

Archaeological Museum Practicum: Collections Management: COURSE AS.389.240**FALL 2019, FRIDAYS 1:30-4:00PM**

INSTRUCTOR: Sanchita Balachandran
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OFFICE HOURS: Fridays, 4-5pm, and by appointment

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

Our class meets on Native land. The Museum is currently working towards meeting and talking with members of these communities with the aim of respectfully acknowledging their presences on this land.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn current procedures for surveying, cataloguing, documenting and rehousing collections using objects from the Archaeological Museum. This is a hands-on practicum course working closely with museum staff.

The learning goals of this course include:

- Exploring and understanding various aspects of museum collections management
- Learning hands-on skills related to the study and care of museum collections
- Developing more equitable, reciprocal and respectful museum practices
- Broadening our view of the varied audiences for whom museums function

Rather than considering collections management as a set of static and purely practical interventions that raise few theoretical or ethical questions, this course invites us to re-examine and intentionally re-think how museum collections may be managed in more equitable, reciprocal and respectful ways. Given the historic association of museums with colonial practices and the current push to diversify and democratize museums, this work of methodically questioning “how things are done” is particularly relevant and needed. Our readings therefore aim to connect and intertwine theoretical, philosophical and ethical questions in museum work with applied practices of caring for and interpreting museum collections. While we will be reading material from around the globe, we will use these readings to consider how the questions and approaches raised in other contexts can help us work more intentionally here at the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum.

Our readings are limited to works available in English, which in turn limits the scope of our conversation to English-speaking institutions and individuals, thus leaving out large parts of our world and their approaches. Furthermore, much of the existing literature on museum management and practice has been primarily focused on “Western” (European and non-indigenous North American cultural heritage) collecting practices or has been written about “non-Western” cultural material from a “Western” perspective. Given these limitations, a specific intention of this course is to broaden our perspective by reading and engaging with

authors and practitioners who self-identify as women, people of color, indigenous and Native people, and LGBTQIA+ people.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are required to attend every meeting with all readings and any writing exercises for that day completed. On average, there will be approximately 40 pages of reading (not including references) per week. All readings will be posted on Blackboard or will be available on the internet, as listed. Absences for religious holidays, special observances, or other reasons should be discussed with the instructor in advance. Do not come to class if you are feeling unwell but do inform the instructor by email. You are expected to be in class for the entirety of the scheduled time, from 1:30 to 3:50pm, including the Friday before Thanksgiving break.

The first part of class will involve discussing the readings followed by a brief lecture. After a short break, the second half of the class meeting will typically include a hands-on exercise with the Archaeological Museum collection.

Your grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

Class participation	20%
Writing exercises (now includes 4 draft sections for final paper)	40%
Online catalog entries	20%
Final paper	20%

In order to ensure that you are completing and thinking about the course readings, you will have a short writing exercise—typically 500 words—each week that is due by midnight on Thursdays. These exercises should be posted to “Discussions” on Blackboard, under the prompt for the week. The assignment prompt will be posted on Blackboard on the Monday morning of the week that it is due.

Other Exercises/Class projects:

As part of the course, you will be learning to make storage containers for ancient objects, practice labeling objects, and write object descriptions for uploading to the museum database and online searchable catalog. Any hands-on work with museum objects will take place during class hours.

Final Paper:

You will develop a proposal for an exhibition to be developed in the Archaeological Museum based on your experience of registering, cataloguing and studying a collection this semester. More detail about this exercise will be provided later in the semester.

Grading:

An “A” is awarded for exceptional performance in class. Simply completing the assignments as required will result in a “B” grade. In order to be graded, all work must be turned in on time. Late work receives a “0.”

COURSE ETHICS AND POLICIES

Our classroom is a space for rigorous and thoughtful discussion and debate. As a community, we agree to communicate our ideas and our dissent respectfully and constructively.

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board Web site (<http://ethics.jhu.edu>) for more information.

You are expected to abide by all Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum protocols. Failure to follow these protocols will result in revoking your privilege to work with museum objects; this will also severely affect your grade, as several exercises are object-based. Food, drink and gum are not allowed in the museum and should be disposed of as far from the museum space as possible. There are no digital devices allowed in the seminar room except during discussion of the readings or when authorized by the instructor; this includes laptops, Ipads, tablets, cell phones, etc. Any improper use of devices during discussion time will result in them being entirely banned from class for everyone. You are expected to take notes with pencil only, and on paper. All other materials including coats and bags should be stored in the cubbies outside the seminar room. For more information on museum procedures, see: <http://archaeologicalmuseum.jhu.edu/visit/museum-visitor-guidelines/>

Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class should speak to the instructor as well as obtain an accommodation letter and additional assistance from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

In most of my courses, you are welcome to bring a family member to class on occasional days, if, for example, emergency childcare is unavailable, or a relative has health needs; however, given that we will be working with museum objects on most days, this will likely not be feasible. However, please have a conversation with me about any such needs so that we can figure out some alternatives.

COURSE SCHEDULE

8/30 Introduction

In class exercise: Object handling quiz and lecture

9/6 Museum missions

- American Alliance of Museums. “Developing a mission statement.” <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Developing-a-Mission-Statement-2018.pdf>
- International Council of Museums. 2019. “Creating a new museum definition—the backbone of ICOM (International Council of Museums).” <https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>
- Small, Z. 2019. “A New Definition of “Museum” Sparks International Debate.” *Medium*. <https://hyperallergic.com/513858/icom-museum-definition/>
- Balachandran, S. and K. McHugh. 2019. “Respectful and Responsible Stewardship: Maintaining and Renewing the Cultural Relevance of Museum Collections.” In *Preventive Conservation: Collection Storage*, edited by Lisa Elkin and Christopher A. Norris, 3-24.

In class exercise: Introduction to object handling

9/13 Forming Museum Collections: Archaeological Practices

- Selections from *Handbook on Postcolonial Archaeology*, 2010:
 - Lydon, J. and U.Z. Rizvi, “Introduction: Postcolonialism and Archaeology,” 17-29
 - Porter, B.W., “Near Eastern Archaeology: Imperial Pasts, Postcolonial Presents, and the Possibilities of a Decolonized Future,” 51-60.
- Cipolla, C., Quinn, J. and J. Levy. 2019. “Theory in Collaborative Indigenous Archaeology: Insights from Mohegan.” *American Antiquity*, 84, 1: 127-142.
- Cohen, M. December 1884. “Mr. Mendes Cohen on ‘the Cohen Collection of Egyptian Antiquities,’ and its Collector, Colonel Mendes I. Cohen.” *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, 21-23.
- Cohen, M. I. 1859. *Catalogue of Egyptian Antiquities Consisting of Mummies, Funereal Vases, Idols, Amulets, Gems, etc., etc.* Read the preface and peruse the entries.

In class exercise: Select objects for class projects.

9/20 Curatorial Practices in the Museum

- Friberg, Z. and I. Huvila. 2019. “Using Object Biographies To Understand the Curation Crisis: Lessons Learned from the Museum Life of an Archaeological Collection.” *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 34:4, 362-382, DOI: [10.1080/09647775.2019.1612270](https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2019.1612270)
- Bivens, J., Garcia, B., Moore, P., trivedi, n., and A. Wittman. 2017. “Chapter 7: Collections: How we Hold the Stuff We Hold in Trust.” *Museum as Site for Social (MASS) Action Toolkit*, 125-138. https://www.museumaction.org/s/TOOLKIT_10_2017.pdf
- Wilson, H.W. 1908. “The Archaeological Collection of the Johns Hopkins University.” *The Classical Weekly* 1, 24, 189-191.
- Magoffin, R.V.D. November 1915. “The Archaeological Collection of the University.” *The Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine*, 27-32.

In class exercise: Developing biographies for objects.

9/27 Provenance

- Selections from *The Acquisition and Exhibition of Classical Antiquities. Professional, Legal and Ethical Perspectives*, 2007.
 - Gerstenblith, P. "The Acquisition and Exhibition of Classical Antiquities." 47-60.
 - Bradley, D.E. "Response to Patty Gerstenblith." 61-63
 - Rorschach, K. "Scylla or Charybdis. Antiquities Collecting by University Art Museums." 65-73.
- Colwell, C. "Why Museums Are Returning Cultural Treasures." (Running time, 12:54) https://www.ted.com/talks/chip_colwell_why_museums_are_returning_cultural_treasures/transcript?language=en
- Saunders, D., Barr, J. and N. Budrovich. 2016. "The Antiquities Provenance Project at the Getty." *Observations of the Collections Analysis Collaborative*. 1-8. <http://www.cac.rice.edu/sites/default/files/articles/CACObservations.1.Saunders%2C%20Barr%2C%20Budrovich.pdf>
- AAMD Guidelines on the Acquisitions of Archaeological Material and Ancient Art, 2013: <https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/AAMD%20Guidelines%202013.pdf>

In class exercise: Provenance research on objects.

10/4 Object Description

- Thornes, R. with P. Dorrell and H. Lie. 1999. *Introduction to Object ID. Guidelines for Making Records that Describe Art, Antiques and Antiquities*. 1-35. <https://books.google.com/books?id=POhVAgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

In class exercise: Object description exercise, practicing cataloguing objects for database.

10/11 Registration and Record Keeping

- Greene, C. S. (2016), Material Connections: "The Smithsonian Effect" in Anthropological Cataloguing. *Mus Anthropol*, 39: 147-162. doi:[10.1111/muan.12121](https://doi.org/10.1111/muan.12121)
- Turner, H. (2016), The Computerization Of Material Culture Catalogues: Objects and Infrastructure in the Smithsonian Institution's Department of Anthropology. *Mus Anthropol*, 39: 163-177. doi:[10.1111/muan.12122](https://doi.org/10.1111/muan.12122)

10/18 Fall break day—no class

10/25 Registration and Record Keeping

In class exercise: Discuss plans for exhibition proposal. Continue cataloguing objects for database.

11/1 Exhibition Planning

- Anderson, A., Rogers, A., Potter, E., Cook, E., Gardner, K., Murawski, M., Anila, S., and A. Machida, 2017. "Chapter 5: Interpretation: Liberating the Narrative." *Museum as Site for Social (MASS) Action Toolkit*, 89-104.
https://www.museumaction.org/s/TOOLKIT_10_2017.pdf
- Walheimer, M. "Museum Exhibition Design—Part I." *Museumplanner.org blog*. 2012.
<https://museumplanner.org/museum-exhibition-design-part-i/>
- Society for Experiential Graphic Design Blog. 2015? "The Twenty Most Influential Exhibit Designs This Century." <https://segd.org/20-most-influential-exhibit-designs-century>

Part of paper due (500 words): The purpose of the exhibition. What story will you tell about the work of the museum through the experience of working these Greek and South Italian ceramics?

11/8 Exhibition Audiences

- Guler, K. 2015. "An Exhibition Design Checklist for Visitor Circulation." *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 30:1, 63-74, DOI: [10.1080/09647775.2015.1008392](https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2015.1008392)
- Lake-Hammond, A. and N. Waite, 2010. "Exhibition Design: Bridging the Knowledge Gap." *The Design Journal*, 13:1, 77-98, DOI: [10.2752/146069210X12580336766400](https://doi.org/10.2752/146069210X12580336766400)
- Skydsgaard, M.A., Møller Andersen, H., and H. King, 2016. "Designing museum exhibits that facilitate visitor reflection and discussion." *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 31:1, 48-68, DOI: [10.1080/09647775.2015.1117237](https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2015.1117237)

Part of paper due (500 words): The audience for the exhibition; plans for how you will assess whether/how much you have reached the audience.

11/15 Inclusive Exhibition Design

- Phillips, L. 2017. "Responsible Exhibition and Interpretation of Indigenous Artifacts." http://saskmuseums.org/files/WEB_-_Responsible_Exhibition_and_Interpretation_of_Indigenous_Artifacts_v_2.pdf
- Kojo Nnamdi Show. 2019. "Accessibility Is Everything: How D.C.'s Arts And Culture Scene Accommodates Special Needs." (Running time 19:43, or available as transcript).
<https://thekojonnamdishow.org/shows/2019-07-08/accessibility-is-everything-how-d-c-s-arts-and-culture-scene-accommodates-special-needs>
- Birch, J. 2018. "Museum Spaces and Experiences for Children – Ambiguity and Uncertainty in Defining the Space, the Child and the Experience." *Children's Geographies*, 16:5, 516-528, DOI: [10.1080/14733285.2018.1447088](https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2018.1447088)

Part of paper due (500 words): The design for the exhibition; logistics for how long it will take to design and implement the exhibition; the cost of the exhibition. How will this be inclusive design?

11/22 Information Dissemination

- Marstine, J. 2007. "What a Mess! Claiming a Space for Undergraduate Student Experimentation in the University Museum." *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 22:3, 303-315, DOI: [10.1080/09647770701628644](https://doi.org/10.1080/09647770701628644)

- Smithsonian Institution. 2019. Panel on Accessibility and Digitization. (Running time 15:27)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYdQibLwHvk>
- Smithsonian Institution. "Accessibility for Visitors. Making All Visitors Feel Welcome."
<https://www.si.edu/visit/VisitorsWithDisabilities>
- Additional readings TBD

Part of paper due (500 words): The dissemination of information from the exhibition; what web/social media platforms would you use? What printed resources (pamphlets, hand outs) would you use?

11/29 No class

12/6 In Class Work session

Finalize the cataloguing records you have thus far.

Meet individually with SB about the status of your final papers.

12/19 (Thurs) by 5pm—all final papers/documents to be uploaded to JH Box folders