

AHIS 479 / HIS 479

History in the Museum: Collecting and Displaying the Past in Objects



Fall 2020
Tuesdays, 2-4:50pm
Professor Daniela Bleichmar
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An examination of how museums collect and display objects, shaping ideas about human cultures and the world, from the Renaissance to the present.

This seminar will examine the ways in which different human groups and cultures have been understood through their objects over the past five centuries, educating students about the diversity of human cultures and the ways in which it has been represented *and* not represented in museums past and present. We will pay special attention to non-Western and non-hegemonic cultures, and to the ways in which museums have presented and helped to form ideas about complex issues including human civilizations, slavery, racism, gender politics, imperialism, and the environment.

FORMAT FOR OUR MEETINGS:

As an upper-level small seminar, this class revolves around advanced readings, detailed group analysis and discussion, and extensive work on original research. This is not a lecture class but rather a collaborative laboratory in the humanities.

Seminar meetings will take place online, and will include discussion of readings and online exhibitions, conversations with museum professionals who will visit our class virtually, and a variety of class-wide, small-team, and individual activities. We will collectively curate an online exhibition based on original research, object selection, and texts written by the students.

Under normal circumstances, this seminar would take place in person and include at least five visits by the entire group to Los Angeles museums, where we would meet with museum professionals. The number and format of museums visits in Fall 2020 will depend on what is logistically possible. Ideally, every student will have at least three museum visits as part of this class. These visits may take place in L.A. or elsewhere (depending on where students are living in the fall) and be individual or in groups (depending on public health regulations and safety concerns).

A detailed syllabus will be provided by the start of the semester.