GSEM 657 Curatorial Issues  
Spring 2011  
Syllabus  
Updated April 3, 2011

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This seminar is intended to introduce graduate students in the history of art, archaeology, and classics to a broad range of issues associated with curatorial practice—through critical readings, discussions with visiting curators, scholars, and Bryn Mawr faculty members, and field trips to museums in Philadelphia and New York. The readings for the course will emphasize theoretical issues fundamental to curatorship as well as noteworthy case studies. Students will have the opportunity for hands-on experience with collections through the final exhibition project for the seminar. In addition, the course is intended to prepare students for the Graduate Group’s curatorial internship program at partner institutions in the Philadelphia area and Bryn Mawr.

There are three short writing assignments for the course, as noted below (due January 26, March 2, and March 23), as well as a longer exhibition project to be presented at the end of the semester (April 20 and 27, with a written project report due May 6). In addition, students will be expected to post comments and discussion questions regarding weekly readings on the seminar’s Blackboard site the evening before each class meeting (on Tuesdays, by 10:00 p.m.) Prior to the visits to museum conservation studios on March 16 and 30, students will be required to write short response papers to the weekly readings.

Students should make note of the four field trips, in particular the full-day excursion to New York City. The field trips are: (1) February 9, to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, leaving campus at 2:00 and returning by 6:00; (2) February 23, to the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, leaving campus at 2:00 and returning by 6:00; (3) March 16, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and American Museum of Natural History, leaving campus at 7:00 a.m. and returning by 7:00 p.m.; and (4) March 30, to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, leaving campus at 2:00 and returning by 6:00.

1. January 19 - Introduction  
   - Overview of syllabus, course objectives, and exhibition project  
   - Brief discussion of the history of museums  
   - Visit to art and artifact study and storage areas in Thomas Hall

2. January 26 – Collecting: Theories and Practices – Christiane Hertel  
   First Assignment Due: Brief response paper to the Worlds to Discover exhibition, one to two pages  

Further reading:

3. February 2 - Cultural Heritage Laws and Issues – Patty Gerstenblith, Director of the Center for Art, Museum, & Cultural Heritage Law, DePaul College of Law
• Patty Gerstenblith, Acquisition and Deacquisition of Museum Collections and the Fiduciary Obligations of Museums to the Public, Cardozo Journal of International and Comparative Law (summer 2003), 1-7. Additional pages are optional
• Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums (2002)
• United States v. Schultz, 333 F.3d 393 (2d Cir. 2003) (edited)
• United States v. An Antique Platter of Gold, 184 F.3d 131 (2d Cir. 1999) (edited)

Students should also familiarize themselves with the website of the Department of State’s Cultural Heritage Center, http://exchanges.state.gov/heritage/index.html, particularly the section on International Cultural Property Protection.

Further Readings:


Patty Gerstenblith, “Has the Market in Antiquities Changed in Light of Recent Legal Developments,” unpublished essay.

4. February 9 – Curating Archaeology Collections – Ann Brownlee, Curator, Mediterranean Section, Pennsylvania Museum of Art and Archaeology


Further Reading:


5. February 16 - Curating Ethnographic Collections and Exhibitions – Chapurukha Kusimba, Associate Curator for Archaeology and Ethnology of Africa, Field Museum, Chicago


Further Reading:


6. February 23 - Exhibition Development and Contemporary Art Exhibition Issues—Ingrid Schaffner, Senior Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania


Further Reading:


7. March 2 – Interpretation, Education, and Audience – Martha Easton

Second Assignment Due: Exhibition review, three to five pages


Further Reading:

8. March 16 - Conservation Issues I, Gridley McKim-Smith, Field trip to NYC, Metropolitan Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Art; and American Museum of Natural History


Further Reading:
• Aldona Jonaitis, From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History (University of Washington Press, 1988), 17-29 and 207-212

9. March 23 - Curatorial Interventions – Fred Wilson, artist and curator


Further Reading:

10. March 30 - Conservation Issues II, Gridley McKim-Smith, Field trip to Philadelphia Museum of Art, Painting Conservation Department

Third Assignment Due: Selection of object(s) for exhibition and one-page exhibition proposal

To prepare for the exhibition project:

11. April 6 - New Technologies for Curatorship, Cheryl Klimaszewski, Digital Collections Specialist

Introductory articles about technology in museums:
• Matthew MacArthur, "Can Museums Allow Online Users to Become Participants," The Digital Museum: A Think Guide. Eds. Herminia Din and


**Articles about museum websites:**


**12. April 13 - Leadership, Administration, and Funding – Elizabeth Easton, Center for Curatorial Leadership**


*Further Reading:*


13. April 20 - Exhibition presentations

14. April 27 - Exhibition presentations

**Final Exhibition Project Due May 6**

*Text (available in the Bryn Mawr Book Store):*