Topics in the Anthropology of Art and Museums

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Office Hours: Thursday 11:00-1:00 pm and by appointment  
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Seminar: Wednesday 6:00-9:00

Course Description:
This course engages with art largely through the institutional frame of the museum, seeking to understand art’s social agency. Our examination of museums as distinctively modern social formations will address not only art museums, but also museums of ethnography, and science, and the various imperatives with which they are entangled.

Required Reading:
All assigned reading must be completed by the date for which it is assigned. Completion of the readings is essential to your understanding of the lecture material, to your ability to be an active participant in class, and to your enjoyment and sense of achievement in the course.

The required texts available in the bookstore:

In addition, there are a number of required readings that will be available either in hard copy or electronically through the reserve library. We will discuss how to access these in class. Occasionally I will make articles available from my office. I will draw your attention to useful supplementary readings via Blackboard as we proceed through the course.

Blackboard:
The course will utilize Blackboard in several ways. The syllabus will be available on Blackboard, along with access to electronic reserves (ERes). I will use it for distributing messages to the class, including details of assignments and reminders of deadlines. I will also use it to draw your attention to useful resources. I will show you how to access it in class.

Class format:
Classes will take the form of discussions. Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings before each lecture and be prepared to participate in class discussion. Class preparation and active participation are required for the satisfactory completion of the course.

Office Hours:
I am available to meet with students during my scheduled office hours (Thursday 11:00-1:00) and at other times by appointment.

Assignments and Grading:
Your grade will be based on two elements:
1. Participation (15%) This involves consistent participation in class discussion, informed by the assigned reading and by your reflection upon it. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and should be prepared to make an informed contribution to class discussion. The grade will be assigned on the basis of the consistency and quality of participation. Each week students will be responsible for introducing discussion questions.
2. Research Proposal (85%)
   - Define a research area and build an annotated bibliography (25%). Due March 12.
   - Research proposal using form I will distribute to you (60%).

Informed Participation. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and should be prepared to make an informed contribution to class discussion. The grade will be assigned on the basis of the consistency and quality of participation. Course requirements have been designed with a view to encouraging conversation and thinking aloud. Students need not worry that they will be graded on everything they say. Grading of oral participation will be based on evidence of a good-faith effort to be a prepared, thoughtful, and generous participant in the conversation of the seminar.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism means copying or paraphrasing someone else’s work and presenting it as one’s own or without sufficient acknowledgement of another person’s work. Plagiarism is a form of cheating even if there is no intent to deceive.

Copying from textbooks or articles without sufficient acknowledgement is plagiarism. Paraphrasing a book or article without sufficient acknowledgement is plagiarism. Copying another person’s unpublished work is plagiarism.

Students are encouraged to discuss work and assignments with me and with each other but any assignment or research paper you present must be your own work.

I recommend that you read the Student Academic Honesty and Integrity Code in the Bulletin (http://bulletin.binghamton.edu/). Knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty will enable you to identify it and thereby avoid such practices.

Seminar Schedule

Week 1    January 30    Introduction

Week 2    February 6    Perspectives on the Field

Week 3    February 13    Artworld Ethnography

Week 4    February 20    Screening: tba

Week 5    February 27    Art as Ethnography

Week 6    March 5    Museum Exhibition

Week 7    March 12    Museums as Counter-Worlds?
- Smart, Pamela, tba.

Annotated Bibliography Due
Week 8  March 19  Repositioned Objects 1

Spring Recess March 21-30

Week 9  April 2  Museum Ethnography 1

Week 10  April 9  Problematic Histories

Week 11  April 16  Education and Audiences
Guest Lecture by Katherine Somerville Howorth Bouman
- tba

Week 12  April 23  Museum Ethnography 2
- MacDonald, Sharon, Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum. New York: Berg, 2002

Week 13  April 30  Note: 5:15 meeting time for VizCult Seminar
- Haidy Geismar, Assistant Professor, Program in Museum Studies and the Department of Anthropology, New York University
  “The Photograph and the Malangann: Rethinking Images in Vanuatu”
  Reading to be assigned.

Week 14  May 7  Review