

HISTORY 2886 G  
**Fakes, Frauds & Fairs: The History of Museums**  
Winter 2024  
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This is a **draft** syllabus. Please see the course site on OWL for a final version.

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**Course Description:** This course examines the history and development of museums and their changing role in society across the globe from the ancient world to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Antirequisite(s):** MCS 2610F/G

**Course Syllabus:** Themes include the rise of anthropology and natural sciences; looting; repatriation; professionalization; colonialism/decolonization; representation of the 'other'; museums as political and cultural tools.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this course, students will:

- be familiar with thematic issues in the social, cultural, and political history of museums
- have conducted historical research
- have practised formulating and communicating an effective argument, and demonstrating good research and writing skills
- be able to evaluate objects through material culture theory
- be able to critically evaluate exhibitions as historical sources

Recommended expectations and outcomes for 2<sup>nd</sup> year courses are here:

[https://www.history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_information/expectations\\_outcomes.html](https://www.history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_information/expectations_outcomes.html)

**Course Materials:** All readings are online through the library catalogue or through OWL, as noted below. There are website readings, podcasts, museum visits, and documentaries, all listed below. Most days that are scheduled for podcasts, documentaries, and museum visits there will be no class; instead, students must complete the preparation on their own time that week. The main texts are:

Alexander, Edward P., Mary Alexander and Juilee Decker. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. 3rd Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017. (**Online library catalogue**)

Macdonald, Sharon, ed. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Malden, MA: Oxford, 2006 or 2011. (**Online library catalogue**)

Simmons, John E. *Museums: A History*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. (**OWL**)

**Methods of Evaluation:**

Midterm Exam	35%	Due:
Research Essay	30%	Due:
OR 2 Reflection Papers	2 x 15% = 30%	Due:
Final Exam	35%	Due: Final exam period

**Students can choose to write two reflection papers OR one research essay.** Once that choice has been made, students cannot change their mind. Submission of the first reflection paper indicates a student's decision to complete two. No submission of the first reflection paper indicates the choice of a research paper.

**Reflection Papers:** Students will write two 5-6 double-spaced page reflection papers that tie together class readings, lectures, and out of class preparation. The first paper is based on weeks #3-6. The second is based on the material and preparation for Social Justice/Slavery/Representation/Repatriation I and II. Papers need to use specific examples from the source material and include thoughtful analysis about the material. No extra research needs to be conducted. Questions to *begin* thinking about the papers are provided below. You should ask and answer other questions, as relevant to the topic.

**Paper #1**

How were museums embedded in colonial and racist structures? How were museums shaped by public interest and popular beliefs? How and why were Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour treated as objects? How did they, and to what extent, exploit or protest the collection and exhibition of their material culture? Were European and non-European human remains treated similarly?

**Paper #2**

Should/how can museums represent 'difficult histories'? Can museums overcome their establishment through roots of colonialism and racism, and if yes, how? What are the successful and unsuccessful examples, and what can we learn from them? How is repatriation more complicated than simply returning items?

You may include photographs. However, pictures are additional; you still must write 5-6 pages of text for each paper. Footnotes should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* format. See <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

Please use your last name as part of the file name of your document. **Submit your papers as an MS Word document via Assignments tab in OWL (including Turn it In) on due dates by 5pm.**

For more information, see the marking rubric document on OWL.

**If there a question about plagiarism in essays, students will be asked at any time to produce research notes made during the research process. Please keep your notes and drafts of your paper.**

**All work submitted in this course must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course.**

**Research Essay:** Students will write a research essay on a topic of their choice in the history of museums of 10-12 double spaced pages in length, plus bibliography, with use of a minimum of 12 academic books and/or journal articles. If you are unsure if a source is academic, please contact me.

Encyclopedia articles, textbooks, or lectures cannot be used. Good sources for research have arguments rather than being simply descriptive or exploratory.

If you are unsure of a topic, start by identifying the time period/theme/type of history that interests you most. This research paper topic should be focused. Topics can be refined by narrowing down the time period, the geographical area, the themes, case studies, or policies. Do not try to cover a topic in a whole country, or all developments of one time period. I am happy to discuss how to narrow down your topic.

A good historical research paper will have a specific thesis argument which is well supported by historical evidence. Historians start research with a set of related questions, not already decided-upon statements. Instead, they examine the historical evidence to find the answers to their questions, like a detective starts an investigation with questions solved by examining the evidence left behind. The answer to your question(s) is your thesis. Thesis arguments are not personal opinions or ethical statements about what “should” be. They are also written argumentatively, not descriptively.

Structurally, the paper should include an introductory paragraph with a thesis argument (1 paragraph); background information that the reader needs to understand your research (max. 1 page); a detailed exploration of the historical evidence that supports your argument (8-10 pages); a conclusion which re-asserts your thesis (1 paragraph).

Common essay writing mistakes: choosing too large of a topic for page length; writing in the passive voice not active voice; beginning with broad sweeping generalizations; and not following Chicago style manual. Quoting should be rare and only then from primary, not secondary, sources unless extremely eloquent. Quotes are not ‘proof’ of your argument; historical evidence and examples are proof. Always write in the past tense.

As your papers may be about museum exhibits or material culture, you may include photographs in your paper. However, pictures are additional; you still must write 10-12 pages of text for the essay.

Footnotes and bibliography should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* format. See <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>. Bibliography should be divided into primary and secondary sources, if relevant.

Please use your last name as part of the file name of your document. **Submit your essay as an MS Word document via Assignments tab in OWL (including Turn it In) on March 24, 2023, by 5pm.**

For more information, see the marking rubric document on OWL.

**If there a question about plagiarism in essays, students will be asked at any time to produce research notes made during the research process. Please keep your notes and drafts of your paper.**

**All work submitted in this course must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course.**

**Exams:** Students will write a midterm and final exam. Both exams will draw from lectures, readings, films, websites, podcasts, and museum visits. Questions will be of two types: identification/significance questions, and essays. **The midterm will be written during class time. The final exam will be written during the university's final exam period.**

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

**Use of Electronic Devices:** Use of any electronic devices will not be allowed during the exams. In the midterm, students must leave phones or other devices in an area in the classroom away from the desks.

**Due Dates and Late Penalties:** Assignments are due on the date specified above. Penalty for late assignments is 2% each day (including Saturdays and Sundays). There will be no exceptions unless students provide medical documentation. For all medical and non-medical issues that might warrant accommodation, including all assignments, exams, tests, presentations, and class attendance, please go to academic counselling.

**Accommodation for missed tests/midterms:**

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test will be required to write a makeup test. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

For in-person classes, make-up tests will be written at one of the Department of History make-up midterms. Dates for the make-ups will be listed on the Department of History website under [Important Dates](#).

No other make-up opportunities will be provided unless further academic consideration is granted by Academic Counselling. Students who fail to write a make-up test in a designated time slot will receive a grade of zero on that assessment.

Course professors may not be available to respond to questions during the make-up test slots.

**Course Schedule**

Week	Date	Topic	Notes
1		Introduction What is a Museum?	
2		The Ancient World, Greece, & Rome Medieval Collecting	
3		Renaissance & Enlightenment Museums Colonialism & Collecting I	
4		Colonialism & Collecting II	

		World's Fairs & Wild West Shows	
5		Medical & Anatomical Museums Exam Review	
6		Midterm Exam Race, Gender, & Exhibitions	
7	<b>READING WEEK</b>		
8		Fakes, Frauds, & Popular Museums The Outdoor Museum	
9		War & Museums Social Justice & Museums	
10		Looting Slavery, the Slave Trade & Museums	
11		Representation & Appropriation Repatriation I	
12		Repatriation II Future of Museums	
13		Exam Review	

**Additional Statements:**

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.