

Anth 381
ARCHAEOLOGY, MUSEUMS, AND MATERIAL CULTURE
Fall 2015

(syllabus subject to minor changes)

Course information:

Tue & Thu 8:35 - 9:55 a.m.

ARTS 150

Credits: 3 credits

Instructor:

Maria Theresia Starzmann

Office hours: Tue 12:00 noon - 2 p.m., or by appointment

Leacock Bldg., Room 837

Contact: maria.starzmann@mcgill.ca

When emailing me, provide a day or so for me to answer, i.e., no last minute emails or emails that require a response over the weekend. For urgent or sensitive matters, please come see me in my office.

Course description:

This course explores how material culture is used in the context of museums to produce a sense of the past, of historicity, and of belonging, but also how museums deal with conflicted, contested, or fragmented histories. As such, museums are not merely collections of things, but social institutions that actively shape our understandings of the past. That is, in their practices of collecting, classifying, and displaying objects, museums resemble archives that actively produce knowledge about the past.

Recognizing that museums can constitute sites of conflict over representation, this course considers a variety of functions of museums that go beyond preservation and education. Institutions of central importance in nation-building projects, we will see that museums can function in highly exclusive ways by creating value, producing narratives of a national past, or appropriating local history. However, as sites of heritage management, museums can also play a crucial role in the safeguarding of cultural property, offering marginalized social groups means of identification with and laying claims to their past.

Finally, this course also considers the changing practices of contemporary museums as they tackle issues of accessibility and community collaboration, often in response to outside challenges. In this context, we will address ethical as well as legal questions, especially concerning issues of repatriation, authority, and control. Recognizing that the 'Western' museum with its notions of authenticity and ownership is only one way of managing material culture and heritage, we also explore alternative museum concepts, including indigenous museums and, by way of a group project, digital museums.

Learning outcomes:

The goal of this course is for students to trace the historical development and political programs of museums. A series of hands-on exercises and practical assignments invite students to identify competing conceptualizations of the museum as well as to critically analyze museum exhibitions and

programs, including various approaches to the presentation of knowledge and the addressing of a museum's audiences.

Course format and requirements:

This course integrates occasional lecture segments, class discussions as well as in-class exercises, and a small number of visits to local museums. The prerequisite for this course is some background in archaeology or anthropology, i.e., students should have completed, or be currently enrolled in, an introductory anthropology class, such as ANTH 201 or ANTH 202. Students who are uncertain about whether they meet the requirements for this course should contact me.

Assignments:

All assignments must be completed by the due date. Late submissions will be marked down 10% per day. If you are ill or have some other emergency, it is your responsibility to notify me and to do so *before* the beginning of a class or the date on which an assignment is due.

Grading criteria:

- 1. Active participation (25% of final grade):** You are expected to actively participate in class discussions, which means both asking critical questions as well as contributing commentary, observations, and evaluations based on the assigned readings. Active participation also means that you show up for every class as well as for all museum visits and museum-based assignments. Note that I take attendance, but that I do grant each student one unexcused absence per semester, so use it wisely.
- 2. Assignments (30% of final grade):** Throughout the semester, you will need to complete five assignments. These will involve, among other things, a field trip to a museum, ethnographic interviews, and the submission of a critical essay. The goal of these exercises is for you to engage the themes of this course in more creative and exploratory ways.
- 3. Final project (20%) and final paper (25% of final grade):** While your final project will be due at the end of the semester, each student is expected to work on his/her project throughout the entire term. For your project, you have two options: (a) Find an object on view at a museum of your choice (can be online) and reconstruct its life history, conducting a methodological analysis of its evolving interpretation OR (b) choose a number of objects (min. 5, max. 10 objects) and write a "narrative" for them based on the information / data that is available about them. How are these objects connected? What do they "mean"? What is the story told by their grouping together? Note that your objects should be archaeological objects (though they don't have to be) and that they must be part of a museum collection (whether currently on display or in storage).

Final papers:

While I need to receive a formal final paper from each student, I encourage innovative formats for your final projects. That is, you may present your final project in mixed media format, e.g., as a blog or website that integrates your text with photographs of objects, audio recordings, video segments, etc. It is the text section of this presentation that you need to submit to me as a final paper.

Your final papers have to be 2000 words long (5-6 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman) and absolutely need to include a bibliography (on a separate page, not counting toward the 5 page limit) that follows the Chicago Manual of Style (see: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/>). All final papers are due one week after our last class (Thu. Dec. 10) no later than 4 p.m. Note that projects that are not completed by the due date and final papers that are turned in late will be marked down 10% per day.

Assigned readings:

All readings are an essential component of the course, so make sure to read them. Develop reading strategies early on in this course, i.e., take notes, transcribe excerpts of texts, write down questions and discussion points that you can bring to class or to museum visits.

The readings for this course come mostly from journals and books, which will either be available online on MyCourses or on reserve in the McGill library, so that you can make copies of assigned readings. Since we will be reading large sections from the following two books, copies of them are available for purchase at the *Paragraphe Bookstore* (<http://www.paragraphbooks.com>):

- Karp, Ivan, and Steven D. Lavine. 1991. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press. (also available as e-book in the McGill library)
- Weschler, Lawrence. 1996. *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and Other Marvels of Jurassic Technology*. New York: Vintage Books.

In addition, I have ordered the following edited volume on museums and material culture that you might find relevant for this course and which can be purchased at the *Paragraphe Bookstore* as well:

- Edwards, Elizabeth, Gosden, Chris, and Ruth B. Philips (eds.), *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, pp. 199-222. Oxford: Berg. (also available as e-book in the McGill library)

Schedule of classes:

Class 1: **Introduction** (Tue. Sept. 8)

Class 2: **Lecture** – **The Museum of Innocence** (Thu. Sept. 10)

- Excerpts from Pamuk, Orhan. 2009. *The Museum of Innocence*. London: Faber and Faber.

Class 3: **What is a Museum? – The Curious and The Typical** (Tue. Sept. 15)

- Karp/Lavine, Ch. 1 (“Museums As A Way of Seeing”)
- Weschler, Lawrence. 1996. *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and Other Marvels of Jurassic Technology*. New York: Vintage Books.

Class 4: **Lecture** – **The Museum of Things** (Thu. Sept. 17)

- Excerpts from de Waal, Edmund. 2010. *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance*. New York: Picador.

Class 5: **Collecting and Narrating – Things on Display** (Tue. Sept. 22)

- Kalp/Lavine, Ch. 2 (“Objects of Ethnography”)
- Belk, Russell, and Melanie Wallendorf. 1997. ‘Of Mice and Men: Gender Identity in Collecting,’ in: Katherine Martinez and Kenneth Ames (eds.), *The Material Culture of Gender: The Gender of Material Culture*, pp. 7-25. Winterthur: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum.
- Holtorf, Cornelius. 2002. Notes on the Life History of a Pot Sherd. *Journal of Material Culture* 7(1): 49-71.

Class 6: **Museum visit – Redpath Museum** (Thu. Sept. 24)

We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the entrance of the Redpath Museum on McGill’s downtown campus. Note that the museum does not have an elevator or access ramp and is therefore not recommended for people with limited mobility. For a map indication the museum’s location on campus, go to:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/maps/redpath-museum>

In preparation of our visit to the Redpath Museum, please make sure to read Assignment #1 on MyCourses. Note that this assignment is due after our museum visit and must be submitted no later than Monday, Sept. 28 at 6p.m.

Class 7: **Museums and Nationalism** (Tue. Sept. 29)

- Karp/Lavine, Ch. 6 (“Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship”)
- Hassan, Fekri A. 1998. Memorabilia: Archaeological Materiality and National Identity, in Lynn Meskell (ed.), *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, pp. 200-216. London: Routledge.
- Knowles, Chantal. 2011. ‘Objects as Ambassadors’: Representing Nation Through Museum Exhibitions, in: Sarah Byrne, Anne Clarke, Rodney Harrison, and Robin Torrence (eds.), *Unpacking the Collection: Networks of Material and Social Agency in the Museum*, pp. 231-247. New York: Springer.

See Assignment #2 on MyCourses, which is due by Monday, Oct. 5, at 6 p.m

Class 8: **Film screening – PBS Documentary “Objects and Memory”** (Thu. Oct. 1)

Before our class on Oct. 1, visit the Smithsonian Museum’s “September 11: Bearing Witness to History” website: <http://amhistory.si.edu/september11/> – Browse the online collection (<http://amhistory.si.edu/september11/collection/>) and, if possible, listen to some of the curators’ stories. Consider what responses these objects may elicit in viewers, i.e., why are the “meaningful” to people? To what degree is their meaning derived from the format of the presentation?

Class 9: **Museums, Heritage, Identity** (Tue. Oct. 6)

- Bortolotto, Chiara. 2007. From the 'Monumental' to the 'Living' Heritage: A Shift in Perspective, in: Roger White and John Carman (eds.), *World Heritage: Global Challenges, Local Solutions*, pp. 39-46. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Robinson, Olivia, and Trish Barnard. 2007. "Thanks, But We'll Take It from Here": Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women Influencing the Collection of Tangible and Intangible Heritage. *Museum International* 59: 34-45.
- Little, Barbara J., and Paul Shackel. 2014. Museums and Civic Engagement, in: Barbara Little and Paul Shackel, *Archaeology, Heritage, and Civic Engagement: Working Toward the Public Good*, pp. 127-144. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Class 10: **Guest lecture – Lisa Overholtzer** (Thu. Oct. 8)

Readings tba. See also Assignment #3, which must be uploaded to MyCourses no later than Monday, Oct. 12, at 6 p.m.

Class 11: **Ethics and the Museum** (Tue. Oct. 13)

- Tapsell, Paul. 2011. 'Aroha mai: Whose Museum?': The Rise of Indigenous Ethics Within Museum Contexts: A Maori-Tribal Perspective, in: Janet Marstine (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 85-111. New York: Routledge.
- Macdonald, Sharon. 2008. Museum Europe: Negotiating Heritage. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 17(2): 47-65.
- Williams, Paul. 2011. Memorial Museums and the Objectification of Suffering, in: Janet Marstine (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 220-233. New York: Routledge.

Class 12: **Museum visit – Centre d'histoire de Montréal** (Thu. Oct. 15)

We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the entrance of the Centre d'histoire de Montréal, where we will get a guided tour through the "Traces. Places. Memories" permanent exhibition. Admission for the tour will be \$1.75 per student. The museum is located at 335 Place D'Youville in Old Montréal.

Class 13: **Museums and Accessibility: From Local to Global Public(s)** (Tue. Oct. 20)

- Gerbich, Christine. 2012. "A Wooden Room With Many Doors..." – Social, Physical and Intellectual Accessibility at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, in: Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber, and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *Islamic Art and the Museum: Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 321-327. London: Saqi.
- Willmott, Cory. 2008. Visitors' Voices: Lessons from Conversations in the Royal Ontario Museum's *Gallery of Canada: First Peoples*. *Material Culture Review* 67:45-55.
- Saunderson, Helen. 2011. 'Do Not Touch': A Discussion on the Problems of a Limited Sensory Experience with Objects in a Gallery or Museum Context, in: Sandra H. Dudley and Susan M. Pearce (eds.), *The Thing About Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*, pp.159-170. London: Routledge.

Class 14: **Field assignment – Visitor experiences** (Thu. Oct. 22)

See Assignment #4 on MyCourses. Make sure to complete the assignment no later than Wednesday, Oct. 28, by 6p.m.

Class 15: **Lecture – The Whitney Plantation** (Tue. Oct. 27)

- Amsden, David. 2015. Building the First Slavery Museum in America, *The New York Times*, Feb. 26, 2015 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/magazine/building-the-first-slave-museum-in-america.html>)

Class 16: **Museums and Colonialism** (Thu. Oct. 29)

- Kalp/Lavine, Ch. 18 (“The world as marketplace”)
- Welsch, Robert L. 2000. One Time, One Place: Three Collections-Colonial Processes and the Shaping of Some Museum Collections from German New Guinea, in: Michael O’Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch (eds.), *Hunting the Gatherers: Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s*, pp. 155-175. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Harrison, Rodney. 2011. Consuming Colonialism: Curio Dealers’ Catalogues, Souvenir Objects and Indigenous Agency in Oceania, in: Sarah Byrne, Anne Clarke, Rodney Harrison, and Robin Torrence (eds.), *Unpacking the Collection: Networks of Material and Social Agency in the Museum*, pp. 55-82. New York: Springer.

Class 17: **Lecture – The Tenement Museum** (Tue. Nov. 3)

- Grimes, William. 2014. An Artifact Once Was Just Home: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Welcomes a Former Resident, *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 2014 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/03/arts/lower-east-side-tenement-museum-welcomes-a-former-resident.html>)

Class 18: **Museums, Memory, Conflict** (Thu. Nov. 5)

- Dubin, Steven C. 1999. Introduction: Museums as Contested Sites, in: Steven C. Dubin, *Displays of Power: Controversy in the American Museum*, pp. 1-18. New York University Press.
- Sevcenko, Liz. 2010. Sites of Conscience: New Approaches to Conflicted Memory. *Museum International* 62: 20-25.
- Crooke, Elizabeth. 2001. Confronting a Troubled History: Which Past in Northern Ireland’s Museums? *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 7(2): 119-136.

Class 18: **Lecture – Eastern State Penitentiary** (Thu. Nov. 5)

- Tietz, Jeff. 2012. Slow motion torture: How solitary confinement – once reserved for the most dangerous and disobedient inmates – became standard practice in American Prisons. *Rolling Stone Magazine*, Dec. 6, 2012, pp. 58-64.

Class 19: **Managing a Painful Past in the Museum** (Tue. Nov. 10)

- Macdonald, Sharon J. 2008. Unsettling Memories: Intervention and Controversy Over Difficult Public Heritage, in: *Heritage and Identity: Engagement and Demission in the Contemporary World*, pp. 93-104. New York: Routledge.
- Strange, Carolyn, and Michael Kempa. 2003. Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island. *Annals of Tourism Research* 30(2): 386-405.
- Duffy, Terence M. 2001. Museums of 'Human Suffering' and the Struggle for Human Rights. *Museum International* 53(1): 10-16.

Class 20: **Film screening: "Stolen Spirits of Haida Gwaii"** (Thu. Nov. 12)

Class 21: **Museums and Indigenous Communities: Changing Relationships** (Tue. Nov. 17)

- Classen, Constance, and David Howe. 2006. The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artifacts, in: Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Philips (eds.), *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, pp. 199-222. Oxford: Berg.
- Smith, Paul Chaat. 2007. The Terrible Nearness of Distant Places: Making History at the National Museum of the American Indian, in: Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn (eds.), *Indigenous Experience Today*, 379-396. New York: Berg.
- Farrell Racette, Sherry. 2009. Looking for Stories and Unbroken Threads: Museum Artifacts as Women's History and Cultural Legacy, in: Eric Guimond, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, and Madeleine Dion Stout (eds.), *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community and Culture*, pp. 283-312. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Class 22: **Field assignment – Exhibition Review** (Thu. Nov. 19)

See Assignment #5 on MyCourses, which is due no later than Wednesday, Nov. 25, by 6p.m.

Class 23: **No class** (Tue. Nov. 24.)

Class 24: **Museums, Governments, and Policy: Legal Questions** (Thu. Nov. 26)

- Gaither, Edmund B. 1992. 'Hey, That's Mine': Thoughts on Pluralism in American Museums, in: Ivan Karp, Christine Muller Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, pp. 56-64. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Dumont, Clayton W. Jr. 2003. The Politics of Scientific Objections to Repatriation. *Wicazo Sa Review* 18(1): 109-128.
- Yellowman, Connie Hart. 1996. 'Naevahoo'ohsteme' – We Are Going Back Home: The Cheyenne Repatriation of Human Remains—A Woman's Perspective. *St. Thomas Law Review* 9: 103-116.

Class 25: **The Museum of the Future** (Tue. Dec. 1)

- Karp/Lavine, Ch. 15 (“Why museums make me sad”)
- Ouzman, Sven. 2006. The Beauty of Letting Go: Fragmentary Museums and Archaeologies of Archive, in: Chris Gosden, Elizabeth Edwards, and Ruth Phillips (eds), *Sensible Objects: Museums, Colonialism and the Senses*, pp. 269-301. Oxford: Berg.
- Crouch, Michelle. 2010. Digitization as Repatriation? The National Museum of the American Indian’s Fourth Museum Project. *Journal of Information Ethics* 19(1): 45-56.

Class 26: **Final discussion** (Thu. Dec. 3)

Other important stuff to be aware of:

Fossil Free Week of Action (Week of Sept. 21-25):

Divest McGill is planning a Fossil Free Week of Action from Sept. 21-25, 2015, to raise awareness about climate change and global warming. While I’m not offering a “climate change syllabus” for this class, I welcome students’ contributions to ANTH 381 on climate and environmental issues. Given that the politics of nature (climate justice, social movements for climate change, political economies of climate change and extraction) impact indigenous communities in more intense ways than white communities, these are highly relevant concerns when considering the relationships between museums and indigenous peoples (see esp. Classes 20-24). For more information on Divest McGill’s projects, see: <http://divestmcgill.com/>

Laptop-free zone:

Like an increasing number of professors at North American universities, I have a “no laptop policy” for courses that include discussion-based segments, are upper-division seminars, or have an enrolment of 25 or less students. That is, unless you have a learning disability and rely on a laptop, all you need to bring to class are the assigned reading materials, your notes (comments, questions, other discussion contributions), and pen and paper. There is no reason to distract yourself from listening and participating in my courses by checking your emails, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and so on. If a tweet is just so good that it can’t wait, step outside and do what you have to do, but be respectful of our learning environment by not disturbing other students.

For more laptop-free classrooms, check out these new research findings indicating that students who take notes with laptops—rather than by hand—remember less:

- Article in “The Atlantic” on “To Remember a Lecture Better, Take Notes by Hand”: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>
- Podcast on “The Takeaway” on “Take Note: Use A Pen and Power Down The Laptop”: <http://www.thetakeaway.org/story/laptop-or-no-laptop-classroom/>

Academic integrity:

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Students' rights:

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue.

Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights. The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities is available online at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/sites/mcgill.ca.secretariat/files/student-handbook-2010-english.pdf>.

Social equity and diversity:

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. This means: Be respectful of others' opinions, beliefs, and identifications—hear them out!—and do not use sexist, racist, ableist, classist, or otherwise discriminatory terminology.

In an effort to achieve inclusivity, please note that as a student at McGill you're able to use your preferred first name and that this name can be different than your legal first name (see: <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/records/address/preferred>). When first signing up for this class, you will also be given the opportunity to inform me of your preferred gender pronoun („he,“ „she,“ „they,“ etc.).

Should you experience harassment or discrimination in this course, do not hesitate to contact me. Another important resource when faced with harassment or discrimination is McGill University's SEDE (Social Equity and Diversity Education) Office. While the SEDE Office does not take on individual cases, SEDE staff members can help you understand the options available to you. You may contact SEDE via email at equity.diversity@mcgill.ca.

If you experience any other barriers to learning in this course, please discuss them with me or contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (514-398-6009).

Mental health:

As more and more students deal with the stress and anxiety that a fast-paced, streamlined, and highly competitive academic learning environment can create, make sure to set aside time for rest, respite, and self-care in your off-campus life. In the classroom, be supportive of each other by collaborating and engaging each other's ideas, and consider forming study groups or reading groups for classes that are particularly labor- and/or time-intensive.

If you experience mental health issues and are not sure who to turn to, please note that McGill University offers Counseling Service (514-398-3601 or counselling.service@mcgill.ca) as well as Mental Health Services (514-398-6019). The latter also offers emergency drop-in hours (for more information see the homepage of the McGill Mental Health Services: <http://www.mcgill.ca/mentalhealth/home>).

Indigenous rights:

This is to acknowledge that McGill University sits on land whose traditional owners are the people of the Haudenosaunee or Six Nations. Given that we teach and learn on this land, let us be respectful of indigenous communities and support their efforts for recognition, reconciliation, and restitution.