



ARTS 370: MUSEUMS

Professor Elizabeth Marlowe
emarlowe@colgate.edu
228-6098

office hours:
W, 2-3 p.m. &
Th, noon-1 p.m.

DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This course will explore the role played by museums in shaping our knowledge of the past, forging national identity, and constructing Others. We will consider how choices concerning architectural and exhibition design shape the narrative and judgments that museums convey about their collections, how they help museums to justify their right to own and present the patrimony of other cultures, and how they manipulate the experience of the visitor. We will consider some of the debates that have been aired over the years about what kinds of objects belong in museums (e.g. ones that speak to universal ideals of aesthetic beauty or ones that offer insight into specific historical moments?) and some of the challenges that recent trends in contemporary art have posed to the “cultural logic” of the museum. We will also explore the ways that museums have responded to these various criticisms and challenges, and consider whether and how the museum can itself participate in institutional critique.

READINGS

Required textbooks:

- Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
- Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, *Grasping the World. The Idea of the Museum* (London: Ashgate, 2004).
- additional readings will be posted on Moodle

Please note: this course is not about me teaching you facts. It is about our shared exploration of a range of complex issues that we will get at through a set of readings, which will need to be analyzed, unpacked and thoughtfully debated in class. Therefore, your primary responsibility in this course is to be an active, engaged participant in our discussions of the readings. **IF YOU ARE NOT THE KIND OF STUDENT WHO KEEPS UP WITH COURSE READINGS ON A DAILY BASIS, PLEASE DO NOT TAKE THIS CLASS.** It would be a frustrating experience for both of us.

ASSIGNMENTS

Your major assignment for this class will be to design a small exhibit (10-15 objects) for the Clifford Gallery. Your exhibit can focus on any theme you like, and you may include in it any objects you like (the Mona Lisa, the beard of Gengis Khan, a dissected beetle, etc). You will design the look and layout of the exhibit (wall color, partitions, cases, lighting), and write up an introductory wall text and labels for each of the objects. Your final paper will consist of these plus a five- to ten-page introspective essay about why you chose the topic you chose, what you hope your audience will get out of the exhibit, how your layout was meant to foster that learning, how the exhibit relates to the themes and readings in our course, and what you learned in the process. You will also give two presentations to the class on your exhibit, one in October (to present your preliminary ideas and get feedback on them) and one at the end of the semester. Please plan to take advantage of the expanded services of the Colgate Writing Center, which now offers extensive training in how to give public presentations. **SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT WITH THEM NOW**, before their calendar fills up.

As soon as possible, please read Lyndel King and Janet Marstine, “The University Museum and Gallery: a Site for Institutional Critique and a Focus of the Curriculum” (on Moodle). This will help you think about what kinds of topics your exhibition could address. Please note that while we won’t be discussing this essay in class, it is required reading for the course.

*Written work turned in after the due date will not be graded unless an extension has been granted **in advance**.*

There will also be a final exam; it is currently scheduled for Friday, December 17.

COURSE COMPONENTS

- A) Citizenship (participation, initiative, enthusiasm, respect for peers), 20%
- B) Midterm Presentation, 15%
- C) Final Presentation, 25%
- D) Final Paper, 25%
- E) Final Exam, 15%

TOPICS AND READINGS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- T, Aug 31 **What is a Museum?**
- James Cuno, “The Object of Art Museums,” in Cuno, ed., *Whose Muse? Art Museums and the Public Trust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 49-75
 - <http://www.aam-us.org/aboutmuseums/whatis.cfm>
- Th, Sept 2 **Ideals and Missions**
- McClellan, 13-52
 - “Night at the Museum”: please watch the first 30 minutes of this film, available on-demand from Amazon.com for \$2.99, and take careful notes: what stereotypes about museums does this movie reinforce? Be specific.
- T, Sept 7 **Museum Architecture: the Enlightenment to Pompidou**
- McClellan 53-84
- Th, Sept 9 **Museum Architecture: Pompidou to MoMA**
- McClellan 84-106
 - Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: an Iconographic Analysis,” in Preziosi and Farago, 483 -500.
- T, Sept 14 **The Museum and the Nation**
- Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* (1980), 448-69 (on Moodle).
 - Annie E. Coombes, “Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities,” in Preziosi and Farago, 278-98.
 - Eric Gable, “How We Study History Museums: or Cultural Studies at Monticello,” in Janet Marstine, *New Museum Theory and Practice* (Blackwell: Malden, 2006) 109-28 (on Moodle).
- Th, Sept 16 **The Colonized Other**
- Timothy Mitchell, “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Other,” in Preziosi and Farago, 442-61.
 - Craig Clunas, “China in Britain: The Imperial Collections,” in Preziosi and Farago, 461-72.
- T, Sept 21 **Other Others**

- James Clifford, “Histories of the Tribal and the Modern,” in Preziosi and Farago, 636-52.
- Susan Vogel, “Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion,” in Preziosi and Farago, 653-62.
- Christa Clarke, “From Theory to Practice: Exhibiting African Art in the Twenty-first Century,” in McLellan, *Art and Its Publics*, 165-84 (on Moodle)

Th, Sept 23 **Collecting, Classifying and Display**

- McClellan 107-154

T, Sept 28 **Resonance or Wonder?**

- Patricia Mainardi, “Postmodern History at the Musée d’Orsay,” *October* 41 (1987), 31-51 (on JSTOR).
- Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” <http://www.arthist.umn.edu/classes/ah3401/museum/readings/greenblatt.pdf>

Th, Sept 30 **no class**

T, Oct 5 **Exhibition Design**

- Victoria Newhouse, “Placing Art” and “Jackson Pollock. How Installation can Affect Modern Art” in *Art and the Power of Placement* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005) (on Moodle).

Th, Oct 7 **Postmodern Art in the Museum**

- Rosalind Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” in Preziosi and Farago, 600-14.
- Case Study: Marina Abramovic at MoMA: find three critical (i.e. analytical, not simply descriptive) articles about this recent exhibit. Read them, summarize their main arguments in bullet points, and be prepared to discuss your notes and turn them in.

T, Oct 12 **FALL BREAK**

Th, Oct 14 **Midterm Exhibit presentations**

T, Oct 19 **Midterm Exhibit presentations**

Th, Oct 21 **Midterm Exhibit presentations**

T, Oct 26 **Midterm Exhibit presentations**

Th, Oct 28 **Midterm Exhibit presentations**

T, Nov 2 **The Museum Public**

- McClellan, 155-92

Th, Nov 4 **Commercialism**

- McClellan, 193-232
- T, Nov 9 **Restitution**
- McClellan, 233-68
- Th, Nov 11 **The Elgin Marbles and the Benin Bronzes**
- Ekpo Eyo, “Repatriation of Cultural Heritage: The African Experience,” in *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity* (London and New York, 1994), 330-51.
 - Yannis Hamilakis “Stories from Exile: Fragments from the Cultural Biography of the Parthenon (or ‘Elgin’) Marbles,” *World Archaeology* 31 (1999), 303-20.
- T, Nov 16 **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act**
- Film: “Science or Sacrilege? Native Americans, Archaeology and the Law”
 - Moira Simpson, “Cultural Reflections,” in Preziosi and Farago, 628-636
- Th, Nov 18 **National Museum of the American Indian: A New Paradigm?**
- <http://www.nmai.si.edu/>
 - “Review Roundtable: The National Museum of the American Indian,” *The Public Historian*, v. 28.2, Spring, 2006, 46-90 (all the articles in this section) (on JSTOR)
- T, Nov 23 **Universal Museum?**
- Neil MacGregor, “The Whole World in our Hands,” *The Guardian*, July 24, 2004.
 - M. O’Neill, “Enlightenment museums: universal or merely global?” *Museum and Society* 2.3 (November, 2004), 192-202.
 - Sharon Waxman, “How did that Vase Wind Up in the Metropolitan?” *New York Times*, December 1, 2008.
- Th, Nov. 25 **THANKSGIVING**
- T, Nov 30 **Exhibit presentations**
- Th, Dec 2 **Exhibit presentations**
- T, Dec 7 **Exhibit presentations**
- Th, Dec 9 **Exhibit presentations**
- FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 17**