TOPICS IN CHAPS (AH 441)

The Politics of Heritage

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1. Course description

Your home, the pyramids of Giza, grandmother’s Pierogi recipe, the 9/11 memorials, your favorite National Park, and artworks looted by Nazis. What do all these things have in common? They are all cultural heritage, and they are all the consequence of a political context.

Cultural heritage is an entanglement of discourses and experiences that mediate the past in the present, and give meaning to our existence as socialized beings. Heritage is both material and immaterial, and is prompted by a wide range of multi-temporal devices: objects and memories, buildings and landscapes, peoples’ traditions, and our own bodies. Notions of heritage became central in the construction of the Western world, particularly in the articulation of modern nation-states since the 19th century. Heritage—whether materialized in archaeological artifacts and urbanism, or expressed in foodways, performative arts or any other cultural form—was assumed as the language that expressed peoples’ identities, and entitled nation-states to social and political borders. Because of its associations with power, modernity and the West, heritage has been always an arena for social struggles. Defining heritage is a contested process that brings into confront different conceptions of identity and community, as well as different positionalities regarding economics, development, environmental sustainability, authenticity, ethics, and law.

Over this course, we will discuss the history of heritage as a concept, and investigate the ways heritage is constructed, negotiated, and perceived in the contemporary world. We will critically examine cultural heritage, and how its professionals—e.g. anthropologists, archaeologists, art historians, museum professionals, architects—and stakeholders engage in the process of defining heritage. We will examine key issues in the work heritage such as the notions of authenticity, ownership, risk, protection, and responsibility. The course will also provide a critical overview of the theories and methodologies available to heritage professionals, and we will discuss major case-studies pertaining each week’s theme.

2. Course objectives

By the end of the course, students may be able to recognize that heritage is a contested domain in which professionals, stakeholders, and communities have diverse, often conflictive political positionalities. The course has three main learning goals:

- To introduce the concept of cultural heritage, how it differs from history, and how it is articulated in the contemporary world;
• To critically examine the theories and methods that shape the discourses and experiences of cultural heritage;
• To address issues of power and inequality in the work of heritage, and engage critically the concerns of disadvantaged communities.

3. Course texts and readings

The readings required for this semester can be also found at the library and at major online retailers. A number of other readings, including short articles and media materials will be provided online.

4. Course requirements and assessment

Class meetings will have three main components: lecture, discussion of readings, and scheduled presentations. All students are required to participate in class and engage with the readings and other materials. This will be evaluated in different ways:

• Class Participation: 20%, 100 points
• Presentation: 30%, 100 points
• Final Paper: 50%, 100 points

Class participation: This course requires full and active participation of all students, who are expected to complete all required readings each week prior to class meetings and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. Students will be evaluated on the quality of the contributions. Class attendance is crucial. Students are allowed up to three non-justified absences, but no more than three. The final letter grade will be affected negatively by additional absences not justified with formal documentation (e.g. health reasons). The instructor will provide feedback on participation during the 5th week of classes to let the students know what to improve on.

Presentation: Each student will select, and prepare a five-minute oral presentation to the class about a UNESCO World Heritage Site, based on materials assigned to class and other online resources. Each presentation will include a brief description of the site and an examination of the criteria behind its classification. Presenters will analyze the contemporary social and political context of the site, its current conservation problems, and lead a discussion about the motivations and consequences of the site’s inclusion in the UNESCO list. The instructor will schedule the presentations, which will occur during the class meetings starting on the 6th week. The rest of the class must take notes and engage in the discussion.

Final paper: Students will write a 10-page research paper (approximately 2800 words) on a subject of their preference, as long as it is related to the course themes. Students must relate the chosen topics to the readings and to critical heritage and preservation issues. It is due during the finals week. The details of this assignment will be discussed in advance, and the students must discuss their chosen subject with the instructor before starting their project.
Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-87</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-77</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
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General Grading Detail for Assignments and Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent. Well-written, clearly communicated, demonstrates a clear understanding of material and shows critical and creative thinking, going beyond critique. For participation, consistently strong and productive contributions with creative insights. Always prepared for discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/B+</td>
<td>Good to very good. Fulfilled the assignment, with a few minor improvements suggested. Shows understanding that goes beyond simple definitions. For participation, generally strong and productive contributions. Consistently prepared for discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Basically completed the assignment as required, but little more. General understanding demonstrated. For participation, some substantive contributions, but little more than minimum expectations met. Occasional lateness, missed class, or lack of participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/D</td>
<td>Content missing and limited demonstration of understanding. Consistently lacking in participation. Missed several class meetings without justification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Missing significant content or did not follow guidelines. Major omissions and no understanding demonstrated. Missed many class meetings without justification.</td>
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</tbody>
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5. Course policies

It is strongly advisable for students to come to office hours, see the instructor after class, or make an appointment to meet if there are any questions, ideas, concerns, or difficulties to discuss. E-mail is good for logistical issues such as making appointments, but it is much better to discuss in person. The use of electronic devices (except laptops and tablets) is not allowed in classroom.

6. Plagiarism and academic honesty

In this course students are individually responsible for doing the assigned readings, and completing all assignments autonomously. Any students caught in violation of this policy will be assigned an “F” in the course and subject to further
penalties as prescribed by the University. Check the University policies on: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu

7. Course schedule

Week 1

INTRODUCTION

We will look at the syllabus in the first class meeting, and talk about the course goals and expectations. In our first week, we will discuss definitions of heritage, how heritage is a politically contextualized concept.

Harrison, Rodney

Brundage, W. Fitzhugh

Fortin, Jacey

Joyce, Rosemary

Meeks, Stephanie

Sinyangwe, Samuel

Williamson, Kevin D.
Week 2

HISTORY AND NATIONALISM

We will examine the differences between heritage and history, discuss the politics behind the construction of ideas of the past, and the role of those notions in contemporary societies.

Allen, Richard

Lowenthal, David

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph

Week 3

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

We will discuss the role and politics of memory, using Connerton’s 2009 book as a starting point. I will put this book in context in relation to his previous publication How Societies Remember, 1989.

Connerton, Paul

Week 4

UNESCO AND THE UNIVERSAL

We will discuss how heritage is an international language, and how certain paradigms—values, practices and discourses of heritage—became hegemonic.

Donnachie, Ian

Meskell, Lynn

Winter, Tim

UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/
UNESCO Criteria for World Heritage Listing
http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Week 5

LOCAL HERITAGE AND COUNTER-HEGEMONIC DISCOURSES

Our sixth week will be devoted to the analysis of alternatives to the international paradigms of heritage, and their limitations. Counter-hegemonic heritage may, in some cases, challenge the fabric of modernity.

Hart, Siobhan and Elizabeth S. Chilton

Hodder, Ian

LaSalle, Marina
2010 Community Collaboration and Other Good Intentions. Archaeologies 6(3):401-422.

Merrill, Samuel

Week 6

COMMONS AND PROPERTY

Heritage is always about ownership and stewardship. This week we will examine how these notions are constructed and contested, focusing on issues of intellectual property, and on the economic value of heritage.

Alonso González, Pablo

Pullman, Daryl and Laura Arbor

Silberman, Neil Asher
2013 Discourses of Development: Narratives of Cultural Heritage as an Economic Resource. In Heritage and Tourism: Place, Encounter, Engagement,
OWNERSHIP AND REPATRIATION

We will discuss how cultural heritage can be an instrument of domination and oppression by looking at three contexts: European colonialism, Native America, and the Second World War. We will then examine how certain practices are being contested, and how people come to terms with them in the realm of justice.


NATURE AND CULTURE

We will examine how the border between “natural” and “cultural” heritage is constructed and contested. We will discuss several key examples, and analyze the potential impact of those notions in contemporary societies.


Week 9

**SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

*This week’s discussion will revolve around the role of heritage in the development of sustainable communities, with focus on urban areas. We will also pay attention to the connections of heritage to global issues such as climate change, and economic crises.*

De Cesari, Chiara and Michael Herzfeld

James, Paul

Labadi, Sophia and Peter G. Gould

*Neighborhood Heritage & Sustainability Project*
[https://sustainableneighborhood.org](https://sustainableneighborhood.org)

Week 10

**MUSEUMS AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES**

*We will critically examine the history of museums and conservation practices. We will focus on issues of stewardship, access and preservation.*

Appiah, Kwame Anthony

Minder, Raphael

Saiz-Jiménez, Soledad Cuezva, Valme Jurado, Angel Fernandez-Cortes, Estefanía Porca, David Benavente, Juan C. Cañaveras, Sergio Sanchez-Moral

Schubert, Karsten
Week 11

**HERITAGE AS ‘CULTURE OF EXPERTISE’**

We will examine the tensions between counter-hegemonic discourses of heritage, and the increasing specialization of its professionals and practices. We will look at how heritage is becoming a “culture of expertise”, and how communities and professionals are dealing with it.

Holmes, Douglas and George Marcus

Rico, Trinidad

Thornton, Sarah

Week 12

**HERITAGE, VIOLENCE AND THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

*Cultural heritage is a contentious realm, and it is often linked to organized, state-sponsored violence. Over this week, we will look at how heritage takes part in violent contexts, how people try to mitigate the impacts of violence on heritage, and how heritage can be used to counteract violence.*

González-Ruibal, Alfredo and Martin Hall

Hamilakis, Yannis

Howe, Zoe

1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/400

Week 13
DIFFICULT HERITAGE

Scholars and professionals have been challenging the notion of “positive” in heritage. This week we will put that in context, and discuss the manifold impacts of traumatic events in the contemporary landscape.

Mcdonald, Sharon

Samuels, Joshua

Sturken, Marita

Week 14
UNRULY HERITAGE

In our final week, we will return to key ideas used in international, paradigmatic discourses on heritage such as “tradition”, “legacy”, and “risk”. We will examine them with a focus on processes that are not fully determined by human agency, and discuss how their “unruly” character may facilitate counter-hegemonic practices.

Isaksen, Karoline Kevellestad

Pétursdóttir, Þóra

Rico, Trinidad

Week 15
CONCLUSION