Syllabus

CHAPS: Museums, collecting and preservation (16:082:585, 01:082:440)

Instructor: Dr. Salam Al Kuntar

Course Description:
The history of collecting and preserving ancestral remains and relics go back to the early Neolithic times. Possessing valuable ancient artifacts is an old tradition that was practiced by elites and rulers throughout history. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Roman emperor Tiberius, Swedish queen Cristina, and the Russian czars are few names among many others that amassed private collections. The concept of a museum, however, whether private or public implies some kind of display and viewing access to people other than the owners and their social circles. The word "museum' can be traced to the Classical era when Ptolemy Sorter I founded the famous Museum in Alexandria which was more of a library and research center. But the museum in its contemporary form came to birth in the middle of the fifteenth century Europe and gradually became an important characteristic of European modernity. Museums become public institutions that collect, preserve, document, exhibit and interpret the material evidence for the benefits of the public. Europe still hosts more than half of the world's museums to this date.

This course examines the history of museums, modes of collecting, and the preservation of the past. The course starts with exploring the complex relationship between people and objects as producers, owners and collectors and how the object value is shaped by an inherited social meaning that influences object selection. We will proceed to look at the emergence of the museum as a public institution that embodies the public ownership of object, and how museums acquire, exhibit and convey information about an individual object and its wider social context. We look at different types of museums, exhibiting philosophy, and collecting codes of ethics. An important component of the course will be devoted to heated debates about the role of museum in defining cultural identity, legitimacy of ownership for artifacts collected during the colonial era and repatriation to original country/community. We will examine the custodial universalism approach adopted by the most prestigious museums, such as the British Museum, the Louvre and the Met. Does such an approach obscure the imperial past in which Europeans claimed superior knowledge of ancient civilizations and thus legitimate rights to own and exhibit the world's heritage?

We will also touch upon the issue of unprovenanced antiquities that come through illicit traffic and end up in museum galleries, and how the collectors and museums buy them on a no-questions-asked basis; how collecting looted objects contributes to the destruction of the archaeological context and prevents the understanding of the past which undermine museums' mission of education and preservation. We look specifically at cases of classical antiquities outside the classical world that have been disputed in court cases such as the Elgin Marbles and Getty Bronze. The relationship between museums and private collectors; and the artifact donations they make to museums will be a topic covered in this class.

Reading:

Readings for the course are listed on the syllabus. About 60-80 pages assigned per week. Readings will be uploaded on Sakai. You should expect also to do additional reading as you research papers/ d the museum project and prepare for leading class discussion and presentations.

Learning goals:
- To learn the history of museums and museum collecting practice.
- To appreciate the concept of the museum as a powerful institution in shaping public knowledge of human history and cultures.
- To understand the complexity of the social, political and economic factors that influence museums' strategies and modes of change.
- To have a critical perspective on museums collecting practice and display approaches, examine current ethical codes and explore pathways through which museums can reach best practices.
- To introduce students to work in the world of museums, and allow them to conduct research projects that demonstrate innovative ideas on how museums can improve their role as preservationist institutions.

Course structure:

The course will be in the format of a seminar. Attendance is critical in order to understand the course material. You will, however, be excused for religious obligations, or medical, personal, and family emergencies upon notification. I will present a brief background of the topic and highlight questions followed by a discussion based on the suggested readings.

Course assignments:

1. **Class participation:** Participation in class discussion is essential. As of week 3, a student (or 2 students) will be asked to summarize the readings and lead the discussion. A sign-up sheet for dates and topics will be distributed in week 2.
2. **Response paper:** Each student is required to write a short response paper (3-5 pages for undergrads, 5-7 for grad students) to a question stated by the professor which relates to specific topic(s) discussed in class and covered by class readings.
3. **Final project or paper**: Each student is required to do a final project or paper (10-12 pages for undergrads and 15-20 pages for grad students) and do a presentation on the same topic in the last week of classes. There are three choices for the final paper/project:
a) It can be a longer exploration of a theme related to topic covered in the class. A list of paper topics and paper-writing guidance will be provided. However, you can opt to choose a topic outside the provided list but you have to discuss with the professor the outline of your choice.
b) You can do a project that involves original research with museum collections from the Rutgers Geology Museum. If you want to do this, however, you must meet with the professor by 2/22/2019 so that we can identify a project for you to do and set up times for you to work with the material in the museum. This could be a really great opportunity to

do the sort of project that can only be done through the CHAPS program, but it will require much more diligence.

c) You can design a new museum exhibit. You will need to choose a theme for a gallery that will display material from the periods and areas covered in this class. You will then need to choose items from the online digital archives of any museum(s) of your choice (e.g. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection, http://www.penn.museum/collections/), but – when possible-you are also encouraged to look in museum galleries in order to make up a (virtual) display case. A designed exhibit project will include the following components: 1) A 2-3 page statement of the general theme of the exhibit, 2) A 3-4 page description of how the exhibit will work (including discussion of individual display cases and how they relate to the broader theme, and maps and figures that indicate how the exhibit would use the available space), 3) A 3-4 page detailed description of one display case, with a discussion of the objects present and how they relate to your larger theme.

Grading:

1. Participation and leading seminar discussion 30%
2. Response paper 20%
3. Project/Research paper (including research structure and bibliography) 50%

Class participation grading:

Grade	Outstanding (A)	Good (B)	Satisfactory (C)	Poor (D)
Leading discussion	Raising very important points for discussion and asking excellent questions	Keeping discussion effectively focused and engaging. Asking good questions	Demonstrating some level of preparation without necessarily being effective in keeping an engaging discussion	Showing poor preparation and Missing the point of the discussion.
In-Class contribution	Reading thoroughly the assigned readings. Discusses views clearly and engages insightfully.	Good grasp of readings. Participating effectively in class discussion	Participating occasionally in class discussion.	Lack of participation in class discussion

Response paper grading

Grade	Outstanding (A)	Good (B)	Satisfactory (C)	Poor (D)
Response paper	Perfect answer to the question showing excellent understanding of the	Answering the question clearly showing good understanding of the	Responding to the question showing moderate understanding and	Submitting a response that does not draw on the readings or reflect an

	topics covered in the readings and points of views of raised	topics covered in the readings and points of views of raised	missing some points of views	understanding of the material

Research paper grading

Grade	Outstanding (A)	Good (B)	Satisfactory (C)	Poor (D)
Topic selection (10%)	Topic is creative, focused, and addresses excellent questions	Topic is focused, and addresses relevant areas of the field in appropriate and interesting ways	Topic is appropriate for the field, but less focused	Topic is far too broad or irrelevant to class material or is so narrow that it is missing the point of assignment
Literature/Sources (20%)	Demonstrates an excellent choice of relevant sources and synthesizes information representing various points of view	Presents detailed information from relevant sources representing various points of view/ approaches	Presents information from relevant sources representing acceptable survey of available sources	Presents information from irrelevant or insufficient sources
Analysis (30%)	Excellent discussion of literature Presenting material in a critical, clear and fluent way. Excellent organization	Organizes relevant evidence effectively to reveal the argument similarities related to topic. Good organization	Demonstrates some relevant evidence to reveal argument but lacks full/ elaborate discussion of material. Adequate organization	Lists evidence that is unrelated to the topic. Analysis is weak, or unclear. Poor organization
Conclusions (20%)	Conclusions are clearly stated and are exceptionally convincing	States a reasonable conclusion based on the analysis in a good	States a general conclusion that is less specific	No conclusion or a vague/ illogical one
Formatting (10%)	Excellent – no errors	Acceptable citation and adherence to format instructions	Shows some inconsistency	Inconsistent style, lacks proper citation

Course schedule:

Introduction and definitions: What is an object and what is a museum

We will explore concepts such as, agency of objects, object value, differences between craft and art, prestige objects, the idea of a exhibiting artifacts. Privet and public ownership of artifacts.

Reading:

Pearce, S., 2017. *Museums, objects, and collections: A cultural study*. Smithsonian Institution. Introduction

S. Dudley, A. J. Barnes, J. Binnie, J. Petrov and J. Walklate (editors) 2011. *The Thing About Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*. Routledge, London.

Why do we collect

We will focus on the desire for collecting and the how the collected material changed though time and across cultures. Learn about the key differences between "collections" and "museums".

Reading:

Pearce, S. and Pearce, S.M., 1997. *Collecting in contemporary practice*. Sage.

The birth of the modern Museum

We will look at history of museums and how the museum as a history-specific institution-which arose in the late 18th and early 19th century in Western Europe- evolved into different types in our current time.

Reading:

Alexander, E.P., Alexander, M. and Decker, J., 2017. *Museums in motion: An introduction to the history and functions of museums*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Simmons, J.E., 2017. History of museums. In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* (pp. 1812-1823). CRC Press.

Museums collecting practices

We will look at museums practices of collecting. What are the political and social factors that shaped such practice, and how contemporary standards and protocols evolved.

Reading:
Conn, S., 2010. *Do museums still need objects?* University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapter 1

ICOM (2004) *Code of Ethics*. http://icom.museum/who-we-are/the-vision/code-of-ethics.html ed. ICOM.

AAM (2012) *Characteristics of Excellence for Us Museums*2013. Washington, DC, AAM. AAM (2000) *Code of Ethics for Museums*. http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/code-of-ethics-for-museums ed. American Association of Museums.

Assessment visit to the Geology Museum

Reading:

Neitzke-Adamo, L., Blandford, A.J., Criscione, J., Olsson, R.K., and Gorder, E., 2018, The Rutgers Geology Museum: America's first geology museum and the past 200 years of geoscience education, in Rosenberg, G.D., and Clary, R.M., eds., *Museums at the Forefront of the History and Philosophy of Geology: History Made, History in the Making*: Geological Society of America Special Paper 535, p. 217–236.

Displaying and narrating

We will examine how museums shape their narratives, and use particular rhetoric

 of display to demonstrate authoritative knowledge and convey certain messages.

Reading:

Karp, I. and S. D. Lavine (editors) 1991 *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.

Hilda, H., 1998 "Museums: From Object to Experience," in Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed., *Aesthetics: The Big Questions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell): 103-115.

Nationalism, colonialism and the message of museums

We will focus on the role played by museums in the practices of nationalism and colonialism. How the museums established in the colonialist period have classified other cultures in relation to "western" culture. How national museum contributed to the nation-state building in the 20th century.

Reading:

Frederick N. Bohrer, 1994 "The Times and Spaces of History: Representation, Assyria, and the British Museum," in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture. Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 197-222.

Annie E. Coombes, 1994"Temples of Empire: The Museum and its Publics," and "Containing the Continent: Ethnographies on Display," in *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994): 109-160.

Crane, S.A., 1997. Memory, distortion, and history in the museum. *History and theory*, *36*(4), pp.44-63.

Museums and the representation of gender and race

We will discuss broader questions of gender, race and museum practices. Looking at the ways in which museums define nations and ethnic groups, and constitute masculine and feminine and

Reading:

John, U., 1996, "How Societies Remember the Past," in *Theorizing Museums. Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, Macdonald and Fyfe, eds., pp.45-65.

Sandell, R., 2003. Museums and the combating of social inequality: roles, responsibilities, resistance. In *Museums, society, inequality* (pp. 23-43). Routledge.

Western Museums and their relations to private collectors and donors

We will discuss controversial issues surrounding such relationships in term of museums accepting artifact and financial donations from private collectors.

Reading:

Watson, P. and Todeschini, C., 2007. *The Medici Conspiracy: The Illicit Journey of Looted Antiquities--From Italy's Tomb Raiders to the World's Greatest Museum*. Public Affairs.

Waxman, S., 2010. *Loot: the battle over the stolen treasures of the ancient world*. Macmillan. Part 2.

Optional visit to the Brooklynn Museum

Ownership and repatriation

Who owns artifacts? We ill particularly look at the complex issue of whether cultural artifacts in Western museums taken during the colonialist periods should remain or be returned to their place of origin.

Reading:

Conn, S., 2010. *Do museums still need objects?* University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapter 2

Looted artifacts and legal complications

We look at case studies of looted artifacts that made their way through illicit trafficking to prestigious museums. We will also examine recent looting of archeological sites in the Middle East.

Reading:

Felch, J. and Frammolino, R., 2011. *Chasing Aphrodite: the hunt for looted antiquities at the world's richest museum*. HMH. Part III

Steele IV, C.D., 1999. The Morgantina Treasure: Italy's Quest for Repatriation of Looted Artifacts. *Suffolk Transnat'l L. Rev.*, *23*.

Community engagement and a new public message

Reading:

K. Hudson, 1975 *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought*. Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.

Karp, I., C. M. Kreamer and S. D. Levine (editors) (1992) *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.

MacDonald, S., 2016. University museums and the public: the case of the Petrie Museum. In *Archaeological Displays and the Public* (pp. 67-86). Routledge.

Students presentations

Academic Honesty: Please read and abide by the University's policy on academic honesty Please take a note of Rutgers rules on plagiarism: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/

Papers be monitored through turnitin.com. Cheating and plagiarism have very serious consequences. If you are caught plagiarizing you will fail this class and proceedings will be initiated against you on the college and/or university level.

Attendance Policy: I expect all students to attend class regularly. You will, however, be excused for religious obligations, medical and family emergencies upon notification. Please use the University absence reporting websitehttps://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/
<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. More serious problems should be brought to my attention face-to-face or through an email.
If you miss more than one class without being excused, your participation grade will suffer. Students with more than 3 absences risk failing this course.
Disability: If you have a disability that will require special attention, please see me during the first week of class in order to make arrangements.
Internet Sources: Wikipedia and other internet sources are obviously not acceptable for citation. If you would like to use an internet source, you must run it by me first. On the other hand, I encourage you to use JSTOR and other scholarly electronic databases available on the library server.

Disclaimer: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.