University of Brighton
School of Humanities

Museums, Material Culture, Representation
Year 2 Option

Module Document
Tutor: Dr Claire Wintle
Museums, Material Culture, Representation:

Module Tutor: Dr Claire Wintle (c.wintle@brighton.ac.uk), Office: 404a

Introduction to this Module:

Museums are carefully constructed spaces which colour the way we view the world. Since the birth of the public museum we have been framing and representing specific versions of ourselves and others, using the arrangement of visual and material culture to create values, assumptions and messages about the status of art, the course of history and hierarchies of humanity. This option will explore the museum as a contested space, with a particular focus on the display and interpretation of African, Asian, Oceanic and Native American objects in museums in the Global North over the last thirty years. In Part 1, we will define and think through key concepts and terms surrounding museums, material culture and representation: what are problems and opportunities involved in displaying culture? How do museums classify visual culture as ‘art’? What counts as ‘authentic’ culture? How are stereotypes formed? In Part 2 we will examine a series of events and interventions which have had a significant impact on the display of African, Oceanic, Asian and North American visual and material cultures. We will consider different approaches to display and museum practice from around the world and explore issues of repatriation, collaboration, sacred material and artistic interventions.

Learning Aims of this Module:

During this module, you will be engaged in learning:

1) Common historical and contemporary features in the display of African, Asian, Oceanic and Native American objects in museums
2) About the ways in which museums construct values, identities and histories through collection, interpretation and display.
3) To understand and critically evaluate the scholarly and professional debates which have surrounded the display of non-European visual and material culture over the last thirty years.
4) To analyse the display of African, Asian, Oceanic and/or Native American material and visual culture in museums.

Coursework requirements for this Module:

1) Seminar Performance This term you will be marked on your seminar performance. You will be marked in regards to two aspects of class contribution. This includes a demonstration of reflection, interpretation and application of knowledge (that you can critically engage and apply the text), and that you show constructive participation in group discussion (that you listen to, are respectful of, and can contribute to debate). Your class tutor will run through these requirements at the beginning of the first seminar with you.

2) Individual Seminar Presentation (15 minutes, plus sufficient issues/questions to sustain further discussion). Together with your week-by-week seminar performance, this will make up 30% of your overall mark.

During your individual seminar presentation you will examine a contentious or revolutionary event in recent museum practice. You should introduce the event, including close description of the most relevant physical aspects of the display/event and its institutional context. Please relate your event to some of the theoretical considerations raised during the course so far, and in particular the theme...
of your week. Please do not rehearse the main arguments of the group text for your week (everyone has already read that), but show how some of the key themes from the text apply and shed light on your event. The following questions might be useful, but you can also develop your own:

- Is your event progressive in relation to this theme?
- What are the problems of this event in relation to the theme?
- What is the impact of this event on how museum practitioners have approached this theme since?

3) **Essay (2,500 words) due Monday 13th 2020 before 12:00, noon.** To be submitted via Turnitin. The subject will usually be developed from one of your seminars and should take account of tutorial feedback and advice. 70% of overall mark.

In addition, in **WEEK 10 (Monday 25th November)** you will have a formative assessment in the form of a submitted essay plan. This should be submitted via Turnitin.

**General Requirements and Advice for Presentations:**

Seminar presentations should be to time and be supported by appropriate visual material and references. You are expected to do extensive secondary research for your presentations, and to draw on primary sources and site visits where possible. Seminar **notes** must be submitted on the day of your presentation as part of the assessment process (via Turnitin BEFORE the class in which you will be presenting) and should therefore be typed, with all summarised information and quotations **footnoted**, and a full **bibliography** provided. Assessment will be made of the organisation and communication of ideas, both in terms of your own thoughts and your ability to debate your research with your colleagues.

Seminars are designed to share ideas and information with your fellow students so that you can jointly develop your critical understanding of a topic. They will be relying on your work to inform their learning. Your presentations should therefore include:

1) An **introduction**, which explains what the seminar is about, what kind of research you have undertaken and highlight any key methodological or theoretical issues you have come across.
2) A **conclusion**, which summarises your key points.
3) A **handout**, of key points, selected references, and any key names, dates and quotations that may be hard to grasp at a single hearing. A properly referenced image list and list of key texts is also useful.
4) A **powerpoint** which allows everyone to see and engage with your images. Please reference images properly. You may want to include a few key words or a brief structure to help your audience understand your approach.

**N.B.** When presenting, it is important to note that, just as you would with an essay, you should be careful to identify your sources and to reference your reading in ways that are clear to your audience and your assessor (for example, by stating, “As xxx has argued...” and by introducing direct quotations explicitly).
Module Plan

**Week 2: Monday 30th September**  
**Introduction: Museums and Political Culture**

Individual presentation tutorials

**Week 3: Monday 7th October**  
**Museums and Representation**

*Visit to World Stories: Young Voices, Brighton Museum & Art Gallery*  
*Please meet outside the entrance of Brighton Museum at 9am*

**Key Readings:**


**Week 4: Monday 14th October**  
**Whose Muse? Universal Museums and Indigenous Museology**

**Key reading:**


Individual presentation tutorials

**Week 5: Monday 21th October**  
**Sensual Culture and Digital Curating**

**Key Readings:**


Individual presentation tutorials
Week 6: Monday 28th October  Trip to National Maritime Museum

We will meet Dr Claire Warrior, Senior Exhibitions Interpretation Officer for a tour of the new Pacific Encounters and Polar Worlds galleries. **Please meet in the foyer of Pavilion Parade at 9am, and note that we will be travelling by minibus to Greenwich and returning to Brighton at 4pm.**

**Key Reading:**

Parker, Katherine. “Coming to terms with Captain Cook: exhibiting the 250th anniversary of the Endeavour voyage.” *Journal of Historical Geography*. 64 (2019): 98-103.

Week 7: Monday 4th November  Reading week

Week 8: Monday 11th November  Art/Artefact and Beyond

**Student Presentations:**


Musée du quai Branly, Paris, France, opened 2006

**Group Reading:**


Week 9: Monday 18th November  Museums and Social Justice

**Student Presentations:**


Världskulturmuseet/Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, Sweden, opened 2004.

**Group Reading:**


Week 10: Monday 25th November  Museums and Collaboration

(ESSAY PLAN DUE IN)

**Student Presentations:**
*Te Māori*, touring exhibition, New Zealand Museums (New York, St Louis, Chicago and San Francisco, New Zealand), 1984-6.


**Group Reading:**


**Week 11: Monday 2nd December**  
**Sacred Objects**

**Student Presentations:**


**Group Reading:**


**Week 12: Monday 9th December**  
**Tutorials to discuss essays (no class)**

**Christmas Break**

**Week 13: Monday 6th January**  
**Beyond Empire? Critiquing History**

**Student Presentations:**


Tropenmuseum, Netherlands


Group Reading:


Week 14: Monday 13th January   Essay Deadline at 12:00 noon (No class)
Bibliography: Specific Institutions/Exhibitions

*Te Māori*, touring exhibition, New Zealand Museums (New York, St Louis, Chicago and San Francisco, New Zealand), 1984-6.


Vogel, Susan (ed.). *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*. New York: Center for African Art, 1989. Please note that the 2nd edition has a very useful supplement, which includes rich discussion on the nature of the exhibition.


*Memory of the Congo* at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren.


Världskultur museet/Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, opened 2004.


Lonetree, Amy. Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012 (on order, see chapter on NMAI)


Musée du quai Branly, Paris


Tropenmuseum, Netherlands


van Dartel, Daan 'Tropenmuseum for a change! Present between past and future. A symposium report’ edited by Daan van Dartel, 2009

**Repatriation of Sioux Ghost Dance Shirt from Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, 1999.**


**Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford, loan of five Blackfoot shirts, to Glenbow Museum, Calgary and the Galt Museum, Lethbridge, 2010.**


**Canadian Museum of Human Rights**


General Bibliography


Collaboration

Models of Museology


Kaplan, Isaac. The Case against the Universal Museum 26 April, 2016
https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-the-case-against-the-universal-museum


Sensual Culture in Museums
Candlin, Fiona. “Rehabilitating unauthorised touch or why museum visitors touch the exhibits”, The Senses and Society, 12 (2017): 251-266. [online library]


Digital Curating


**Museums and Imperialism**


**Artists in Museums**


Repatriation/Human Remains/Sacred Objects


Representation/Value


Museum Visitors/Access/Representation


Other Resources:
International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography (http://network.icom.museum/icme/)

Museum Ethnographers Group (UK) (http://www.museumethnographersgroup.org.uk/en/)

Material Worlds blog (“an interactive, online hub for contemporary debates, discussion, thinking and research centred on material and visual culture,” associated with the University College London’s Anthropology department (http://www.materialworldblog.com/)

Online Supplement to Museum Anthropology, the Journal of the Council for Museum Anthropology, a section of the American Anthropological Association (http://museumanthropology.blogspot.co.uk/)