



Centre for Museology
School of Arts, Histories and Cultures

art Africa Americas Asia collecting colonialism critical
culture curatorship display ethics exhibiting gallery
interpreting material museum objects Oceania
politics practice reconstruction restitution storage

Exhibiting Cultures

1st Semester 30 credit option course

MA Art Gallery and Museum Studies

www.manchester.ac.uk/museology

SAHC60161

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Exhibiting Cultures

Course Option – Semester 2

Aims

The aim of the course is to develop students' understanding of the intellectual, ethical and practical issues arising from the display and interpretation of objects within the museum. By studying practices of collecting and exhibition in ethnographic, archaeology and art museums – both historically and in the present – the course will provide students with a knowledge and understanding of institutional and disciplinary formation, as well as of critical issues in contemporary curating.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit successful students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a critical knowledge of:
 - the role of the museum (historically and in the present) in the production of meaning and value to objects via practices of collecting, conservation, storage, display and interpretation
 - the specific issues of appropriation and representation arising from the curation of non-western objects in museums and art galleries
 - the application of material culture and post-colonial studies to an understanding of museum theory and practice
- Describe, analyse and evaluate, on the basis of first-hand study, the collecting, display, storage, conservation and interpretative strategies of a number of museums in the North West.

Content

This course examines the strategies and practices by which museums select, interpret, organise, conserve and display objects produced within diverse historical, geographical and cultural contexts. The course provides an introduction to the theoretical issues involved in interpreting and 'reading' the biographies of objects. We focus, in particular, on the construction of meaning of ethnographic collections during the colonial period, as well as issues of ownership and display in the post-colonial world. The classifications of non-western objects as 'art' or 'artefact', the ethical dimensions of curating and conserving non-western objects as well as cross-cultural notions of authenticity will be addressed.

Teaching and learning methods

The course will be delivered through a combination of university-based seminars, independent and group site visits and seminars with museum/gallery professionals.

Illustrative bibliography

- Stocking, George W (ed) (1985) *Objects and others: essays on museums and material culture*, History of Anthropology, Volume 3. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Shelton, Anthony (ed) (2001) *Collectors: expressions of self and other* and *Collectors: individuals and institutions*. London: The Horniman Museum
- Pearce, Susan (ed) (1994) *Interpreting objects & collections*. Leicester University Press
- Pearce, Susan (1989) *Museum studies in material culture*. Leicester University Press.
- Myers, Fred R (2001) *The empire of things: regimes of value and material culture*. Santa Fe and Oxford
- Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean (2000) *Museums and the interpretation of visual culture*. London: Routledge