

Anthropology 6202.80/Museum Studies 6702.80 Museums and the Public: Exhibiting Culture

May 20- June 26, 2013

Monday and Wednesday 2:20-4:30

Classroom: National Museum of Natural History, Room 339 (Anthropology [Rose] Seminar Room).

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class introduces students to the wide range of problems, possibilities, and choices that are part of the cultural landscape of how museums interact with their audiences through public programs. Students will have an opportunity to consider the social issues that museums face as well as the solutions chosen by specific institutions as they engage both national and local audiences. The course addresses the museum's power to represent society and social identity through selective exhibiting and collecting.

When visitors enter a museum they bring their own perspectives and expectations with them. Their experience in the museum is channeled through personal experience, cultural values, and perceptual skills learned through membership in multiple communities. In recent years museums have seriously reassessed their objectives and have sought a new level of community involvement, but achieved with varying levels of success. For the museum and the public, terms like 'community engagement' and 'multiculturalism,' continue to be debated. Rather than setting on the sidelines, many museums have become active participants in the discussions that have their basis in questions of power, authority, and inclusiveness.

The class will define the perspectives that derive from a range of cultural institutions including community centers, natural history museums, history museums, and art museums. Questions raised by the class include: How do museums and other cultural institutions represent and define peoples and cultures? Who should hold the authority to present "others"? Are community-centered museums satisfying the needs and interests of their audiences? How are audience issues to be considered in the exhibit planning process?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this seminar students will be able to:

- 1). Develop a solid understanding of the records associated with museum collections;
- 2). Understand ethical issues of authenticity, cultural equity and the public trust as they affect museum scholarship and exhibition;
- 3). Lay a foundation for critical thinking in the planning and evaluation of museum exhibitions and programs.

- 4). Create strategies and programming content that incorporates ideas supporting community engagement and audience diversity.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1). Readings are assigned from various sources, provided to students at the beginning of class. See schedule below and course bibliography for specifics.
- 2). Project 1: The class will work as a team to assess one or more museum exhibitions using the framework developed by Beverly Sorell. Each student will be asked to write a personal assessment of the exhibitions, not to exceed three pages (**due June 5th**).
- 3). An in-class essay quiz on the readings will take place in the second half of the course.
- 4). Project 2: In a final project paper (**due June 26th**) each student is asked to design a strategy and a working program in the form of a proposal that explicitly addresses community engagement while also reflecting critically on the pitfalls inherently contained within the selected strategy. The paper should discuss two or more themes covered in the readings and lectures. Considering that community engagement, or dialogue, is as much about a museum's style and philosophy, the paper should consider the broader changes in institutional approach that might be necessary if the proposed program is to work. Each student will be asked to give a brief presentation on their final paper (8-20 pages total).
- 4). Class participation counts for 20% of the overall grade, museum critique 20%, quiz 15%, final presentation and project 45%.

LECTURE THEMES

- The place of Museums in Contemporary Society—A brief history of museums in the 20th century with a focus on changes in objectives and orientation. What are the issues fueling change? Where do the traditional goals of the museum fit within the current debate?
- Defining the audience—A review of what we know about the visiting public and the realities of who is included, who wants to be included, and who is excluded. Who and what is a community? Methods of exhibition critique.
- Strategies for Community Involvement—Specific examples of how museums are encouraging and building involvement, including outreach and inreach efforts.
- Diversity and the Struggle for Representation—The creation of local and national efforts that include the museum within much broader trends, including the politics of representation. Some recent examples of challenges and their resolution will be discussed.

- Museums and International Issues—Museums and representation in a post-colonial world. The interplay between indigenous rights and the creation of national identities, including the example of reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Australia. Other examples are reviewed from Mongolia, Brazil, and the U.S.
- Indigenous Perspectives and the Post-Modern Museum--The cases of the Maori Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian. Also discussed are issues surrounding repatriation of human remains and cultural patrimony.
- Converting good ideas into better proposals.

SCHEDULE

Lectures are held in the Anthropology Seminar Room (Rose Room), # 339, National Museum of Natural History

M	May 20	Introduction; Museums in Society, the Social Museum-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Duncan, From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London, in <i>Civilizing Rituals</i>. Issues of identity, representation, and power-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Karp, Civil Society and Social Identity, in <i>Museums and Communities</i>
W	May 22	Strategies for Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandell, Museums and the Combating of Social Inequality • Kadoyama, Practicing Civic Engagement • RCMG, Small Museums and Social Inclusion Exhibition Critique Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serrell, <i>Judging Exhibitions: A Framework for Assessing Excellence</i>
M	May 27	Memorial Day—no class
W	May 29	Class visit to exhibition
M	June 3	Discussion and analysis of exhibition Museums and the Post-Colonial World— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kreps, <i>Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums...</i> ▪ Casey, Museums as Agents for Social and Political Change
W	June 5	Museums and Repatriation-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferguson, Repatriation at the Pueblo of Zuni • Watkins, Yours, Mine, or Ours?
M	June 10	Guest lecture—Randi Korn--audience research (1st half of class) The Global and the Local—Ecomuseums, Diaspora, Globalization, and Indigenous Museology

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simpson, Native Amer. Museums and Cultural Centres, in <i>Making Representations</i>. Discussion of Project 1
W	June 12	The Global and the Local—continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • van den Bosch, <i>Museums: Constructing a Public Culture in the Global Age</i> • Nederveen Pieterse, Multiculturalism and Museums • Mozaffari, Modernity and Identity
M	June 17	Guest lecture—Dr. Mary Jo Arnoldi—building the <i>African Voices</i> exhibit (1st half of class) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arnoldi, Reflections on “African Voices” Developing a solid proposal—discussion of what makes a good proposal
W	June 19	The Politics of Representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harris, 1995, <i>Museums and Controversy</i> The role of collections--how objects represent, material culture studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gurian, What’s the object of this Exercise • Tegomoh, Cultural Entrepreneurs
M	June 24	Follow-up topics suggested through discussions—Strategies for Engagement, Part II, controversies, race, other topics?
W	June 26	Final presentations—Project 2 Summary

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

SECURITY

In the case of an emergency, the Smithsonian warning system will give instructions about sheltering in place or evacuation. If evacuation is called, the class will rendezvous on the mall between the Natural History Museum and the Smithsonian Castle, unless advised otherwise by security.