

Western University, Department of Visual Arts
Histories of Collecting, Museums and Heritage Studies
VAH 3386G – Winter 2017
Mondays 5:30pm – 8:30pm
John Labatt Visual Art Centre, Rm. 249



“The Keeper,” 2016. Exhibition View: New Museum. Photo: Maris Hutchinson / EPW Studio

Course Instructor: Jessica Cappuccitti

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1pm – 2pm, VAC 240

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Course Description:

This course will provide an introduction to the history and theory of collecting, museums, and heritage studies. Through an analysis of case studies that will include historic and contemporary exhibitions and curatorial projects, disputed collection practices, and related discourse in the field, this course provides students with an in-depth understanding of the complex politics of collecting, museums, and heritage studies. This course will consider issues such as: the politics of representation and identity; nationalism; (post)colonialism, cultural difference and contested histories; issues of ownership and cultural property; trauma and memory, and debates around the preservation and conservation of historic sites. It will encourage students to rethink collecting practices and the function of museums and heritage sites, while highlighting the contested histories and continually evolving systems of collection and display practices. Key questions we will consider include: What is the relationship between collecting, museums, and heritage sites? Why do we entrust our collections to museums and what role do museums play in our understanding of human history? What denotes a heritage site? What are the rules regulating them and the role they play in our communities? What are the social responsibilities of the museum and the heritage site? How has this evolved?

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the histories of collecting, museums, and heritage sites. They will be able to interpret the function of museums and heritage sites as well as identify the contentious history of collecting, the rationale and current debates surrounding this practice.
- Critically engage with and evaluate the effectiveness of museum collections and exhibitions.
- Employ, both orally and in writing, the discursive/theoretical vocabularies that are utilized in debates and literature within the field.
- Articulate arguments orally and in writing, support their arguments using examples of artistic and/or curatorial projects in addition to academic sources. The completion of the assignments in this course will demonstrate that the student can read, comprehend and summarize the main arguments of the assigned readings, conduct research using the library catalogue and databases, and most importantly, critically engage with the material presented in this course.

Prerequisite:

1.0 from VAH 1040 or two of VAH 1041A/B – VAH 1045A/B or permission of the department. You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites (or obtained a permission waiver from the Department). Lack of prerequisites may not be used as the basis for an appeal.

Antirequisites:

None

Required Readings:

The course readings are available in pdf format on OWL under the “resources” section.

Grading

Participation	10%	Weekly
3-Minute Presentations (2)	10%	Schedule TBD by Instructor
Mid-term Test	20%	Feb. 27, 2017
Case Study Analysis		
Outline	15%	Feb. 13, 2017
Presentation	20%	Mar. 13, 2017
Final Paper	25%	April 3, 2017