

## **Museums as spaces of memory, identity and activism**

**Alexandra Curvelo**

**Fall Term, AY 2021-2022**

M.A. level course

Credit value: 8 ECTS

Elective

Consultation: during office hours or by appointment at [alexandra.curvelo@fcsb.unl.pt](mailto:alexandra.curvelo@fcsb.unl.pt)

### **BRIEF INTRODUCTION:**

The course will focus on the role of museums as knowledge-based institutions that create time-framed narratives and that are associated with the construction of national identities and collective memories. It will highlight the historical discourses of the museum in terms of both narratives of display and space/architecture projects. The analysis will also include the use of resources such as museum writing and technologies of storytelling (e.g. films) as mechanisms for the creation of engaging and meaningful interpretive settings. The course will further explore the way people relate to heritage, particularly movable heritage, and how objects are displayed as historical documents, functioning both as material and as semiotic texts. Through the reading and discussion of articles and book chapters, as well as the analysis of case studies, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical background of the museum, its main challenges in the present and how it is positioning into the future, the theoretical framework of the field of Museum Studies and the historical agencies of the institution.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Have theoretical knowledge about the historical development of museums and the main challenges for the future;
- be able to demonstrate critical awareness of the role of museums in culture, as institutions embedded in historical contexts and as sites of cultural production and construction of historical narratives, collective memory and identity;

Have the ability to critically discuss the role of objects or things preserved in Museums as testimonies of knowledge, identity, and memory, and perform a narrative analysis of the different topics of the course.

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS:**

The course's learning activities will comprise seminar-style classroom discussions (based on mandatory readings) and will include visits to museums and exhibition spaces and direct contact with museum professionals.

**ASSESSMENT:**

Class Participation: because this course is organized as a seminar and meets just once a week, it is particularly important that students be in attendance and be prepared to participate. This seminar emphasizes student participation and therefore a part of the final grade grows from student participation in class discussion. (15%)

Required Readings and Discussion Participation Assignments: course readings are required and students are expected to prepare written seminar discussion participation notes. (20%)

Discussion Facilitation: students will facilitate one seminar discussion of a PDF assigned article/book chapter reading made available by the Professor by providing a 15-minute overview of the core ideas, concepts, and theories of the author(s) and posing initial question(s) for discussion. (20%)

Final Monograph Essay Assignment: students will hand in a 4,500-5,000 word-final essay focused on one of the main topics of the course contents. (45%)

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

- ALPERS, Svetlana (1991). "The Museum as a way of seeing". Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display. London, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp.25-32.
- BARRINGER, Tim; FLYNN, Tom (1998). Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum. London and New York: Routledge.
- BENNETT, Tony (1995). The birth of the museum. London, New York, Routledge.
- BENNETT, Tony (2004). Past Beyond Memory. Evolution, Museums, Colonialism. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- BOAST, Robin (2011). "Neocolonial collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited". Museum Anthropology, Vol. 34, Iss. 1, pp.56-70.
- CHAMBERS, Iain; DE ANGELIS, Alessandra; IANNICIELLO, Celeste, ORABONA, Mariangela; QUADRARO, Michaela (2014). The Postcolonial Museum. The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History. Farnham, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- CLIFFORD, James (1997). "Museums as Contact Zones." Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp.188-219.

- DEWDNEY, Andrew; DIBOSA David; WALSH, Victoria (2012). “Museums of the Future”. *Post Critical Museology. Theory and Practice in the Art Museum*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.205-220.
- DUDLEY Sandra; BARNES, Amy Jane; BINNIE, Jennifer; PETROV, Julia; WALKLATE, Jennifer (Eds,) (2011). *The Thing about Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- DUDLEY, Sandra (2012). *Museum Objects. Experiencing the Properties of Things*. London and New York: Routledge.
- DUNCAN, Carol (1995). *Civilizing Rituals: inside public art museums*. London and New York: Routledge.
- ERSKINE Andrew (1995). “Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Museum and Library of Alexandria”. *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Apr. 1995), pp.38-48
- EVANS, Jessica; BOSWELL, David (Eds.) (1999). *Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories, Heritage, and Museums*. London; New York: Routledge.
- GIEBELHAUSEN, Michaela (2006). "Museum Architecture: A Brief History". Sharon MacDonald (Ed.), *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Oxford; Malden; Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, pp.223-244.
- HOOPER-GREENHILL, Eilean (1992). “What is a Museum?” *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.1-22.
- HOOPER-GREENHILL, Eilean, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
- HOOPER-GREENHILL, Eilean, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- JANES, Robert R. (2009). “The Mindful Museum”, *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.147-168.
- JANES, Robert R.; SANDELL, Richard (Ed.) (2019). *Museum Activism*. London and New York, Routledge.
- KREPS, Christina (2003). “Curatorship as Social Practice”, *Curator: The Museum Journal* 46(3), pp.311-323.
- LANG, Merike (2007). “Cultural memory in the museum and its dialogue with collective and individual memory”. *Nordisk Museologi*, 2, S, pp.62-75.
- LOWENTHAL, David (2015). *The past is a foreign country – revisited*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- LUMLEY, Robert (Ed.) (1988). *The Museum Time Machine. Putting Cultures on Display*. London and New York: Routledge.

- MACDONALD, Sharon (2003). "Museums, Nationalism, Postnational and Transcultural Identities", *Museums and Society* 1 (1), pp.1-16.
- MACDONALD, Sharon (Ed.) (2006). *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Blackwell Publishing.
- MACLEOD, Suzanne; HANKS, Laura Hourston; HALE, Jonathan (Eds.) (2012). *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*. London and New York: Routledge.
- PEARCE, Susan (1990). *Objects of knowledge*. London: The Athlone Press.
- PEARCE, Susan (1994). *Interpreting objects and collections*. London: Routledge.
- POULOT, Dominique (2013). "Another History of Museums: from the Discourse to the Museum-Piece". *Anais do Museu Paulista, São Paulo, N. Sér. v.21. n.1*, pp.27-47.
- PREZIOSI, Donald; FARAGO, Claire (Eds.) (2004). *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub.
- PREZIOSI, Donald; FARAGO, Claire (Eds.) (2004). *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub.
- SHERMAN, Daniel J.; ROGOFF, Irit (Eds.) (1994). *Museum Culture. Histories. Discourses. Spectacles*. London: Routledge.
- SLEEPER-SMITH, Susan (Ed.) (2009). *Contesting knowledge: museums and indigenous perspectives*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- SOARES, Bruno Brulon; LESHCHENKO, Anna (2018). "Museology in Colonial Contexts: A Call for Decolonisation of Museum Theory". *ICOFOM Study Series 46 | 2018, The politics and poetics of Museology*, pp.61-79.
- VERGO, Peter (1989). "The Reticent Object". *New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books, pp.41-59.
- WINTER, Tim (2012). "Heritage and Nationalism: An Unbreachable Couple?" *ICS Occasional Paper Series, Volume 3, Number 4*, Penrith NSW: Institute for Culture and Society University of Western Sydney, pp.1-13.
- WITCOMB, Andrea (2003). *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum*. London and New York: Routledge.
- WOOD, Elizabeth; LATHAM, Kiersten F. (2014). *The Objects of Experience. Transforming Visitor-Object Encounters in Museums*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.
- ZERUBAVEL, Eviatar (2003). *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

The course will be structured in five topics (each corresponding to two sessions):

1. Museum in Theory: Past, Present and Future
2. The Historical Discourses of the Museum
3. Museums, Knowledge and Memory
4. Objects as knowledge, identity and memory
5. Museums, Post-Colonialism and Activism