

CAPILANO UNIVERSITY COURSE OUTLINES		
TERM: FALL 2015	COURSE NO: ART HISTORY 410	
INSTRUCTOR:	COURSE NAME: MUSEUMS AND COLLECTING: THE RHETORICS AND RITUALS OF DISPLAY	
OFFICE: LOCAL: E-MAIL:	SECTION NO(S):	CREDITS: 3
OFFICE HOURS:		

COURSE FORMAT:

Three hours of class time, plus an additional hour delivered through on-line or other activities (possible field trip, etc.) for a 15 week semester, which includes two weeks for final exams.

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

45 credits of 100-level or higher coursework including 6 credits of 100 or 200-level AHIS.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

AHIS 410 is an in-depth look at how museums and galleries structure perceptions of art and function as public spaces. We will examine a number of case studies to understand the diversity of practices and institutions. How do the practices of collecting, classification, and display determine how we see or what we know? Politics, knowledge formation, colonialism, gender, and class issues all play roles in how museums and galleries display work or how individuals respond to or use their collections. How do galleries and museums categorize and exhibit art, rare specimens, technological objects, and cultural artifacts? This course will examine the rhetorics and rituals of display, from early cabinets of curiosity to natural history museums, from ethnographic collections to anatomical wax museums, from memorial museums to contemporary art museums. How have collectors and museums promoted themselves or attempted to attract more diverse audiences? How have digital technologies changed conventions of archiving, display, and the viewing audience? How has museum architecture or the types of exhibits changed? Why has there recently been a museum building boom?

The material in the course is presented as both a series of power point lectures (with visual examples) and in-depth class discussions of the readings. Be prepared to contribute to or lead group discussions of the weekly readings.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- demonstrate a broad understanding of how objects are collected, classified, and displayed by institutions
- use the specialized vocabulary they have learned to describe and interpret collecting practices and to expose and critique the rhetorics and rituals of display and the missions and values of museums
- be able to put the above into practice through written work, including an exam and a final project.

COURSE WEBSITE:

A Moodle site accompanies the class and students are expected to check it regularly for messages, assignments, relevant links and suggestions for further readings. <http://moodle.capilanou.ca>

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Karp, Ivan, and Steven D. Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

McLellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

ADDITIONAL READING:

Readings will be listed on the Moodle site and will either be from your textbook (TXT), posted on the Moodle site as links, or copies will be put on 3-hour reserve at the library (RES).

COURSE CONTENT:**Week 1 Introduction to Museums Part 1 Setting the Scene**

What is a museum? How do we make sense of, and impose order on, the world of objects? How do we select, categorize, and label *things*? What is the role of the museum and how has it changed over time as it went from being a princely collection to a public institution? What are the differences between private museums and state-run museums? What do practices of collecting and display tell us about nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, sexism, racism, technology and progress? What is included and excluded? How do museums assert authority or internalize their value systems?

Assignment for next class: Bring an object which you think conveys something about you and be prepared to discuss your choice.

Week 2 Introduction to Museums Part 2 Collecting and Display: *Wunderkammern* and Cabinets of Curiosity

Prior to public collections there were private ones. What kinds of ideologies are at work in the classification systems of collections? We all possess things; what do we think they say about us? Collecting and display practices say a great deal about social, political, psychological, and economic contexts. The wealthy elite of the past assembled diverse collections that not only satisfied their curiosity about the natural world, but also enhanced their status within those particular groups privileged enough to see their curiosity cabinets or *wunderkammern*.

They frequently employed artists to document their collections and printed catalogues that advertised their holdings to a broader public.

Week 3 The Natural History Museum, the Anatomical Museum, and The Wax Museum

How have natural scientists categorized fossils, or species, or botanical specimens given the status of knowledge in their time period? What is the role of taxidermy or dioramas in the natural history museum and how do we understand human/animal relations based on display specimens of wild or exotic species?

The body as exhibit has a long history. We will examine how anatomical specimens have been collected, preserved, and displayed, with examples from the Dutch and Italian Baroque periods and a contemporary example that was recently featured in Vancouver. How have these specimens served to influence medical knowledge and vice versa?

Case Studies: Frederik Ruysch, La Specola, Body Worlds

Whether you find the wax museum fascinating or creepy, it is an interesting cultural phenomenon. We will deal particularly with Madame Tussaud.

Week 4 Colonialism, Anthropology, and Ethnographic Collections

The collecting of objects from other cultures and “living displays” of indigenous peoples of colonized countries connect issues of race, nationalism, and imperialism in complex ways. Status and power were often displayed through the “collection” of exotic animals or dwarves in European courts. Categories of scientific “normalcy” and “deviance” are at work in circuses or sideshow exhibits. World’s Fairs have historically put a particular country’s accomplishments on display for an international audience. We will examine the contestation over ownership and issues of post-colonial repatriation in relation to collections housed in the British Museum and the Museum of Anthropology (MOA), University of British Columbia. How have various cultures sought to have objects repatriated or sought restitution?

Week 5 The Representation and Display of Other Cultures

We will look at some case studies of Canadian exhibitions that provoked controversy and how these crises reshaped museum practice both in Canada and in other countries.

Week 6 IN-CLASS MIDTERM**Week 7 Memorial Museums**

In terms of memorial museums, an example of an institution with the mandate “never forget” would be the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., but of course there are many such museums around the world. How do viewers deal collectively with historical trauma and its remembrance? Case studies will include South Africa. How can museums represent concepts that are both abstract and democratic (freedom, justice, equality)?

Assignment for next class: Bring an object you think should be included in a museum of the future.

Week 8 Science and Technology Museums

What do these institutions tell us about definitions of “progress” or the future at particular historical moments? How does progress connect with industry, nationalism, and everyday life?

Week 9 The Modern Art Museum: History, Values, and Responses to Criticism

There are entire institutional and intellectual mechanisms at work to define an object as “art.” What do collecting practices tell us about inclusion and exclusion of particular artists, types of art, and social minorities? How have museums thus created particular worldviews or perpetuated negative stereotypes? How are modern art museums cultural citadels, elitist institutions, or democratic ones?

How have institutions made connections between modern European art and the art of Africa or First Nations peoples? What are the stereotypes or assumptions at work in such analogies? Who determines that something is a “masterpiece”? What is the aura of the original and how does it appeal to people? What about the status of the reproduction, or the “fake”? How are concepts of “authenticity” in conflict with the contemporary practices of aboriginal artists?

The exclusionary practices of museums and their supporters have been the subject of criticism from diverse groups: feminist artists, African-American artists, art historians, etc. What kind of critiques have groups such as the Guerrilla Girls launched and how have museums responded? How have some artists actively intervened in critiques of the museum, either from outside it, or by utilizing existing collections and “reframing” them? How are museums responding to criticisms? How are they collaborating with diverse communities or becoming more interactive and less elitist?

Week 10 Museums in Transition: “The Public” New Strategies, Diversification, Digitization, and Outreach

What is the relationship between art and commerce when it comes to museums? How have museums changed their practices in light of an altered economy? How have museums dealt with advanced capitalism, declining public funding, rising costs, and corporate sponsorship? How have they attempted to engage a broader public and boost attendance and what are the debates about doing so with regard to their stated missions and values? How have the types of exhibitions changed (permanent, temporary, blockbuster, etc.) and what does this mean in terms of what art is, how art is defined, and who the public for art is? How has the Internet changed the rhetorics and rituals of presentation?

Week 11 Nationalism, and Globalization, Branding, and the Museum as Entertainment

How do we explain the phenomenon of “starchitects” building new museums or the franchise aspect of the museum “brand”? How can we explain the museum building boom? How have the types of experiences offered by museums expanded? How has their architecture changed public perceptions of them? How has globalization expanded our understanding and awareness of other cultures and their artifacts and art?

Week 12 Presentations of Final Projects

Week 13 Presentations of Final Projects

Week 14 & 15 FINAL EXAM PERIOD – No Exam, but Final Projects due in Week 14

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

All students are required to complete 1 short written work, a midterm exam in class, and the final project (the project must also be presented to the class). Together these will measure how well the learning outcomes are being achieved.

EVALUATION PROFILE:

Participation and Group Work	10%
Research Essay	30%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Project (25% content, 5% presentation)	30%

Total	100%

GRADE PROFILE:

A+ = 90 - 100%	B+ = 77 - 79%	C+ = 67 - 69%	D = 50 - 59%
A = 85 - 89	B = 73 - 76	C = 63 - 66	F = 0 - 49
A- = 80 - 84	B- = 70 - 72	C- = 60 - 62	

OPERATIONAL DETAILS:

Capilano University has policies on Academic Appeals (including appeal of final grade), Student Conduct, Cheating and Plagiarism, Academic Probation and other educational issues. These and other policies are available on the University website.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken. Failure to attend classes regularly will inevitably result in poor grades.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will be penalized 2 points per week, unless an extension is given. This must be requested in advance and is granted only under exceptional circumstances, usually requiring a doctor's certificate.

Missed Exams: Make-up tests are given at the discretion of the instructor. They are generally given only in medical emergencies or severe personal crisis. Students should be prepared to provide proof of inability to write the test on the scheduled date (e.g. letter from doctor).

English Usage: It is the responsibility of students to proof-read all written work for any grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors. Marks will be deducted for incorrect grammar and spelling in written assignments.

Incomplete Grades: Given at the discretion of the instructor. Generally given only in medical emergencies or severe personal crises.

Electronic Devices: No personal electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, etc...) may be used during an examination. During an exam, turn off all cell phones and remove them from the desk. The use of laptops is permitted in class only for the purposes of taking notes.

Emergency Procedures: Students are expected to familiarise themselves with the emergency procedures posted on the wall of the classroom.