

New College of Florida

Worlds of Wonder: A History of Museums (Fall 2022)

Art History 2260, CRN # 85071

Instructors:

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Schedule: Wednesdays, 6-9pm

Location: ACE 102

Course Description:

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term “museum” was applied to encyclopedic collections intended to represent the world in microcosm. The formation of these collections enabled collectors to make sense of new discoveries, resulting from global exploration, which challenged established beliefs and existing world-views.

This course surveys the history of museums from antiquity to the present. It considers the historical influences that have shaped the development of museums from communities of scholars, concerned with the preservation and dissemination of knowledge, to public institutions, dedicated to the collection and exhibition of objects.

The course examines the impact of museums on the development of new disciplines, which, in turn, have influenced the organization and interpretation of their contents. It also investigates the relationship between museums and other cultural phenomena, such as world fairs and the circus. In addition, it addresses challenges facing museums today, ranging from decolonialization and repatriation to diversity and social justice.

The course will appeal to students with a wide range of interests, including museum studies, the history of collecting, art history, archaeology, anthropology, natural history, and the history of science. It is a required course for the secondary field in Museum Studies, and is eligible to fulfill an Art History course requirement for the Art History AOC. It is open to students of any year and concentration. There are no prerequisites.

Liberal Arts Curriculum (LAC) and Chart Your Course (CYC):

The general education requirements, which are designed to ensure a breadth of experience even as you eventually specialize in a particular area of concentration, were revised last year. LAC (Liberal Arts Curriculum) courses have been reworked as CYC (Chart Your Course) courses for students beginning at New College in Fall 2021. This course can fulfill either a LAC or a CYC requirement for a Humanities or a Writing course (CYC requirements will only allow a course to count for one requirement; you can find out more about the requirements [here](#)). In addition to ensuring an education with some breadth, CYC courses place particular emphasis on a set of skills that New College (like the American Association of Colleges and Universities) considers essential skills for work, citizenship, and life. You are not required to gain experience with all or a particular subset of these skills, but you may decide to target (and later highlight) skills that are foregrounded in your CYC courses. Though this course will allow you to develop other skills as well, the CYC skills it emphasizes are information literacy, written communication, and oral communication. Here is some more information on these skills (you will receive more information in the context of specific course assignment prompts):

Information Literacy:

As a course that introduces you to (or opens up a broader perspective upon) museums, it is important that you develop the skill that is essential not only to this specific area of art history and museum studies, but also to all academic work and to everyday life: information literacy. We are able to access an increasingly vast and varied array of information with ease, but the downside of this wealth of possibility is that it can make it harder to identify relevant and trustworthy sources. False claims and misrepresentations proliferate on the internet, with particular rapidity over social media. Information literacy will enable you to avoid circulating bad information or drawing conclusions based on false or unsupported claims. We are all better off if we make decisions—whether what car to select, what doctor to visit, or how to vote—based on accurate information drawn from a variety of reputable sources.

Information literacy involves determining 1) what and how much information is needed to answer one's research questions; 2) where and how you can find that information; 3) distinguishing the most relevant and trustworthy sources; 3) mobilizing that information from a range of those sources so as to provide convincing support of the task at hand (such as interpreting a museum in class or making a decision in your daily life); and 4) presenting this supporting information (whether through paraphrasing,

summary, or quotations) in a manner that accurately represents your sources and credits them (using an appropriate citation method) with sufficient precision to allow others to track them down to verify or reevaluate your representation and interpretation of that information. Accomplishing these tasks will be crucial to the successful completion of the final project in this class.

Oral and Written Communication:

Oral and written communication are skills not only relevant to many career paths, but also to everyday life. Have you ever wanted to quickly and memorably convey information, help someone to understand an idea or point of view, and/or convince someone to change their mind or take action? Written and oral communication skills are essential to accomplishing any of these goals, and either skill may be the most efficient and/or effective means of doing so in a particular situation. You are gaining a lot of knowledge and experience as a student at New College, and it would be a pity not to be able to share it with others through strong oral and written communication.

A key test of **oral communication** skills—both in this class and in broader professional life—is the delivery of a presentation on a topic. A student that demonstrates strong oral communication skills will deliver a presentation that fulfills the following criteria: the various components of the presentation are organized in a logical, coherent sequence; the presentation centers on and clearly conveys a compelling message; the presentation incorporates materials (such as examples, illustrations, data, or quotations from sources) that support its key statements and, especially, its overall central message; and the language and delivery techniques employed result in a vivid and polished presentation. Many of these requirements find a parallel in the criteria for strong **written communication**. The latter must use clear, grammatical language to convey a focused, compelling perspective on a topic, and support that perspective with claims and/or evidence drawn from relevant, trustworthy sources. In both **oral and written communication**, it is important to adapt to the particular audience, context, and purpose. In other words, you should be asking yourself: who are you addressing, and under what circumstances and with what goals? Furthermore, there will always be conventions (traditions and/or rules) particular to the context and format of your communication, and you must learn these conventions in order to fulfill or challenge them effectively. You will have a lot of informal opportunities for oral and written communication in this course, but a key way in which you will develop and demonstrate these skill is through the final presentation and essay on a museum of your choice.

Course Goals:

In addition to developing the CYC skills (information literacy, oral communication, and written communication) outlined above, as a result of this course you should be able to:

- Define, situate chronologically, and demonstrate comprehension of key concepts, vocabulary, events, and trends relevant to the origin and history of collecting and museums.
- Apply this knowledge to specific, pertinent examples drawn from the course materials.
- Identify the key characteristics, functions, and understanding of museums over time, as well as the key issues raised by these changes.
- Analyze an individual museum in the light of its history and the key concepts, themes, issues, and historical trends addressed in the course material.
- Apply research methods relevant to art history and museum studies.
 - Use research databases relevant to museums and the broader humanities in order to identify appropriate research sources.

Expectations for a "Satisfactory" Evaluation:

- Regular attendance (no more than 2 absences during the term). Please do your best to reserve these absences for absolute necessity! Also, it is obviously best if you miss fewer than two classes.
- Completion of all readings and class preparatory work by the beginning of the session for which they were assigned, or as otherwise specified by the assignment deadline. In the case of an absence (within the acceptable number), you should complete this work prior to the subsequent session.
- Regular participation in class discussion and activities.
- Satisfactory, on-time completion of all formal assignments (i.e. the portfolio, midterm and late-semester short-answer assessments, and the final project). Whether this work is satisfactory will be made clear in assignment feedback, and it will be evaluated using rubrics that you will be able to review as you complete these assignments.
 - Note: Professor Brion will be managing the assignments, and is willing to provide extensions for deadlines that don't involve time-sensitive activities such as the final oral presentation. If you wish to ask for an extension, please do so in advance, and we can discuss an extension of no more than five days after the original due date (barring some exceptional circumstances). However, it is always best to turn your work in on time, even if it is in a rough state; it allows you to keep in pace with this and other course schedules, and you'll be asked to revise it if the work is not at a satisfactory level. A done assignment is always better than an imaginary, ideal one!

Reading:

You don't have to buy any texts for this class. All readings and course materials will be provided in electronic form via our Canvas course site.

Assignments:

- Each week you will have preparatory work to complete prior to the class session (and sometimes earlier, as indicated by the individual Canvas assignment deadlines). This work will consist of some combination of readings, discussion posts, and/or short written responses.
 - Around mid-semester, you will submit a portfolio of a selection of these responses accompanied by a reflection on your learning.
- Mid- and late-semester short-answer or short essay responses designed to help you synthesize your knowledge and solidify your understanding of the course material.
- A research-based final project in which you examine the history of a museum of your choice, analyze the impact of that history on its current mission and role in society, and relate your analysis to the key themes, historical trends, and issues addressed in the course material. You will present this material in the form of a final oral presentation to the class and a longer written essay submitted to the instructors.

Course Session Topics and Readings to Prepare for Each Session:

Week 1 (8/31) – Challenges facing museums today

Hannah McGivern and Tom Seymour, "Museums and heritage in 2021: pandemic woes and African treasures," *The Art Newspaper* (December 10, 2021).

Catherine Hickley, "Global survey: where in the world are the Benin bronzes?," *The Art Newspaper* (April 29, 2021).

Catherine Hickley, "'We've had a lot of museums reaching out': how Nigeria is getting ready to receive the world's Benin bronzes," *The Art Newspaper* (April 29, 2021).

Week 2 (9/7) – Definitions, functions, and types of museums

George Brown Goode, "The Relationships and Responsibilities of Museums," in Hugh H. Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei, eds., *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2008), pp. 111-124.

Vincent Noce, "What exactly is a museum? Icom comes to blows over new definition," *The Art Newspaper* (August 19, 2019).

Alex Marshall, "What Is a Museum? A Dispute Erupts Over a New Definition," *The New York Times* (August 6, 2020).

Week 3 (9/14) – Origins of museums

Paula Findlen, "The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy," *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 59-78.

Samuel Quiccheberg, Mark A. Meadow, and Bruce Robertson, *The First Treatise on Museums: Samuel Quiccheberg's Inscriptioes, 1565* (Los Angeles, 2013).

John Tradescant, *Musæum Tradescantianum: or, A Collection of Rarities Preserved At South-Lambeth near London By John Tradescant* (London, 1656).

Week 4 (9/21) – Historical influences on museum development

Thomas More, Francis Bacon, Henry Neville, and Susan Bruce, *Three Early Modern Utopias: Utopia, New Atlantis, and The Isle of Pines* (Oxford, 2009).

Arthur MacGregor, "'A Magazin of All Manner of Inventions': Museums in the quest for 'Salomon's House' in seventeenth-century England," *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 207-212.

Elias Ashmole, *Statutes Order & Rules, for the Ashmolean Museum, in the University of Oxford* (1686). [See R. F. Ovenell, *The Ashmolean Museum: 1683-1894* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 49-52.]

Week 5 (9/28) – Museum architecture and display

Gustav Friedrich Waagen, "Thoughts on the New Building to Be Erected for the National Gallery of England," in Jonah Siegel, ed., *The Emergence of the Modern Museum: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Sources* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 200-212.

Benjamin Ives Gilman, "Aims and Principles of the Construction and Management of Museums of Fine Art," in Bettina Messias Carbonell, ed., *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2012), pp. 413-420.

Week 6 (10/5) – Museums and world fairs

Robert W. Rydell, "World Fairs and Museums," in Sharon Macdonald, ed., *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Chichester, 2011), pp. 135-151.

Peter Trippi, "Industrial Arts and the Exhibition Ideal," in Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson, eds., *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (New York, 1997), pp. 79-88.

Week 7 (10/12) – Fieldtrip to Marie Selby Botanical Gardens (preview of *The Orchid Show 2022: Capturing the Perfect Shot*)

Break Week (10/19) – Fall break

Week 8 (10/26) – The Victorian museum

Henry Cole, "Extracts from an Introductory Address on the Functions of the Science and Art Department," in Jonah Siegel, ed., *The Emergence of the Modern Museum: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Sources* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 245-246.

William White, "The Function of Museums, as Considered by Mr. Ruskin," *Museums Association: Report of Proceedings* (York and Sheffield, 1893), pp. 73-94.

Winifred E. Howe, "The Museum's Educational Credo," in Hugh H. Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei, eds., *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2008), pp. 195-197.

H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (London, 2005).

Week 9 (11/2) – Early museums in America

Charles Willson Peale, "My Design in Forming This Museum," in Hugh H. Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei, eds., *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2008), pp. 23-28.

Anonymous (Edwin Lawrence Godkin), "A Word About Museums," *The Nation* (July 27, 1865).

P. T. Barnum, "Mr. Barnum on Museums," *The Nation* (August 10, 1865).

Week 10 (11/9) – Museums, education, and community engagement

Adele Z. Silver, "Issues in Art Museum Education: A Brief History," in Barbara Y. Newsom and Adele Z. Silver, eds., *The Art Museum as Educator* (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 13-18.

John Cotton Dana, "The New Museum," in William A. Peniston, ed., *The New Museum: Selected Writings by John Cotton Dana* (Washington, DC, 1999), pp. 21-43.

Benjamin Ives Gilman, "Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method," in Hugh H. Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei, eds., *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2008), pp. 129-136.

Week 11 (11/16) – Illicit trafficking of cultural property

James S. Plaut, "Hitler's Capital," *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 178, no. 4 (October 1946).

Week 12 (11/23) – Thanksgiving holiday

Week 13 (11/30) – Great women collectors

Peggy Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict* (New York, 1960).

Week 14 (12/7) – Final presentations

Week 15 (12/14) – Final papers due