

SAHC70101: The Museum and its Contexts

Core Course – Semester I (30 credits)

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Aim

To provide all students studying AGMS with a knowledge and understanding of the history, theory and operation of the museum as a social, cultural and political institution.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the core course, students will have acquired a range of investigative tools and approaches with which to study the purpose and effects of the museum, as both a historical and contemporary institution. Investigation of the origins and philosophy of the idea of the museum, and its subsequent historical development, will lead to consideration of the role of the museum in society today. The course will address the contexts – theoretical, legal, ethical, political, social and professional – in which the museum operates and will explore the connections between them. It is an objective of the core course to equip all Art Gallery & Museum Studies students with a foundation of knowledge and understanding which will underpin both their study of their courses in semester 2 and also their choice of a dissertation topic. The concept of the “museum” in the course title and content does not refer to a specific museum discipline: it therefore embraces the art gallery and also museums of archaeology, ethnography, history and local history. Indeed, the common and also the distinct issues that are raised by the collection, display and interpretation of different categories of artefacts will be explored during the course.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The course is taught in weekly blocks and with three preparation weeks. During teaching weeks, the lectures, seminars, fieldwork and presentations will take place on Mondays (10am-5pm), Tuesdays (10am-5pm) and Wednesday mornings (10am-1pm). Morning sessions will be divided into a lecture (10-11am), followed by a seminar (11am-1pm). The afternoons will usually consist of a piece of fieldwork or a workshop (2-4pm), followed by student presentations (4-5pm).

Illustrative Bibliography

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Findlen, Paula (1994) *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* Berkeley: University of California Press.

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Nairne, Sandy, Bruce Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg (eds) (1996) *Thinking About Exhibitions*. London: Routledge.

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Shelton, Anthony (ed) (2001) *Collectors: individuals and institutions*. London: Horniman Museum.

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Sherman, Daniel and Irit Rogoff (eds) (1994) *Museum Culture: histories, discourses, spectacles*. London: Routledge.

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Witcomb, Andrea (2003) *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum*. London: New York: Routledge.