events throughout India’s history; the second is a preparation course for the Independent Research. Students are required to take Hindi and are split up into three classes based on their language level. Students have some flexibility in the last two classes—Independent Research and Tutorial. The research project can be about any topic of your choosing related to Varanasi life. The tutorial is a language or traditional art that a student studies individually with a guru. I studied Banarasi weaving with a master weaver and wove an entire sari. I also studied Indian cooking and learned the properties of many foods and how to prepare different dishes.

What Charlotte Learned Through Her Fieldwork: While conducting my focus groups with members of the Varanasi community, I had to be more flexible that I was used to. The participants would take the discussion in a direction that I wasn’t expecting and I had to think on my feet to explore new topics instead of sticking to set questions I had come up with. Some of the conventions of my research methods also posed unexpected challenges, like a ranking system in a questionnaire which was unfamiliar and confusing for the participants. All in all, the field work taught me a lot about the challenges that can arise in a real life situation and some of the compromises and adjustments that have to be made to ensure the project progresses and is successful.

“If you are looking for a study abroad program that is truly transformative then this is the one for you.”