



AHIS 301 — Guardians of the Past? Art Preservation, Ethics, and the Law

Prof. Ann Marie Yasin
Spring 2025
Tu/Thur 11-12:20, THH 308

Description

This course introduces students to key questions that structure ongoing debates about the preservation, reproduction, and ownership of the world's cultural heritage: How and why do we collect and conserve the material culture of the past? How have objects participated in the exploits of colonialism, war, and global politics? Where do works of art belong, and who determines and adjudicates their value, classification, and public access? In addressing these and related questions and engaging with artifacts from antiquity to the present from a global perspective, students in the course will gain insight into the history of museums; the disciplines of anthropology, history, archaeology, and art history; and the ethics of repatriation, art restitution, and reproduction. The class is intended for students interested in the intersection of cultural studies and ethics.

Course Readings

There are no required textbooks for this course. Readings will be posted on the course Brightspace site, available as an e-book from the USC libraries, or to be found on the web. Students may, however, wish to purchase their copy of the following, since we will be reading nearly all of it: Dan Hicks, *The British Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*. London: Pluto Pr., 2020 (paperback 2021, \$17.95)