

**Cultural Heritage on Display:
Fairs, Festivals, and Museum Exhibitions in the American Public Sphere**

The University of Texas at Austin, Spring 2019
Anthropology 325L (31705); AMS 321 (31070)
MWF 10-11am
SAC 4.118

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Course Description:

This course is designed to take you behind the scenes in the public construction, negotiation, contestation and display of “American culture” by focusing on a number of cultural heritage sites in the public sphere. In particular, the course will examine fairs, festivals, theme parks, history sites, and museum exhibitions as contested sites of heritage production in American history—focusing especially on those moments when defining and displaying an image of the “true American” becomes an active—if contested—agent in the process of nation building and ideological construction. We will focus closely on the histories and agencies of specific “exhibitionary complexes,” paying close attention to what one critic calls “the problematic relationship of their objects to the instruments of their display.” (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett). Students will have the opportunity to conduct original research and participate directly in confronting and critiquing a contested cultural heritage site through a proposed museum exhibition, art installation, or public experience.

Readings and Requirements

The class format will be structured around discussions, in-class activities, out of class fieldwork, and lectures. In-class discussions, weekly discussion blogs based on the readings, three written assignments and a final group project are required for this class.

Required Textbooks:

- Thatcher Freund, *Objects of Desire: The Life of Antiques and Those Who Pursue Them*, (Reproduced University Co-op Packet) (or check online for used copies)

- Weekly book chapters and articles will be uploaded on Canvas under “Files.” You will be responsible for reading **all** articles for the week before our Monday class, unless otherwise instructed.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Success in this course involves using both the concepts and the tools of the cultural researcher. Thus, you will be asked to do certain things as well as display certain knowledge. There will be a variety of different types of assignments and opportunities to tailor the assignments to your own interests. All written assignments should be double-spaced, 12 point font, typed, and stapled.

A Note about Due Dates and Academic Integrity

Academic life places all of us under demanding time constraints. Please mark your calendar with due dates for the assignments and begin working on these projects early in the semester. **I will not accept assignments that are turned in late or give incompletes** unless your work was delayed due to a religious observance, a death in the family, or a serious illness just prior to the due date. If this is the case, I will ask you for written verification from your doctor or from a family member.

Grading:

1. ESSAYS: (40%)

Three short (5 page) papers based on readings, in-class materials, and student-initiated research. I will hand out specific project assignments at least two weeks in advance of each due date. The first assignment is an “object biography” of a personal heritage object of significance to your identify and family. The second assignment requires interviewing a collector and analyzing the collection and the collector’s story. The third assignment is an analysis of a contested cultural heritage site of your choice. Please follow the instructions for the projects carefully. No credit will be given for projects that are handed in late without prior approval from the instructor. The first writing project will be worth 10% of your grade; the second and third will each be worth 15% of your grade.

2. DISCUSSION BLOG (20%)

Students will be required to respond to a weekly prompt on our Canvas discussion board and keep up with it each week. There will be a total of 10 blogs—one for most weeks and **each entry should be a full typewritten page:**

- 1) the entry will be based on a written prompt from the instructor which will be posted each week (for the next week). Some of the prompts are listed in your syllabus as well, but **be sure to check on the discussion board site which will have the most up-to-date blog prompt for that week-which may be different from that which is in the syllabus.**

- 2) in most cases, students will respond to the posted blog by 9pm, Sunday evening before our Monday morning class.
 - 3) The blog will be based on the readings for the upcoming week, in most cases. So, if your blog is due on a Sunday night at 9, the topic of the blog will be taken up in class the next day, Monday, and will include the readings for the upcoming week. In other words, the blogs are a way to ensure that you come to class on Monday morning prepared to discuss the readings and topic for that week.
 - 4) Each blog entry will be worth two points, for a maximum of 20 points. Students will receive one point for turning the blog in on time and addressing the posted question. Students will get the maximum 2 points by demonstrating a command of the reading, addressing each aspect of the prompt, and showing insight and effort in your response to the prompt.
- No points if your entry is late, skipped, or grossly incomplete.

3. FINAL PROJECT (25%):

You will work in groups of 4-5 for your final project which will critically explore a contested heritage site/sites on UT's campus or its surroundings through a contemporary museological, performative, or representational lens. Topics (and mode of presentation) must be selected in consultation with (and prior approval from) the professor.

Each student will be responsible for a written proposal, in the form of a 5-6 page grant proposal, addressing each of the key components of the project (10%) and including a separate annotated bibliography.

In addition, each group will present their project to the class. The group presentation will take the form of a "pitch" for a proposed public presentation or experience. The pitch might include a physical model for an exhibition/public experience, or a trailer for a documentary, or a pop up art installation or a walking tour/public dialogue (10%).

Finally, each student will submit a two page, written, final reflection piece to complete this assignment. (5%)

Our final group project "pitches" will be presented to the class during our last week of classes. Attendance is mandatory.

Note: There will be no final exam during final exam period.

4. IN CLASS ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION (15%):

Attendance will be taken each week. You will be allowed one missed class with no penalty. After that, each missed class will count 1 point off. Attendance will be 10% of your final grade.

Active participation in class seminar-style discussions will constitute 5% of your final grade. If you contribute regularly to class discussion you will receive 4 points. If your contributions are consistently insightful and high quality, you will

receive the full five points. If you only contribute to class discussion when called on, but are otherwise attentive to the discussion and up on the readings, you will receive 3 of the total 5 points. If you come to class, participate in small group discussion, but do not contribute at all to full class discussion, you will receive 1-2 points. If you fall asleep in class more than once, or consistently come to class late, you will receive 0-1 points for participation. No participation points will be given if you have more than 10 absences.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Honesty:

Students are required to do their own research and work. All students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis.php>. Plagiarism, using research without citations or using a created production without crediting a source, is forbidden; will result in a grade of zero for the assignment or for the class, or even expulsion from the university, depending on the severity of the plagiarism. This applies to any non-credited websites as well as written sources.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities may arrange for necessary accommodations for the course by contacting the office of Services for Students with Disabilities, within the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. This office can make arrangements in coordination with the instructor, given proper advance notice. For more information, as well as the relevant online forms, call SSD at 471-6259 or look them up at: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Classroom Etiquette:

Please respect the class, the instructor and your fellow students by avoiding disruptive behaviors. Absolutely no cell phones are allowed in class. Computers only allowed in lecture with prior permission.

Use of Canvas and Electronic Reserves

The course has a Canvas website which will be demonstrated during the first week of the class. It includes an electronic grade book and access to required readings. As noted in the below schedule of assignments, most readings will be available through Canvas under FILES.

Announcements concerning the course will also be made on Canvas. Students in the class are responsible for checking this website regularly. All e-mails to the professor should be done through Canvas, or to my UT email: sseriff@austin.utexas.edu. I have created one merged section for this class which includes all of you in the class, whether you are registered under ANT 325 or AMS 321.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week One (1/23-1/25) --Orientation: Contested Representations of the Self: Personal History on Display

Course introduction: identifying expectations and goals for this course; exploring the concept of cultural heritage, contested heritage, material culture, representation and display. Introduction to the idea of “critical reading” of a “text”—including objects, performances, events, displays, as well as printed media.

Exercise 1. Introductions: I Show and You Tell: Representing the Self to Others: My cultural heritage on display.

Exercise 2. Introductions: You Show and I Tell: Representing Others; Contested truths

Read for Friday, 1/25: (please access your readings from Canvas, in a folder for Week One, under “Files” for our course).

David Lowenthal. The Heritage Crusade. Ch. 2: Personal Legacies.

Tim O’Brien. “The Things They Carried” in The Things They Carried.

Discussion Blog Topic Prompt #1: Personal Legacies

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, January 27, to be posted on our Canvas discussion board:

Personal Reflection: Describe an object of particular importance/significance to you that you consider an “heirloom” from your family. It could be something that we would normally associate as an heirloom like a valuable piece of jewelry or furniture or religious object passed down to you from your ancestors. Or it could be a family recipe, a vacation cabin, a favorite restaurant, a holiday decoration/ornament, a kitchen table, or other item of material culture that is filled with memories for you of your family traditions, and expresses an aspect of who you are or where you come from or what you believe and value. After you have reflected on why this object is important to you, reflect on whether there is any aspect of the object’s story that might be “contested” by another member of your family, or significant others.

Assignment for next week, Jan 28-Feb 1:

Select an object, or an image of an object from a magazine or other mass media form that you feel is “representative” of, or a symbol of, the United States, and bring it in for class on Monday, 1/28. This could be an advertisement, a product,

a coin, a cartoon, an image of a national symbol, a piece of cloth—a mass-produced object, or an image that sums up or illustrates what the USA "stands for" to you. You will be asked to explore what, if anything, might be "contested" about this image and the significance it has for you, and by whom? Please do not select an artist's rendition of an object or symbol, or draw, copy, or "create" an object or collage yourself. I want you to find/select an image or object that is mass produced or mass circulated and already in existence.

Week Two (1/28-2/1) The Changing Meaning of Things: Challenging The Presence/Presentation of the Past in our Everyday Lives

Exercise: Class presentation and discussion of "representative" icons of American culture:

How objects change in meaning over time and in different contexts

Read for this Week:

David Lowenthal. *Collective Legacies*. Ch. 3.

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright: Ch. 1: Images, Power and Politics
pgs. 22-47, In *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*.
Oxford: 2009.

Discussion Blog Prompt: #2: The Changing Meaning of Things.

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Feb 3, to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

In our readings, Sturken and Cartwright note, "to interpret images is to examine the assumptions that we and others bring to them at different times and in different places and to decode the visual language that they 'speak.'" (46). They go on to say, "All images contain layers of meaning that include their formal aspects, their cultural and socio-historical references, the ways they make reference to the images that precede and surround them, and the contexts in which they are displayed."

Your task in this assignment is to take the image or object you selected to "represent America to you" and analyze the different and sometimes controversial "layers of meaning" encoded in it—its formal aspects, its iconic referent, its socio-historical references, and the ways in which the meaning of the object or image has changed over time, with different communities, and/or in different contexts of history, performance, or use in American popular culture. Be sure to adequately describe what it is you brought in--whether it is an object, an object that is a replica, photograph of an object or thing, a digitized image of a photograph of an object or thing, a cartoon depicting the object or thing, etc. Also, of course, the object may have many different meanings to many different people based on its context of consumption.

First Writing Assignment: Object Biography: Due Date: 2/15/19

Assignment for next week:

Part I. Bring to class on Monday (Feb 4) an example of an object (could be an image of an object taken from a magazine or advertisement) that is presented as if it is a model of "good taste" according to the ideas of connoisseurship, and an example of an object that would be considered by a connoisseur to be "bad taste." Sometimes this has to do with marketing, packaging, branding, or other forms of presentation; sometimes it is more about the thing itself—a diamond, a haircut, a fur coat, etc.

Part II for Wednesday (Feb 6). Select a collector or dealer from the "cast of characters" described in Freund's Objects of Desire, and prepare to discuss what "moral" qualities are used to describe him--or that others use to define him--as a "connoisseur" or arbiter of taste in the realm of folk furniture or classic Americana furniture. Your "character" could be someone from history--i.e., Thomas Willing--or one of the collector/dealers in whose hands the piece of furniture has passed in more recent times. Note that some of the collectors--such as Richard Rosen--are described not so much as "connoisseurs" but as "knowledgeable" in a sort of plodding, uncreative way.

Week Three (2/4-2/8) The Changing Value of Things: Fashion, Taste, Connoisseurship

Read for the week:

Freund: Objects of Desire 1-68

Sturken and Cartwright: "Aesthetics and Taste" Ch. 2, pgs. 56-62

Sally Price: "The Mystique of Connoisseurship". In Primitive Art in Civilized Places

No Discussion Board Prompt for next week

Week Four (2/11-2/15); On Collecting Things; On Collecting Cultures; On Collecting Controversies

Read for This Week:

Finish Reading Freund's Objects of Desire (69-end of book)

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright : "Collecting, Display and Institutional Critique" pgs. 62-68

Stewart, Susan, "The Collection; Paradise of Consumption.' In On Longing; Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir and the Collection.

James Clifford. "On Collecting Art and Culture." In The Predicament of Culture

Discussion Blog Prompt: #3: Theorizing Heritage

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Feb 17, to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

In her article, *Theorizing Heritage*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses five propositions about cultural heritage as a contemporary practice. (The five propositions are introduced on page 369.). Select one of these propositions and discuss how it fits with David Lowenthal's notions of the purpose and practice of heritage, and Kapchan's notion of the irony of heritage. (After four or five of you have written on one of BKG's propositions, the next student should select another one so that we get a range.)

Second Written Essay: An Ethnography of Collectors and Collecting: Due: 3/15/19

Week 5: (2/18-2/22) : The Meaning of America's Past: How does History Compare to Heritage Production?

Read for the Week:

David Lowenthal: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History : Chs. 5 and 6

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. "Theorizing Heritage" In Ethnomusicology. Vol 39, No. 3. Pgs.367-380

Deborah Kapchan: "Intangible Rights: Cultural Heritage in Transit," In Cultural Heritage in Transit: Intangible Rights as Human Rights.

(We will spend Monday of this week going over key ideas on collecting/collectors from last week's readings in preparation for your upcoming papers).

Discussion Board Prompt: #4: Exhibitionary Complexes and the Idea of Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Feb 24, to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

In next week's excerpt from Sturken and Cartwright's book, the authors discuss the relationship of the gaze to questions of institutional power, knowledge, and "the Other." For this prompt I'd like you to discuss Tony Bennett's idea of an "exhibitionary complex" in terms of these notions of the gaze and its relationship to institutional power and knowledge in the modern age. How does Bennett define an "exhibitionary complex?" What function does it serve in the modern age? And how does Sturken and Cartwright's idea of "the gaze" help us understand the nature of such complexes?

Week 6 : (2/25-3/1): Exhibitionary Complexes: What Does it Mean to Show?

Read for This Week:

Tony Bennett: "The Exhibitionary Complex" In Boswell and Evans, eds.
Representing the Nation.

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Discourse and Power, Pgs. 104-111

Discussion Board Prompt: # 5: The Rise of American Museums as Exhibitionary Complexes

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Mar 3, to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

Based on your reading of the first two Conn chapters from Museums and American Intellectual Life, and Donna Harraway's "Teddy Bear Patriarchy," discuss the ways in which natural history museums of the 19th century in America reflect the characteristics of an exhibitionary complex as described by Tony Bennett. Be explicit about what the overarching "narrative" or "discourse" is about America that is forwarded through these museums.

Week 7: (3/4-3/8): Cultural Heritage on Display: The Rise of the Museum as an Exhibitionary Complex in America

Read for this Week:

Donna Harraway: "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden"

Steven Conn: Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926, chs. 1-3.

Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, ch. 1, "Culture and Meaning in the Museum," pgs. 1-22. In Museums and the Interpretation of Material Culture. Routledge. 2000.

No discussion board prompt this week.

Week 8: (3/11-3/15): The Exhibitionary Complex of the World's Fair in 19th and early 20th century America

Read for This Week:

Robert Rydell "The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893: And was Jerusalem Builded Here?" In Boswell and Evans Ch. 13.

Curtis Hensley: "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893" In Karp and Lavine, Ch. 18.

Beverly K. Grindstaff: "Creating Identity: Exhibiting the Philippines at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition."

Film: Bontoc Eulogy

Discussion Board Prompt: # 6: Representation of the Philippines: 1904-2004

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, (March 24), to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

Do you think the presentation of Filipino folk culture at the 1998 Smithsonian Folklife Festival differed significantly from the representation of Filipinos at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Expo in St. Louis? Name one example of difference in presentation and how this affected whether or not Filipinos might have been viewed by visitors as uncivilized or depersonalized? Try to give a different example or aspect from other students who have entered the discussion board before you.

Second Paper Due 3/15/19.

Week 9: SPRING BREAK: (3/18-3/23)

Week 10: (3/25-3/29): The Politics of Public Display: Heritage Production in Contemporary Folk Festivals

Read for This Week:

Journal of American Folklore Vol 1221 Winter 2008. Special Issue: Constructing Folklife and Negotiating the National: The Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Diamond and Trimillos: "Introduction: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Smithsonian Folklife Festival"

Trimillos: "Histories, Resistances, and Reconciliations in a Decolonizable Space: The Philippine Delegation to the 1998 Smithsonian Folklife Festival"

Satterwaite: Imagining Home, Nation, World: Appalachia on the Mall"

Discussion Board Prompt: # 7: Disneyland as a Themed Environment

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, March 31th, to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

Drawing on Gottdiener's article on themed environments, explain what you think makes Disneyland such an effective themed environment and what some of the advantages and/or disadvantages might be of such an environment for the presentation of history.

Third Paper Due 4/12/19. Cultural Heritage Site Analysis

Week 11 (4/1-4/5) The Politics of Public Display: Themed Environment, Disney Style

Read for this Week:

Michael Gottdiener, "The Las Vegas Casino, Theme Parks, and the General Trend of Theming, ch. 4

Michael Sorkin: "See you in Disneyland"

Cary Carson, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, Whose History is the Fairest of Them All?"

William Van Wert, "Disney World and Post History"

Nigel Briggs, "Reaching a Broader Audience" *The Public Historian* Vol. 22, No. 3(Summer, 2000) pp. 95-105 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3379581>

Week 12: (4/8-4/12) The Politics of Public Display: The Racial Geography of a University Campus

Did you realize that the UT campus is a racialized and gendered space containing traces of its apartheid beginnings hidden in plain sight? Why is Gearing Hall placed where it is, shaped the way it is, and what does that have to do with gendered space? What are the politics of the West Mall? How does the plaza at the foot of the tower speak powerfully about cultural hierarchies? Why was our campus so key to the construction of Austin's racial geography? Who is that woman in Littlefield Fountain and why would a Mississippi slave-owner, confederate officer, cattle baron, and regent want her placed there? (From Edmund Gordon's Racial Geography Tour.

<https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/aads/racial-geography-tour-.php>)

Read for this week:

Friday: (4/12): Fieldtrip: Racial Geography Tour *or* Exhibit: From Commemoration to Education. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History

Group Assignments and Appt with Instructor this week to discuss final project.

Discussion Board Prompt: # 8: Audience Engagement

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm April 14, to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

Drawing on your readings for this week, especially the theoretical discussion of the "post museum" in Hooper Greenhill's chapter, discuss the revised role and conception of the "audience" as active agents in this new model of museum engagement, and propose one concrete way in which you think contemporary museums might be successful in reorganizing museum culture and museum exhibitions to promote this new relationship between museums and their audiences

Third Paper Due 4/12/19.

Week 13 (4/15-4/19) Remapping the Museum in the 21st Century: The Post Museum

Read for this week:

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Chs. 6, 7, *The Rebirth of the Museum*, in Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture
Sturkin and Cartwright, ch. 10: *The Global Flow of Visual Culture*, pgs. 389-430

Melissa Rachleff, : *Peering Behind the Curtain: Artists and Questioning Historical Authority*. In *Letting Go?* Pgs. 228.
Conversation with Fred Wilson, Paula Marincola and Marjorie Schwarzer: *Mining the Museum Revisited*, In *Letting Go*. Pgs. 230-241

Film: Fred Wilson: *Mining the Museum* (utube 32 minute interview)

Discussion Board Prompt: # 9: Remapping the Museum in the 21st Century: "The Post Museum"

Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, April 21 to be posted on our Canvas discussion board.

"What happens when artists step into the arena of interpretation? Perhaps more than any other exhibition in the last quarter century, Mining the Museum at the Maryland Historical Society changed the way museum professionals see their work and themselves." (*Letting Go?* Pg 207) Discuss this quote and what you think the change is that they are talking about, in light of Hooper-Greenhill's ideas about the Post-Museum.

Week 14 (4/22-4/26) Throwing Open the Doors: From Community Outreach to Community Engagement

Read for this Week:

Adair, Filene, and Koloski: Section: "Throwing Open the Doors: From Community Outreach to Community Engagement." In Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World. Pgs. 68-123
Black, Graham. "From Engaging Communities to Civic Engagement." In *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century*, pgs. 202-240.

Discussion Board Prompt: # 10: Prototyping

Week 15 (4/29-5/3): Prototyping as Exhibit Development Practice: Everything Here is a Work in Progress

Read for this Week:

Kathleen McLean. "Museum Exhibit Prototyping as a Method of Community Conversation and Presentation."
Nina Simon. *Participatory Design and the Future of Museums*. In Letting Go? Pgs. 16-33

Suzanne Seriff and Marsha C. Bol. "Folk Art and Social Change in an American Museum." In Folklife and Museums, Selected Readings. 2nd Edition. Kurt Dewhurst, Patricia Hall and Charles H. Seemann, Jr. eds. Barbara Lau, Jennifer Scott and Suzanne Seriff. "Designing for Outrage." 2017

Final Project Written Proposal Due: 5/3

Week 16 (5/6-5/10) : Cultural Heritage on Display: Student Presentations

Personal Reflection Papers due: 5/10