

The Museum

ARTH 394 sec 001 • ARTH 594 sec 001
Wed. 4:30 – 7:10 pm • Nguyen Engineering Bldg. 1107

Dr. Vanessa M. Schulman

vschulma@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Thurs. 10:00-11:30 am, or by appointment • Office: Robinson-B 340

Course Information:

3 credit hours. Examines history, theory, practice, ethics, and current problems of collecting and displaying art and artifacts to the public. Emphasizes issues central to museums in Washington, D.C., or museums in other locations. Mason Core: Synthesis.

Description: This course will focus on the emergence and development of museums in the western world; the role of museums in social, educational, and political life; and the history and theory of collecting. We often think of museums as neutral institutions with a purely educational purpose, but we will see that throughout the modern era they have been associated with political and social messages as well. What are the origins of the modern museum? Where do the pieces in museums come from and to whom do they belong? What kinds of narratives have museums created and reinforced in their visitors? What happens to an object when it is removed from its context and placed in a museum? We will address all these questions as we trace the development of museums from their medieval origins to the twenty-first century.

Goals: By participating in this course, students should meet the following goals:

- understand the history, origins, and development of the modern museum
- synthesize information to articulate critical responses to objects and texts
- analyze and evaluate museological and curatorial practices in their historical context
- develop skills of academic communication, both written and oral

Mason Core: The Synthesis requirement provides students with the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge, skills and values gained from the Mason Core curriculum. Synthesis courses strive to expand students' ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines. Students who successfully complete a course in the Synthesis category must meet the following learning outcomes:

1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards.
2. Using perspectives from two or more disciplines, connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns.
3. Apply critical thinking skills to evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or solution using appropriate evidence or resources.

Class Communication: The best way to reach me is by email at vschulma@gmu.edu. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. I will send important reminders to your GMU email, so be sure you check that account or have your mail forwarded to an account you check regularly.

Readings: Readings will be made available as PDFs on Blackboard. Readings should be completed before the class meeting for which they are listed. This is a reading-intensive course.

Grading and Assignments:	Participation	10%
	Discussion Questions	10%
	Short Papers (3)	30%
	Final Project	30%
	Presentations (2)	20%

Participation: Participation starts at a C (75/100), but when you participate, that will quickly go up. You can use electronics, but please don't text, post on Instagram, stream video, etc.

Discussion Questions: For each class meeting, bring at least 3-4 substantive questions about the readings. Questions could address issues you want to discuss in more detail, disagreed with, or were not sure about. These will be used to start discussion and will be collected at the end of class.

Short Papers (3): Three 2-3 page papers, reflecting on visits to three different museums: an art museum, a science/natural history museum, and a history/anthropology/culture museum. You may submit the papers in any order, but you must visit all three types of museums. Papers are due Friday Feb. 7; Friday Feb. 21; and Friday March 6. Use Blackboard to view instructions and submit.

Final Project: After completing three museum visits, choose one and pinpoint a specific issue where their current museum practices could be improved. For your final project, you will write a proposal highlighting the problem and offering practical solutions backed by theoretical and contextual research. The final paper will be approximately 6 pages (10 for graduate students).

The following scaffolded sections of the assignment are ungraded and are intended to keep you on track. However, for each step you miss, 10 points will be deducted from your project's final grade.

- Crowdsourcing/brainstorming class session: Wednesday 3/18
- Submit one-paragraph abstract and bibliography: Friday 3/27 (submit online)
- Rough draft for in-class peer review and optional instructor review: Wednesday 4/15

Presentations (2):

Discussion Leader (10%): Choose one of the course readings to present to the class. The presentation can be informal. You should outline the reading's key points and then engage us with questions or an activity. Generally these presentations (including discussion) last about 15 minutes.

Final Presentation (10%): The last two meetings are devoted to student presentations of final projects. You will give a 10-minute formal presentation of your project, followed by 5 minutes of class discussion. Unlike the first presentation, this one should be structured, practiced, and rehearsed ahead of time. You should provide visual aids, when appropriate.

Late work: Penalized 5 points for each 24 hours past the due date. Extensions will be granted *if deemed appropriate* when students submit a request in writing at least one week before the due date.

A Note on Attendance: Excused absences include illness, family emergency, and religious observance. Chronic absenteeism without notification will result in the following penalties:

<u>Unexcused Absences</u>	<u>Result</u>
More than 2	Course grade drops by one letter
More than 4	Course grade drops by two letters
More than 6	F for the course

Evaluation of Student Work: I use the following measurements of student performance. All assignments will be graded using a 100-point scale.

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Clearly stands out as excellent performance
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Level of work is good to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Level of work is satisfactory to average
D (60-69)			Work is below average and marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty constitutes a serious violation of your learning process and your social contract with other students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- failure to cite sources for quotations and ideas
- cutting and pasting text from other sources
- passing off another's work as your own
- purchasing or copying a paper found online
- reusing a paper you wrote for another course

I have a **zero tolerance** policy for academic dishonesty, whether intentional or not. Students who violate standards of academic honesty will earn a **zero** for the assignment and may risk failing the course or being subject to disciplinary action. More information, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at oai.gmu.edu.

Support Resources for Students

Accommodations: Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit ds.gmu.edu, email ods@gmu.edu or call (703) 993-2474.

I am committed to providing all accommodations approved by Disability Services. Please note that faculty do not automatically receive notice of accommodations from ODS, so be sure to contact me directly to discuss how we will implement your approved accommodations.

Help with Writing: If you have struggled with writing in the past, or if English is not your first language, you may want to seek help from the Writing Center. They offer one-on-one tutoring and workshops throughout the semester. Robinson-B213, or writingcenter.gmu.edu

Emotional and Mental Support: College life is complicated. Students may find it helpful to talk with a professional. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help address both personal and academic concerns. Services are free and confidential. SUB I, Room 3129, or caps.gmu.edu

LGBTQ Resources: LGBTQ Resources “works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies.” lgbtq.gmu.edu

Diversity: The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education provides support for an inclusive campus, including first-generation and undocumented students. odime.gmu.edu

Course Calendar

Week 1

Wed. 1/22

TOPICS:

Course Policies and Expectations
Partner Interview and Discussion

READING (before first paper):

• Margaret Lindauer, "The Critical Museum Visitor," in *New Museum Theory and Practice*, ed. Janet Marstine (Wiley, 2005), 203-225.

Week 2

Wed. 1/29

TOPIC:

Museum Origins

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "Remarks on the Collections of Rudolf II: The *Kunstkammer* as a Form of *Representatio*," *Art Journal* 38.1 (Autumn 1978): 22-28.
- Mark A. Meadow, "Quiccheberg and the Copious Object: Wenzel Jamnitzer's Silver Writing Box," in *The Lure of the Object*, ed. Stephen Melville (Yale, 2005), 39-58.
- Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," in *Exhibiting Cultures*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Smithsonian, 1991), 25-32.

BRING:

An object or curiosity of your choice. (You will get it back at the end of class.)

Week 3

Wed. 2/5

TOPIC:

Art Museums

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Anonymous, "The British Museum," *The Penny Magazine*, Apr. 7, 1832, 13-14.
- Carol Duncan, "From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London," in *Grasping the World*, ed. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (Ashgate, 2004), 250-278.
- Michaela Giebelhausen, "Museum Architecture: A Brief History," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Blackwell, 2006), 223-244.

DUE:

Short Essay #1 (by 11:59 PM on Friday 2/7)

Week 4

Wed. 2/12

TOPIC:

Natural History and Science Museums

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Charles Willson Peale, "Advertisement" and "General Principles," in *A Scientific and Descriptive Catalogue of Peale's Museum* (Philadelphia, 1796), iii-viii.
- Carla Yanni, "Museum Vision: Sights Unseen Before," chapter 1 in *Nature's Museums: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display* (Princeton, 2005), 15-32.
- Steven Conn, "Science Museums and the Culture Wars," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Blackwell, 2006), 494-508.
- Peter Heering, "Science Museums and Science Education," *Isis* 108.2 (2017): 399-406.

Week 5

Wed. 2/19

TOPIC:

Ethnographic and National Museums

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Annie E. Coombes, "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities," *Oxford Art Journal* 11.2 (1988): 57-68.
- Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," in *Exhibiting Cultures*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Smithsonian, 1991), 191-204.
- Mara Gladstone and Janet Catherine Berlo, "The Body in the (White) Box: Corporeal Ethics and Museum Representation," in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, ed. Janet Marstine (Routledge, 2011), 353-378.

DUE:

Short Essay #2 (by 11:59 PM on Friday 2/21)

Week 6

Wed. 2/26

TOPIC:

Controversies I: Issues of Provenance

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Whose Culture Is It?" in *Whose Culture?* ed. James Cuno (Princeton, 2012), 71-86.
- James Cuno, "Culture War: The Case Against Repatriating Museum Artifacts," *Foreign Affairs* 93.6 (2014): 119-129.
- Monica Udvardy, Linda L. Giles, and John B. Mitsanze, "The Transatlantic Trade in African Ancestors: Mijikenda Memorial Statues and the Ethics of Collecting and Curating Non-Western Cultural Property," *American Anthropologist* 105.3 (2003): 566-580.
- Pamela Z. McClusky, "Why is this here? Art Museum Texts as Ethical Guides," in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, ed. Janet Marstine (Routledge, 2011), 298-315.

Week 7

Wed. 3/4

TOPIC:

Controversies II: Controversial Exhibits

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Stephen E. Weil, "Publicly-Chosen Art: What Standards Apply?" in *A Cabinet of Curiosities* (Smithsonian, 1995), 51-74.
- Susan A. Crane, "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum," *History and Theory* 36.4 (1997): 44-63.
- Paul Williams, "Memorial Museums and the Objectification of Suffering," in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, ed. Janet Marstine (Routledge, 2011), 220-235.

DUE:

Short Essay #3 (by 11:59 PM on Friday 3/6)

Week 8

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

Wed. 3/18

TOPIC:

Crowdsourcing/Brainstorming Meeting

BRING:

At least three ideas for your final project

Week 10

Wed. 3/25

TOPIC:

Diversity, Equality, Inclusion

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Katy Deepwell, "Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s," in *New Museum Theory and Practice*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell, 2006), 64-84.
- Amy Lonetree, "Museums as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums," in *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith (University of Nebraska, 2009), 322-337.
- Lisa G. Corrin, "Mining the Museum: Artists Look at Museums, Museums Look at Themselves," in *Mining the Museum: An Exhibition* (The Contemporary, Baltimore, 1994), 1-22.

DUE:

Final project proposal with bibliography (by Friday 3/27 at 11:59 PM)

Week 11

Wed. 4/1

GUEST LECTURE:

Adriana Ospina, Curator of the Permanent Collection, Art Museum of the Americas

** this class begins at 5:30 PM **

Week 12

Wed. 4/8

TOPIC:

Audience Engagement

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Scott G. Paris, “How Can Museums Attract Visitors in the Twenty-first Century?” in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Altamira, 2006), 255-266.
- Christopher Wingfield, “Touching the Buddha: Encounters with a Charismatic Object,” in *Museum Materialities*, ed. Sandra Dudley (Routledge, 2009): 53-69.
- Elaine Heumann Gurian, “Threshold Fear,” in *Reshaping Museum Space*, ed. Suzanne Macleod (Routledge, 2005), 203-214.
- Tula Giannini, “Contested Space: Activism and Protest,” in *Museums and Digital Culture*, ed. Tula Giannini and Jonathan P. Bowen (Springer, 2019), 91-111.

Week 13

Wed. 4/15

TOPIC:

Digital Environments

Presenter(s): _____

READINGS:

- Jenny Newell, “Old Objects, New Media: Historical Collections, Digitization and Affect,” *Journal of Material Culture* 17.3 (2012): 287-306.
- Tula Giannini and Jonathan P. Bowen, “Rethinking Museum Exhibitions: Merging Physical and Digital Culture—Past to Present,” in *Museums and Digital Culture*, ed. Tula Giannini and Jonathan P. Bowen (Springer, 2019), 163-193.

BRING:

Printout or digital copy of rough draft for in-class peer review.

Optional second copy of rough draft for instructor review.

Week 14

Wed. 4/22

Student Presentations

Week 15

Wed. 4/29

Student Presentations

Course Evaluations

DUE: Final Project (due by Wednesday 5/6 at 11:59 PM)