MUSEUM STUDIES IN LONDON

Instructor
Joshua White

Course number
ULF ARTHS 111 (also cross-listed as ANTH 111)

Aims and Objectives
This course is designed to introduce contemporary theories and practices of museology, the study of museums and their collections. Using London's museums of international and local importance as specific examples, we will learn how to think about the history of museums, how collections evolve, the role of individual collectors, the power of curators, the impact of decolonization and globalization, the specific character of temporary exhibitions and the significant relationship between museums and society as a whole.

Students on the course will also learn to think about the role of material and visual culture and its value to the entire community.

The course will take the class on ten museum visits, encompassing displays of art, archaeology, decorative arts and design, ethnography, history, medicine and science. Looking at each example in detail, you will learn how to identify and comprehend strategies of display and interpretation and the increasing emphasis on education. Most importantly, the course is structured to teach a critical awareness of the public role that museums play and how they respond to their audiences.

Learning Outcomes
• An appreciation of the role of museums in contemporary culture and society
• Knowledge of London's diverse museums and their place in the cultural life of the city.
• Critical tools to interpret museum collections, objects and the process of curating
• Identifying London's historic role in collecting and research
• The ability to explore such critical terms as 'post-modernism', 'knowledge', 'culture', 'interpretation', 'post-colonisation' and 'history'.
• Understanding the practices and ethical responsibilities of museums

Method of Study
A mixture of lectures, seminars, museum visits, private study and written papers.

Museum visits
We will visit ten individual museums ranging from national collections of international standing to those that relate more directly to London life and history. Details of each visit will be given in the preceding week as the class must be divided up in order to facilitate ease of access to what at times may be quite small spaces. The destination each week is listed below in the handbook.

Seminars
Four scheduled seminars during the semester will allow the class to read some set texts together as a foundation and starting point for a deep analysis of the key issues concerning museums in their role as guardians of public collections.
Private study
This will form an important element in the successful completion of this course. Research will be required for the production of written work. Independent reading and museum visits will support discussions in seminars. You are encouraged to use the opportunity of study in London and any European travel to visit museums privately and draw on this experience in your written work and contributions in class.

Class Times

Each Tuesday with the exception of the half-term break.
On weeks you are scheduled to visit a museum the class will be divided into three groups and assigned the times they are to meet Joshua White.
At 6.30pm the class will reassemble to review the day’s visit for an hour in the Lecture Theatre.

On the four Tuesdays set aside for seminars, the class will be divided into two and meet Joshua either in the morning or afternoon at the following times:
9.30am -12.30pm
2pm – 5pm

During these seminars, there will be a break at the mid-way point.

Office Hours

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Attendance Policy
Program policy dictates that only two absences will be permitted. Attendance will be recorded at each meeting.

Class Etiquette
Students should aim to participate fully in each class. Please arrive on time for all classes to avoid disruption for your classmates. Turn off your cell phones, and do not use laptops in class for anything other than class work. Please remember also to keep your cell phones turned off during visits to individual museums.

Assessment
Assessment is in three parts:

ARTEFACT ANALYSIS RESEARCH PAPER 1: (20% OF FINAL GRADE)
Due: Week 4, Tuesday 15 September

Format
A written paper, 800-1000 word limit with supporting visual material (sketches, drawings, photographs, photocopies of images in books etc) looking in detail at one object taken from a museum we have visited or a collection of your own choosing.

Prompt
See Course Reader for prompt and instructions.
Feedback
The papers will be graded by Joshua White. A letter grade and written feedback will be provided within 2-3 weeks of submission.

GALLERY DISPLAY RESEARCH PAPER 2: (40% OF FINAL GRADE)
Due: Week 11, Tuesday 4 November

Format
A written paper, 1600-2000 word range, with supporting visual material where appropriate. The visual material may be submitted in the form of photocopies, sketches/drawings and photographs.

Subject
See Course Reader for choice of questions and advice.

PAPER 3 (40% OF FINAL GRADE)
Due: Week 11, Tuesday 24 November

Format
A written paper, 1600-2000 word range to be answered in your own time.

Subject
See Course Reader for choice of questions and advice.

Feedback
The papers will be graded by Joshua White. A letter grade and written feedback will be provided within 2-3 weeks of submission. The grades for all three papers and the overall grade for the course will be delivered to Dr Blecic (Academic Coordinator for your programme), and final grades should be available at your home campus by late January.

GRADE CRITERIA
In grading the papers the examiner will be looking for a response that:

• answers the question directly
• constructs an argument in your own words drawn from independent reading and research
• employs forms of description, analysis and synthesis with which you will be familiar from the lectures, seminars, and your reading
• uses relevant examples drawn from lectures, seminars, reading, and your exploration of the museums we visit
• is well structured
• is free from grammatical, spelling and factual errors
Weekly Schedule

Week One
Tuesday 25 August 2009

Lecture and seminar: introduction to the course with a seminar examining the history and concept of museums both in London and abroad. We will also explore together wider concepts such as 'Culture' and 'History'.

Key topics:
- The history and evolution of museums
- Defining terms for ‘collection’ and ‘artefact’
- What role do museums play today?

The first paper will be set and explained in this session.

Week Two
Tuesday 1 September 2009

Visit to the British Museum looking at selected galleries, the architecture and its relationship with the public.

Key topics:
- Is a ‘universal’ museum possible?
- Ownership of cultural artefacts
- How is the British Museum a prototype and model for other collections?

Evening class.

Week Three
Tuesday 8 September 2009

Visit to the Wallace Collection to explore a private collection donated to the nation.

Key topics:
- Private collections as museums and the restraints placed upon them by benefactors.
- How can private collections evolve?
- Are there essential differences between private collections and more general museums?

Evening class.

Week Four
Tuesday 15 September 2009

Visit to Tate Modern

Key topics:
- Collecting and exhibiting Modern and Contemporary Art
- The status of art museums
- Museums as engines of urban regeneration
- What is the role of architecture and design in displaying collections?

Evening class.

HAND IN PAPER 1

Week Five
Tuesday 22 September 2009

Lecture and seminar: collecting, curating and ‘institutional critique’.
Key topics: How are collections assembled?
What is a curator?
Who controls museums?
What is the relationship with their audiences?
How can we assess the power and impact of museums?
What part does education play in museums?
What methods of communication do museums use?
The second paper will be set and explained.

Week Six
Tuesday 29 September 2009

Visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum
Key topics: Decorative Arts museums and their relationship with commerce
The significance of material culture
How are distinctions made between fine and decorative arts?

Evening class.

Week Seven
Tuesday 6 October 2009

Visit to the Wellcome Foundation gallery and the temporary exhibition ‘Exquisite Bodies’
Key topics: Exhibiting science and factual information,
The role of charitable foundations and museums
The ethics of displaying human tissue and disease
How do museums communicate medical knowledge?

Evening class.

Week Eight
Tuesday 13 October 2009

Visit to the Museum of London
Key topics: How does a city construct its history and create a narrative?
What stories do city museums need to relate?
What material should a city museum collect and exhibit?

Evening class.

Week Nine
MID-TERM BREAK

Week Ten
Tuesday 27 October 2009

Visit to the Geffrye Museum
Key topics: What role can ‘reconstructions’ play in museum learning and education?
Can museums achieve ‘authenticity’?
What subjects are suitable for museums to collect and display?
Week Eleven
Tuesday 3 November 2009

Seminar: ‘Museums and Difference’
Key topics: What role do museums play in London’s ‘post-colonial’ age?
How can museums mediate cultural difference?
Can identity be shaped or discovered in the museum?
Is ‘Orientalism’ a useful concept in understanding museum collections?
The final paper will be set and explained.

Week Twelve
Tuesday 10 November 2009

Visit to the Horniman Museum (this museum requires a significant journey so please give yourself plenty of time to cross London. I recommend an hour's journey time)
Key topics: How is cultural and ethnic difference treated in today's museums?
How have ethnographic displays changed over the past 100 years?
How can one society use museums to explore another culture's history and belief systems?

Week Thirteen
Tuesday 17 November 2009

Visit to the John Soane Museum
Key Topics: Are alternative models of classification and display possible?
Can ‘Post-modernism’ expand museum practices?
The collector as curator

Evening class.

Week Fourteen
Tuesday 24 November 2009

Visit to the Natural History Museum's New Darwin Wing
Key topics: How are complex scientific theories explained in museums?
Museum communications and interpretation
Innovation in educational methods

Evening class.

HAND IN PAPER 3

Week Fifteen
Tuesday 1 December 2009

Seminar looking at the future of museums where the class will attempt to evaluate the lessons of the course and the analytic
tools acquired through visiting museums.

Key topics:

- The role of museums in the 21st century
- Blockbuster exhibitions,
- The significance of architecture and new buildings
- Should museums keep growing?
- New audiences, funding, business sponsorship, upkeep, etc.

Select Bibliography

The following are available in the FSU library:

- Emma Barker, *Contemporary Cultures of Display* (Yale 1999)

Further Reading (these will need to be consulted in other libraries)

- G. Kavanagh *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum* (Continuum 2000)
- S. Pearce, *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (Leicester University 1994)

The British Museum – the books listed below are held in the FSU library


Use of Resources

Students are encouraged to make full use of resources available in the FSU library, online via the University of California Digital Library, and in the British Museum's reading room. The Reading Room has a number of books on open
shelves, which the general public can use (though not borrow) and some of these are relevant to the course. There is a computerized catalogue, also computer terminals via which the British Museum website can be accessed. The British Museum also has an extensive bookshop with many relevant texts (in the Great Court, behind the Reading Room).

**Internet use**
There are many useful sites for studying museums on the internet. Each museum now publishes a website with a range of reference material describing their collections, origins and resources. Avoid sites like Wikipedia unless you can verify the information and ideas using other sources.
For example, British Museum website is highly recommended, with information about various aspects of the museum, including COMPASS which illustrates and describes a selection of the objects on display in the museum and briefly sets them within their cultural context.

www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

The Tate Gallery publishes a voluminous survey of their collections with further information on the displays and the history of art. For example you can consult a glossary on key terms

www.tate.org.uk

The Intute website is published by a consortium of British universities including Oxford and Manchester which helps you locate the best online resources for study and research. All the sites have been checked by academics for usefulness and quality.

www.intute.ac.uk

**Instructor Biography**
Joshua White is a lecturer at Christie's Education. Joshua has an M.Phil in Modern and Contemporary Art from the University of Glasgow and a B.A.Honours in Modern History from the University of Oxford. At Christie's Education he runs lectures on the London Art Course and teaches Masters and Diploma students with a particular interest in early 20th century European art and design. Joshua also leads group and private visits for corporate clients and patrons on behalf of Tate Modern and Tate Britain. Elsewhere, he has supervised dissertation students at Camberwell College of Art.

Students wishing to contact Joshua White outside class and office hours may do so via email: joshlondon@sky.com Include ‘UC’ in the subject field.
Please note that I will not necessarily be able to respond immediately as I only check my email once a day (and sometimes less frequently), and I will not be reading emails on the days when I am teaching the UC course or holding UC office hours.