



Instructor: C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa

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Office Hours: 12:00-1:00 T&R, and by appointment

Description

Museums are powerful institutions that shape the public's understanding of Native American history and culture. This course provides a historical overview of the changing relationship between Indigenous people and museums and examines the current state of contemporary museum practice. The central questions we will consider include: How has the relationship between Native Americans and museums changed over the last century and what are the key watershed moments and developments in the field? What are the predominant themes and narratives, objects and images in exhibitions focusing on Indigenous history and culture? How can museums grapple with centuries of unresolved trauma as they tell the stories of Native American histories and cultures? How have tribal communities challenged the rights of museums to house their material culture and human remains, and engaged in efforts to decolonize museums? How can museums honor Indigenous pasts while simultaneously asking hard questions about the history of settler colonialism in the United States? What are the future directions in contemporary museum practice? Topics will include "salvage anthropology" and the collecting of Native American material culture in the early 20th century; historic and contemporary exhibition practices; Indigenous activism and the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990); the potential for museums to serve as "sites of conscience"; Indigenous curation methods; and the development of tribally owned and operated museums. We will also address questions of historical evidence and methodology, the politics of theory and perspective, and conceptual approaches to the study of intermarriage within the discipline of history. This course is designed as an intensive reading course. If you are not prepared to read and discuss academic theory and debates, please choose another course.

Goals

In this course, students will:

- Enhance their knowledge of museum history in the United States, particularly the history displaying and presenting Native histories and cultures.
- Explore the connections between museum practice and social science, science, technology, and medicine, as well as the ways tribal people have worked against and into the museum industry.
- Practice critical reading and analysis of recent scholarship.
- Consider the connections between scholarly history and public history approaches to the history of race and representation.

Required Texts

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (1995)
- Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life* (1998)
- Robert Rydell, *All the World's A Fair* (1984)
- Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures* (1991)

- Orin Starn, *Ishi's Brain* (2004)
- Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Contesting Knowledge* (2009)
- Amy Lonetree and Amanda Cobb, eds., *The National Museum of the American Indian* (2008)
- Patricia Pierce Erikson, *Voices of a Thousand People* (2002)
- Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums* (2012)
- David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars* (2000)
- Devon Mihesuah, ed., *Repatriation Reader* (2000)
- Shepard Krech III and Barbara Hail, eds., *Collecting Native America* (1999)
- In addition, we will read many articles and book chapters throughout the semester. These will be available on Blackboard.

Assignments

50 points - Class Discussion Leader	60 points - Critical Essay #3
60 points - Weekly Responses	60 points - Critical Essay #4
60 points - Critical Essay #1	150 points - Final Project
60 points - Critical Essay #2	500 points - TOTAL

**** - You must complete all graded work in the class.**

Attendance and Participation

Because this is a discussion-based course, attendance and active participation are crucial to its success. I expect you to attend class regularly and promptly. Please let me know in advance if you will not be able to attend a session. You are expected to participate actively in class discussions, posing questions to your classmates and asking for their thoughts on challenging portions of the reading. Since I expect these things of every student, I will not grade participation separately. Only if your contributions are deficient will I factor that into your final course grade.

Class Discussion Leader

Each student will lead a portion of class discussion during one class meeting this semester. The discussion leader should prepare 5-10 specific and/or open-ended questions to stimulate discussion and should be ready to provide follow-up questions as the discussion evolves. Prior to the class session, the discussion leader should meet with Dr. GP to help prepare. After the class session, the student should write a one-page reflection, summarizing his/her thoughts on the discussion. The grade for this assignment is based upon the questions, the written summary/reflection, and the discussion leader's preparedness/professionalism.

Weekly Responses

Each week, students are required to write a brief response to the weekly reading and submit them to the Discussion section of Blackboard by 2pm on Thursdays when our class meets. The responses are designed to help you prepare for the class discussions, read actively, think critically about the readings, and write critically, but respectfully about scholarly work.

- The responses should:

- 1) Summarize the thesis of the book or of a particular chapter in the book.
- 2) What kinds of primary sources does the author engage?
- 3) What are the three most important secondary sources the author engages?
State briefly how s/he engages these works i.e., draws on them for support, refutes existing arguments/ paradigms, borrows a theoretical model, etc.
- 4) What questions does the work leave unanswered or raise for future study?
(Note: this is not a place to critique the author's style or tone unless it is germane to the questions raised by the book.)

Critical Response Essays

Students will write four critical essays throughout the semester. As this class is designed upon the graduate reading seminar model, this is most appropriate form of assessment. Students will be provided with a writing prompt that might ask them to compare readings, or focus on a specific reading only. You will only need to use course materials to complete the assignment. Each essay will be 3-4 pages in length.

Final Project National Museum of the American Indian Exhibit Review

At some point during the semester, please visit the National Museum of the American Indian, and write an exhibit review of approximately 2500-3000 words. (If you are not familiar with exhibit reviews, please use our library databases to search for reviews in both popular periodicals and scholarly journals.)

Your review should be informed by our reading of the critical literature on the development of NMAI and past and current goals of the museum, as well as an understanding of the development of museums as one of the structures of settler colonialism in the United States. Please read and cite the work of at least three scholars, beyond those sources we've read for class, in your review. At our final class meeting, each student will present a summary (5-7 minutes in length) of his/her exhibit review. While I would prefer you focus on an exhibit at NMAI for this assignment, it is possible that you could use another site (for example, if you are traveling during the semester and have the opportunity to visit a tribal cultural heritage center). Please clear this with me in advance.

This assignment should be fun while simultaneously giving you experience with public presentation, allow you to write critically but respectfully about the work of public historians, and help you consider the relationship between scholarly and public history.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

UNIT ONE: MAKING HISTORY AND MUSEUMS AS STRUCTURES OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

Week 1 (Aug. 31): Course Introduction

Class Introduction

Readings:

“‘Indian Country’ on Washington’s Mall—The National Museum of the American Indian: A Review Essay” in *Museum Anthropology* 28(2) (2005).

Paul Chaat Smith, "Critical Reflections on the Our Peoples Exhibit" in Lonetree and Cobb, *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*

Jacki Rand, “Why I Can’t Visit the National Museum of the American Indian: Reflections of an accidental privileged insider, 1989-1994” *Common-Place* 7(4) July 2007. <http://www.common-place.org/vol-07/no-04/rand/>

MUSEUM REVIEW; Museum With an American Indian Voice, *New York Times*, Sept 21, 2004. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E01E4D71539F932A1575AC0A9629C8B63>

Week 2 (Sep. 7): No Class Meeting

Readings:

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

Week 3 (Sep. 14): Producing History in Nineteenth-Century Museums

Readings:

Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926*

John C. Ewers, “William Clark’s Indian Museum in St. Louis, 1816-1838” in *A Cabinet of Curiosities*

Week 4 (Sep. 21): Exhibiting Empire at World’s Fairs

Readings:

Robert Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*

Paige Raibmon, “Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka’wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World’s Fair” *Canadian Historical Review* 81(2) (June 2000)

Critical Essay #1 -- DUE

UNIT TWO: ANTHROPOLOGISTS, COLLECTORS, AND THE POLITICS AND LEGACIES OF MUSEUM COLLECTION

Week 5 (Sep. 28): Nineteenth-Century Collectors and Museum Founders

Readings:

Shephard Krech III and Barbara Hail, eds., *Collecting Native America, 1870-1960*

ATTEND: Fall of the Book, Angela Pulley Hudson, more details to come

Week 6 (Oct. 5): Ishi and the Significance of “Authenticity”

Readings:

Orin Starn, *Ishi's Brain*

Nicholas Thomas, “Licensed Curiosity: Cook’s Pacific Voyages” in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, eds., *The Cultures of Collecting*

Week 7 (Oct. 12): The Ancient One and the Fight over Native American Identity - No Class Meeting - Dr. GP will be presenting research at the American Society for Ethnohistory Annual Meeting

Readings:

David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars*

Week 8 (Oct. 19): NAGPRA and Repatriation

Readings:

Devon Mihesuah, *Repatriation Reader*

Robin Boast and Jim Enote, “Virtual Repatriation: It is Neither Virtual nor Repatriation” in *Heritage in the Context of Globalization*

Critical Essay #2 -- DUE

UNIT THREE: THE POLITICS OF INTERPRETATION—EXHIBITING CULTURES

Week 9 (Oct. 26): The Politics of Museum Display

Readings:

Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures*

Week 10 (Nov 2): No Class Meeting — Dr GP will be presenting research at the Western History Association Annual Meeting

Readings:
Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Contesting Knowledge*

Week 11 (Nov. 9): NMAI, Critical Conversations

Readings:
Amy Lonetree and Amanda Cobb, *The National Museum of the American Indian*

Critical Essay #3 -- DUE

UNIT FOUR: DECOLONIZING MUSEUMS

Week 12 (Nov. 16): Indigenous Self-Determination and the Rise of Tribal Museums

Readings:
Patricia Pierce Erikson, *Voices of a Thousand People*

Week 13 (Nov. 23): CLASS CANCELLED — THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14 (Nov. 30): Are Museums Sites of Decolonization?

Readings:
Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*

Critical Essay #4 -- DUE

Week 15 (Dec. 7): Presentations

**** Final Project Essay DUE during Final Exam Week**

Disability Accommodations

If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor. In addition to providing your professors with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with them at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Office of Disability Services and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell me.

A Note about Communication

Student privacy is governed by the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** and is an essential aspect of any course. Email is a necessary part of life in the digital age. I will communicate with you via email throughout the semester and will use your Masonlive. I do not accept "I did not check my email" as a valid excuse. I check my email frequently and will strive always to respond to your questions and concerns as soon as possible. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

A Note about Academic Integrity:

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely.

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

Grading Scale:

500-470 = A	384-365 = C
469-450 = A-	364-350 = C-
449-435 = B+	349-335 = D+
434-415 = B	334-315 = D
414-400 = B-	314-300 = D-
399-385 = C+	299-000 = F