



**HS/MU338 - MUSEUMS AND MEMORIES:
THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC HISTORY**
IES Abroad Berlin

DESCRIPTION:

This course at the intersection of history and museum studies draws on Berlin's rich cultural and historical landscape to provide students with experiential learning opportunities that foster critical thinking about a variety of Berlin museums and their historical and societal significance. Combining theory and practice, the course explores questions about what "the museum" is, what kinds of museums exist, how the varieties of history (cultural, political, military, art-historical, social, economic) are represented in different genres of museums, and how and why different museums and modes of commemoration come into existence at a particular time and place. Students will also reflect upon what the role of a museum is and can be in society. Visits to museums and memorial sites across Berlin augment the classroom sessions and provide students with an insight into practices of public history such as historic preservation, museum curatorship and related fields.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COSTS: Visits outside of class time to additional museums throughout Berlin to complete assignments, approx. €30.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Seminar intermingling informal lectures with discussion
- Course-related trips
- Student presentations
- Moodle

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

Assignments will focus on developing and honing writing and presentation skills. Students will keep a journal of scheduled visits to museums and visits on their own time to other museums. The final project will consist of drawing up a conceptual plan for an exhibition.

- Course participation - 10%
- Midterm Exam - 20%
- Exhibition review - 15%
- Field study journal - 20%
- Presentation of final project - 10%
- Final project - 25%

Course Participation

Active participation is expected in all seminars and class outings. The IES Abroad Rubric for Participation is also available on Moodle.

A: Excellent participation. The student's contributions reflect active reading of the assigned materials and a respectful engagement with the contributions of other classmates. They skillfully synthesize the main ideas of the readings and raise questions about the significance and implications of the material, providing evidence and reasons for their assertions. Through questions and



comments, the student demonstrates that they can relate the main ideas in the readings to the other aspects covered during the course, and, when appropriate, to his or her own life experience.

B: Very good participation. The student's contributions demonstrate a familiarity with the assigned readings. They identify main ideas and arguments most of the time, even if they do not always reflect upon the significance and implications of the material. The student engages with the contributions of their classmates, but sometimes interrupts the conversation to introduce tangential information or viewpoints.

C: Satisfactory participation. The student demonstrates evidence that they have read the assigned readings, but in a superficial way. The student attempts to engage constructively with the ideas of other classmates, but commonly provides comments that are not germane to the discussion at hand. Contributions frequently reveal a lack of both preparation and familiarity with the material.

F: Unsatisfactory participation. The student consistently comes to class unprepared and reads the materials superficially or not at all. They do not participate in an informed way and show little interest in engaging constructively with others.

Midterm Exam

In essay form (90 minutes, in-class), students will be tasked with discussing good and bad museum/ exhibition practices (first in general, then using specific examples), framed and informed by the readings, films, field trips and discussions in Sessions 1-5. (23 March)

Field Study Journal

With reference to the scheduled readings, students will reflect upon and analyze what they have observed as it relates to one particular museum or exhibition. Length: 1,500 words. Due Session 4 (9 March)

Exhibition Review

In 2,000 words, students will review an exhibition of their choice as if they are writing for a high-end magazine such as the New Yorker. Due Session 10 (27 April)

Group Presentation of Final Project (see Final Project below for related information)

The prompt: "Conceptualize and design an exhibition of your choice." Students will be evaluated on how well they worked together to develop their overall exhibition concept and their marketing plan (placards, brochures, social media strategy). They will also be evaluated on how well they incorporate suggestions or prompts from their peers. The 20-minute Group Presentations will take place in Session 11 (4 May)

Final Project (in lieu of a Final Exam; due during finals week)

Multi-part, written. Even though the students will present their exhibition plan as a group, they will submit written assignments individually. Students will be evaluated on the strength of their 2500-word concept and exhibition chapter outline, including how and to what extent they engaged with the comments of their peers during the Group Presentation phase. How well do the various chapters of the exhibition advance the overarching concept? Is the choice of objects for display compelling? How do the spatial layout and graphic design of the exhibition mesh with the concept? Students will also be required to write two wall texts introducing chapters of their choice (max. 250 words each), along with three object labels (max. 100 words each). In addition, students will also be required to submit copy for an exhibition brochure, as well as a punchy social media post promoting their exhibition. Due Session 12 (9 May).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Over the course of the semester, students will:

- Analyse key generic differences between art museums, history museums, universal museums, natural history museums, and the like.
- Compare the varieties of history (cultural, political, social, natural, intellectual, economic, military) represented in the various genres of museums while evaluating the kinds of public history missions a museum might fulfill.



- Develop confidence presenting ideas to their peers in a cogent fashion.
- Acquire facility with a number of writing styles appropriate to work in the non-profit sector. Forms of writing include the critical analysis of museum exhibitions, the crafting of wall texts and object labels intelligible to a broad museum-visiting public, the drafting of marketing copy for brochures and catalogues, and the art of writing social media posts.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

For our up-to-date attendance and exam policy, see: <https://moodle.iesabroad.org/mod/page/view.php?id=1004317>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Academic Integrity Code. Assigned papers need to be properly and amply footnoted where appropriate, with all sources attributed, including images. Poorly written and grammatically sloppy papers will be judged more severely. Suspicious papers may be checked with plagiarism-detecting software.

CONTENT:

Session		Readings/Assignments/Activities
Session 1-2	INTRODUCTION Discussion of course structure, assignments, expectations, and the kinds of questions we'll consider during the semester. The themes and questions that we develop during the first two weeks - in particular, how museums construct identities and produce knowledge about culture, explain and define the practice of public history — constitute a red thread through the course. MUSEUM, MONUMENT, MEMORIAL What do we mean when we call something a museum, monument, or memorial site? Are all museums memorial sites? Might they also be monuments?	No assignment for first session Reading: Mason et. al., 'First Principles' in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 17-53.
Session 3-4	FIELD TRIP: NEUES MUSEUM This week we'll be taking a guided tour of the <i>Neues Museum</i>, containing the Berlin State Museum's Egyptian Collection along with the Museum of Prehistory and Early History.	Reading: Neues Museum website Ariese & Wróblewska, Introduction (Watch) <i>Deutsche Welle</i> doc 'From Nefertiti to Beuys' (Pt. 1)
Session 5-6	FIELD TRIP: HUMBOLDT FORUM This week, we'll be visiting the much-discussed <i>Humboldt Forum</i>, housed in a reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss. We will be given an introduction to the collections contained in the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art.	Reading: Jan-Werner Müller, Prussian Disneyland Sieg, Colonial History and Imperial Presence in the Museum: Historiography, Mourning, Sovereignty Ariese & Wróblewska, Practicing Decoloniality in Museums <u>Assign: Field study journal (Due October 16)</u>

Session 7-8	FIELD TRIP – JEWISH MUSEUM This week, we'll be visiting Berlin's Jewish Museum, the largest and most important institution of its kind in Europe. We will be confronted with an extreme example of museum architecture that does more than merely house collections.	Readings: Chametzky, Peter. "Not what we expected: the Jewish Museum Berlin in practice." <i>Museum and Society</i> [Online], 6.3 (2008): 216-245.
Session 9-10	FIELD TRIP - HUMBOLDT FORUM - ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM Current debates on how to remember and 'work through' Germany's colonial past will be explored through a field trip to the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation's Ethnological Museum within the Humboldt Forum.	Readings: Humboldt Forum website (Watch) Speech by Chimamanda Adichie Ariese & Wróblewska, 2. Increasing Inclusivity, Practicing Coloniality in Museums Eder, Dilemmas Facing the Humboldt Forum <u>Due October 16: Field study journal</u>
Session 11-12	SEMINAR - Colonial Practices in the Museum How can museums best deal with their colonial legacies? How can they embrace new and more radical changes ? How can they utilise didactic museum displays or participatory museum experiences to 'work through' their often violent pasts – if this indeed is even possible?	Readings: German Historical Museum Colonialism exhibition catalogue Maja-Pearce, Strewn with Loot, London Review of Books, 12 August 2021 Ariese & Wróblewska, 6. Embracing Vulnerability, Practicing Coloniality in Museums
Midterm Exam (90 minutes, in-class)		
Session 13-14	FIELD TRIP – TOPOGRAPHY OF TERROR Through performing a workshop at the Topography of Terror exhibition, we will analyse the different methods and best practices used to engage different audiences in the history of the site formerly used as the headquarters of the Gestapo and <i>Reichsführer-SS</i> during the Nazi dictatorship.	Readings: Wüstenberg, Building Negative Memory: Civic Initiatives for Memorials to Nazi Terror, pp. 102- 126 Recommended: Jaeger, the Second World War in the Twenty-First Century Museum, pp. 160-171. Ariese & Wróblewska, 4. Championing Empathy, Practicing Coloniality in Museums <u>Assign: Final Project</u> (due session 21-22)

Session 15-16	FIELD TRIP – BERLIN WALL MEMORIAL We'll visit the Berlin Wall Memorial at Bernauer Strasse and discuss how the history of Berlin and Germany's division is remembered and communicated.	Readings: Berlin Wall Memorial Website Harrison, The Berlin Wall and its Resurrection as a Site of Memory Ariese & Wróblewska, 5. Improving Transparency, Practicing Coloniality in Museums
Session 17-18	FIELD TRIP: GERMAN HISTORICAL MUSEUM We discuss the German Historical Museum (<i>Deutsches Historisches Museum</i> , or <i>DHM</i>) and consider what it means to "curate" history on both the national and local level. How does the process of curation and communication serve to shape our cultural understanding of Berlin, Germany, and Europe? What are the different roles played by the permanent exhibition (currently being entirely reworked) and the temporary exhibitions in the 'Pei-Bau'?	Readings: Andrews, "Memory of the Nation": Making and re-making German history in the Berlin Zeughaus (PhD thesis, 2014), Introduction, pp. 1-22. Koschnick (ed.) German Historical Museum guidebook (2008), pp. 6-19. (Watch) DHM 'Last Look until 2025' Museum Love video
Session 19-20	FIELD TRIP: GEDENKSTÄTTE DEUTSCHER WIDERSTAND	
Session 21-22	GROUP PRESENTATIONS	<u>Due: Final project (1) Presentations</u>
FINALS WEEK		<u>Due: Final Project (2) Final Paper</u>

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Visits to Berlin museums and exhibitions provide students with a unique “behind-the-scenes” look at museum work (and educational work in particular. Students will hear from experts and will have ample opportunity to ask questions. All of these visits serve to prepare students for their final projects. We will specifically visit: the *Neues Museum*, the *Humboldt Forum*, the *German Historical Museum (Pei-Bau)*, the *Topography of Terror*, and the *Berlin Wall Memorial*.
- Additionally, students will be expected to visit museums of their choice on at least two occasions outside of class time: for their field journal and exhibition review. They may also choose to visit additional museums to help them formulate ideas for their final assignment. These visits provide a counterpoint to what students have observed at the *Neues Museum* and/or *Humboldt Forum*, encouraging them to think through similarities and differences between a variety of exhibition spaces.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Andrews, Mary-Elizabeth. Introduction, in: *“Memory of the Nation”: Making and re-making German history in the Berlin Zeughaus* (2014), pp. 1-22.
- Ariese & Wróblewska, Parcticing Decoloniality in Museums (2022)
- Blom, Philip & MacGregor, Neil. ‘A House of Many Stories: But Who is to Tell Them?’, in: *(Post) Colonialism and Cultural Heritage* (2021) pp. 197-217.
- Case, David, The Politics of Memorial Representation - The Controversy Over the German Resistance Museum in 1994, in *German Politics & Society* (Spring 1998)
- Eder, Rita. ‘Dilemmas Facing the Humboldt Forum: Objects and the Embodiment of a Political Project’ in: *(Post) Colonialism and Cultural Heritage* (2021), pp. 181-194.
- German Historical Museum Berlin: Colonialism exhibition catalogue (2016)
- Harrison, Hope, The Berlin Wall and its Resurrection as a Site of Memory, in: *German Politics and Society* (Summer 2011)
- Kassim, Sumaya ‘The Museum is the Master’s House: An Open Letter to Tristram Hunt’, 26. July 2019.
- Kreuer, Building a Castle of Humanism and Oblivion – The Humboldt Forum and its Struggle with National Identity (PhD, 2017) • MacGregor, Neil, *Germany: Memories of a Nation* (2014)
- Maja-Pearce, Adewale. ‘Strewn with Loot’ in *London Review of Books* (12 August 2021)
- Mason, Rhiannon, Robinson, Alistair, and Coffield, Emma, *Museum and Gallery Studies: The Basics*. (2017).
- Ölçer, Nazan. Heritage. Restitution and Complementary Paths, in: *(Post) Colonialism and Cultural Heritage* (2021), pp. 25-38.
- Wüstenberg, Jenny. ‘Building Negative Memory: Civic Initiatives for Memorials to Nazi Terror’ in *Civil Society and Memory in Postwar Germany* (2017) pp. 102- 126.

WATCH:

- *Deutsche Welle* doc ‘From Nefertiti to Beuys’ (Pts. 1 & 2)
- Speech by Chimamande Adichie at the opening of the Humboldt Forum’s Ethnological Museum
- Tour of the British Museum’s ‘Germany: Memories of a Nation’ exhibition with Neil MacGregor

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Kammen, Michael. Public History and National Identity in the United States’, in *American Studies* Vol. 4 (1999), pp. 459- 475.
- Jaeger, Steven. *The Second World War in the Twenty-First Century Museum* (2020)
- Jones, Mike, ‘Tristram Hunt and the de/recontextualization of museum artefacts’ (blog)
- MacGregor, Neil. *Germany: Memories of a Nation*. (2014). (Also available in podcast format on the BBC).
- Macleod, Suzanne. *Museums and Design for Creative Lives* (2020)

(9/2023)