



**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 museums 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, along with what kinds of careers students can find in museums upon graduation. Visits to museums and memorial sites across Berlin augment the classroom sessions.

**CREDITS:** 3

**CONTACT HOURS:** 45 hours

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. David Meeres

**LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION:** English

**PREREQUISITES:** None

**ADDITIONAL COSTS:** Visits to museums and exhibitions in Berlin, approx. € 25. Visits outside of class time to additional museums throughout Berlin to complete assignments, approx. €15.

**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.

- ✓ A: Excellent participation. The student's contributions reflect active reading of the assigned materials and a respectful engagement with the contributions of other classmates. She/he skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and



raises questions about the significance and implications of the material, providing evidence and reasons for her/his assertions. Through questions and comments, the student demonstrates that he or she is capable of relating 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. He/she identifies main ideas and arguments most of the time, even if he/she does not always reflect upon the significance and implications of the material. The student engages with the contributions of his/her classmates, but sometimes interrupts the conversation to introduce tangential information or viewpoints.
- C: Satisfactory participation. The student demonstrates evidence that she/he has 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. He/she does not participate in an informed way and shows little interest in engaging constructively with others.

### Midterm Exam

In essay form (90 minutes, in-class), students will be tasked with discussing the work of museum professionals in light of the theoretical readings during the first few weeks. In brief: How does museum work align with or diverge from these readings?

### Field Study Journal

With reference to the scheduled readings, students will reflect upon and analyze what they have observed during the structured meetings with staff at the various museums we visit. In addition, students will also record their impressions of visits to museums around Berlin based on in-class discussions and readings about the layout and design of exhibitions. Students will write five 200-word entries in all. Journal entries will be collected during midterm week and again at the end of classes.

### Exhibition Review

In 1,500 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 during Week 8.

### 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 handled critique and comments from their peers.

### 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.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Over the course of the semester, students will:

- Analyze 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.
- Gain awareness of the kinds of careers people can find at museums. Students will also learn what happens on a day-to-day basis behind the scenes, along with how museum staff members work together to produce compelling exhibitions and convince the general public to visit.



- 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:**

Attendance and punctuality in all courses and field studies are mandatory. Absences can only be excused for valid reasons. Unexcused absences can affect students' grades. Students who miss 25% or more of all class sessions will fail the course. Missed exams cannot be taken at another time except in case of documented illness. Late submission of term papers and other work will result in grade reduction unless an extension due to illness or an emergency is approved. Please consult the IES Berlin Academics Manual on Moodle for additional details.

**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:**

Week	Content	Readings/Assignments/Activities
Week 1	<b>Session 1: Course Introduction</b> 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 — constitute a red thread that runs through the course.	Assignment: Ice breaker activities so students and instructor can get to know one another.
	<b>Session 2: Museum, monument, memorial site</b> What do we mean when we call something a museum, monument, or memorial site? Are all museums memorial sites? Might they also be monuments? How are museums different from (or similar to) monuments or memorial sites? Can we broaden any of these terms to include festivals, circuses, world expositions and the like?	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mason et. al., "First Principles," in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 17-53.</li> <li>Rydell, "World Fairs and Museums," in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 135-151.</li> </ul>
Week 2	<b>Session 3-4: Museums as mechanisms of classifying, exhibiting, and exoticizing</b> What are the kinds of power relations inherent in the acts of classifying, categorizing, and exhibiting? This week students will explore the history of the museum as an <i>institution</i> , with particular emphasis on the linkages between display and forms of social	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," in <i>The Birth of the Museum</i>, pp. 59-88.</li> <li>Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," in Karp and Lavine (eds.), <i>Exhibiting Cultures</i>, pp. 386-443.</li> </ul>

	<p>organization such as empires or nation-states. How did (and do) museums construct notions of race, nation, and class? How did museums legitimize notions of what constitutes “culture,” and how do they continue to do so?</p> <p>We will also consider the rise of the museum during the nineteenth century as an integral component of modernity and compare them with other markers of modernity, such as department stores, mass transportation, and mass communication.</p>	
<b>Week 3</b>	<p><b>Session 4-5: What is a “universal museum”?</b> <b>The ethics of exhibition</b></p> <p>Students will learn about the role of the German Historical Museum (<i>Deutsches Historisches Museum</i>), and will consider the following questions: What does it mean 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 ethics of collection and exhibition?</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Visit to the German Historical Museum</p>	<p>Readings/Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Mason et. al., “The Business of Culture,” in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 130-163.</li> </ul> <p>Optional class reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Andrews, “Memory of the Nation”: Making and re-making German history in the Berlin Zeughaus (PhD thesis, 2014), Introduction, pp. 1-22.</li> </ul> <p>Assignment: Journal Entry #1. Relating today’s class to last week’s readings on the museum as an institutional structure that produces knowledge.</p>
<b>Week 4</b>	<p><b>Session 6: The work of museum professionals</b></p> <p>Classroom session to discuss readings about the work of museum professionals. Preview of upcoming museum visits.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Mason et. al., “Visitors and Audiences,” in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 86-129.</li> <li>· Boylan, “The Museum Profession,” in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 415-430.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 7: The Production Department</b></p> <p>The production department works in conjunction with every other department in the museum as well as external contractors (graphic designers and architects) to coordinate object loans, shipping, insurance, the catalogue, and the appearance of the exhibition.</p>	
<b>Week 5</b>	<p><b>Session 8: Restoration/conservation of objects; object registration; object loaning and borrowing</b></p> <p>Without the work of people skilled in restoration and conservation of museum objects, we wouldn’t be able to enjoy our cultural heritage today or preserve it for posterity. Without registrars and people who work to keep databases up to date, the thousands of objects any major museum owns would be an impossible jumble. Students will gain a more nuanced understanding of the curator’s role in the museum.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Gerstenblith, “Museum Practice: Legal Issues,” in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 442-456.</li> </ul> <p>Assignment: Journal Entry #2. With reference to the readings of the first 4 weeks, comment on the various museum staff positions you have learned about.</p>

	<p><b>Session 9: The museum experience I</b></p> <p>In anticipation of work in the coming weeks, students will read works that both probe the ideological underpinnings of museums and reflect upon how social space has an impact on us.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bennett, "The Political Rationality of the Museum," in <i>Birth of the Museum</i>, pp. 80-108.</li> </ul> <p>Assignment: Hand out prompt for exhibition review.</p>
Week 6	<p><b>Midterm exam</b> (90 minutes, in-class)</p>	<p>Due: Journal Entries #1 and #2.</p>
Week 7	<p><b>Session 10: The museum experience II</b></p> <p>Continuation of theme from Week 4, with closer examination of the notion of affect, the social qualities of space, and the architecture of museums.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ahmed, "Collective Feelings," in <i>Theory, Culture and Society</i> 21, pp. 25-42.</li> <li>• Lampugnani, "Insight versus Entertainment," in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 245-262.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 11: Curatorial Work: The "Idea" of Berlin</b></p> <p>Curators perform many functions at the museum and are, perhaps, the most prominent museum professionals. Their work spans collection management, research, and exhibition. They conduct research on their particular areas of the collection. They are central participants in deciding what a museum accessions or deaccessions (in other words, they decide what is "museum-worthy"). They select and present the objects the public sees in the permanent and temporary exhibitions. The object range with which these curators is vast: city models, suits of amour, maps, postcards, photographs, porcelain, paintings, historical documents, furniture, fashion, music, and architecture — just to name a few.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mason et. al., "Collecting and Collections," in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 54-85.</li> </ul>
Week 8	<p><b>Session 12: Representing Fraught Histories</b></p> <p>We will discuss how curators are involved in the historical-political exhibitions staged by a museum.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mason et. al., "Display, Interpretation and Learning," in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 164-188.</li> </ul> <p>Assignment: Journal Entry #3: Museum visit. Choose a museum from the comprehensive list, visit the museum, and record your impressions. Come prepared to discuss your diverse museum experiences during the seminar discussions in the next session.</p>

	<p><b>Session 13: How museums affect us</b></p> <p>After the previous several weeks of learning how museum professionals stage exhibitions, students will reflect more upon what is contained within the space of the museum and what it's doing there. How do exhibitors use space to create a visual narrative? How do the elements of this spatialized narrative — photographs, wall texts, relics, size and shape of a given gallery, lighting, sound — affect the visitor on a conscious or unconscious level? How do museums engage the visitor? How do some curators actively short-circuit our expectations? How do all of these considerations work together to shape or contest identity?</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Fehr, "A Museum and Its Memory," in Crane (ed.), <i>Museums and Memory</i>, pp. 35-59.</li> <li>· Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in Karp and Lavine (eds.), <i>Exhibiting Culture</i>, pp. 42-56.</li> <li>· Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in Karp and Lavine (eds.), <i>Exhibiting Culture</i>, 88-103.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 9</b></p>	<p><b>Session 14-15: Representing the Other</b></p> <p>As a counterpoint to other Berlin museum's collection and exhibition strategies, we will consider how Berlin's ethnologic and folkloric museums represent the "other," whether that "other" is from a different part of the planet or from a different time period in German history. How have museums in Berlin collected and exhibited the objects and relics of other cultures since the nineteenth century? How might these practices have reinforced what it meant to be "German," or to be "European"? How have these visual narratives and exhibition strategies changed over time? These questions will be further illuminated through a discussion of ideas and debates surrounding the Humboldt Forum project.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> visit to the Humboldt Forum site</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Kreps, "Non-Western Models of Museums and Curation in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 457-472.</li> </ul> <p>Assignment: Journal Entry #4. In light of the readings from week 5-9, comment on one of the following: the ideological underpinnings of museum collections; the representation of controversial histories; or the ethics of restitution.</p> <p>Due: Exhibition review.</p>
<p><b>Week 10</b></p>	<p><b>Session 16: The museum and the city I: Marketing, Press, Development</b></p> <p>Sometimes as one department, sometimes as closely allied departments, museum staff who engage in marketing, communication, and development are crucial players in any museum context. They promote exhibitions, communicate the mission of the museum, and cultivate donors.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Bunzl, "Jeff Koons (Heart) Chicago" and "Untitled (Curation)," in Bunzl, <i>In Search of a Lost Avant-Garde</i>, pp. 23-40 and pp. 77-92.</li> <li>· Various brochures for temporary exhibitions around the city.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Session 17-18: The museum and the city II: Education and Visitor Services</b>          Education departments are the public face of museums. How do museum educators “translate” the objects and exhibitions into terms that a range of museum visitors can understand?</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> visit to the German Historical Museum</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mason et. al., “Display, Interpretation and Learning,” in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 189-204.</li> <li>✓ Hein, “Museum Education,” in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 340-352.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 11</b></p>	<p><b>Session 19: The future of museum work: critical perspectives</b>          How can museums remain relevant in an era of instant gratification and big ticket-style entertainment? Does the answer lie in blockbuster exhibitions that cater to a mass public? How and to what extent should museums embrace new technologies? How do we move from didactic museum displays to participatory museum experiences? What is stake in this transition? How might curators cede authority while maintaining a space for their expertise? This exciting and wide-open discussion on inclusion and diversity is eminently current, playing out across blogs and online forums.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mason et. al., “Looking Forward,” in <i>Museum and Gallery Studies</i>, pp. 205-221.</li> <li>✓ Smith, “The Future of the Museum,” in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 543-554.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 20-21: On the margins of a cultural metropolis</b>          Today students will visit one of the fledgling “smaller” museums in Berlin. What challenges do these kinds of museums and memorial sites face, especially in a city like Berlin famous for its bounty of cultural activities? How are their missions both similar to and different from other museums students have encountered? How are they funded? What kinds of outreach activities do they perform within the community?</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> visit to the Marienfelde Refugee Center Museum</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Crooke, “Museums and Community,” in Macdonald (ed.), <i>Companion</i>, pp. 170-185.</li> </ul> <p>Assignment: journal entry reflecting on how “dominant” museums legitimate a particular version of German or European culture that leaves little space for voices at the margins of society.</p>
<p><b>Week 12</b></p>	<p><b>Session 22: Student Presentations</b></p>	<p>Assignment: Final project presentations.</p> <p>Check-in regarding final projects.</p> <p>Due: Journal Entries #3, #4, and #5.</p>
<p><b>Week 13</b></p>	<p><b>Finals week</b></p>	<p>Final project due by 12:00 noon on the first day of exam week.</p>

**COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:**

- ✓ Visits to Berlin museums and exhibitions provide students with a unique “behind-the-scenes” look at museum work while

introducing them to the variety of jobs and careers available in the museum world. 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: the *German Historical Museum*, the *Humboldt Forum*, and the *Marienfelde Refugee Center Museum*.

- Additionally, students will be expected to visit museums of their choice on at least two occasions outside of class time: once for one of their journal entries and once for their 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 German Historical Museum, encouraging them to think through similarities among, and differences between, a variety of museum genres. The instructor will provide students with a comprehensive annotated list of Berlin's museums when circulating the assignment prompts.

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Ahmed, Sara. "Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others." *Theory, Culture and Society* 21, no.2 (2004): 25-42.
- Bennett, Tony. "The Exhibitionary Complex." In Bennett. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Boylan, Patrick. "The Museum Profession." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.
- Bunzl, Matti. *In Search of a Lost Avant-Garde*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Crooke, Elizabeth. "Museums and Community." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.
- Duncan, Carol. "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship." In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Fehr, Michael. "A Museum and Its Memory: The Art of Recovering History." In *Museums and Memory*, ed. Susan A. Crane. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. "Resonance and Wonder." In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Hein, George E. "Museum Education." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.
- Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. "Objects of Ethnography." In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Kreps, Christina. "Non-Western Models of Museums and Curation in Cross-Cultural Perspective." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.
- Lampugnani, Vittorio Magnago. "Insight versus Entertainment: Untimely Meditations on the Architecture of Twentieth-Century Art Museums." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.
- Mason, Rhiannon, Alistair Robinson, and Emma Coffield. *Museum and Gallery Studies: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Rydell, Robert W. "World Fairs and Museums." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.
- Smith, Charles Saumarez. "The Future of the Museum." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Toward an Investigation)." In *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster with an Introduction by Fredric Jameson. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001.
- Andrews, Mary-Elizabeth. "*Memory of the Nation*": *Making and re-making German history in the Berlin Zeughaus* (PhD thesis, 2014)
- Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Crane, Susan A. (ed.). *Museums and Memory*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Duncan, Carol. *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. New York and London: Routledge, 1995.
- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *The Museum Experience Revisited*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Karp, Ivan and Steven D. Lavine (eds.). *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Karp, Ivan, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine. *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.



- Linnenthal, Edward T. *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.
- MacGregor, Neil. *Germany: Memories of a Nation*. London: Allen Lane, 2014. (Also available in podcast format on the BBC).