HS/MU 338 MUSEUMS AND THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC HISTORY IN VIENNA
IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION:
This course at the intersection of history and museum studies draws on Vienna’s rich cultural landscape to provide students with experiential learning opportunities that foster critical thinking about a variety of Viennese museums and their historical 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, natural, intellectual, 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. Regular sessions at the Wien Museum (Vienna’s city history museum) and visits to other museums and memorial sites across Vienna augment the classroom sessions.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: 200-level humanities or social science course with a focus on modern Europe required (Central Europe preferred).

ADDITIONAL COSTS: Wien Museum Annual Pass, €25 (includes the Jewish Museum Vienna and all of the museums and sites administered by the Wien Museum); visits outside of class time to additional museums throughout Vienna to complete assignments, approximately €20-€30. Beyond structured visits to museums during class time, 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 (Week 6), and once for their exhibition review due during Week 8. They may also visit additional museums to help them formulate ideas for their final assignment. I will provide students with a comprehensive annotated list of Vienna’s museums when I circulate assignment prompts.

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 the Wien Museum 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 (Week 5) - 20%
- Exhibition review due during Week 8 (1500 words) - 15%
- Field study journal (five 200-word entries on themes during Weeks 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9) - 20%
- Group presentation of final project (Week 10) - 10%
- Final project in lieu of a final exam - 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, 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 Wien Museum and other museums we visit. In addition, students will also record their impressions of visits to museums around Vienna based on in-class discussions and readings about the layout and design of exhibitions. Students will write five 200-word entries in all. I will collect journal entries during midterm week and again at the end of classes.

Exhibition Review
In 1500 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.

IES VIENNA ATTENDANCE POLICY:
IES Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions, including field study excursions, internship meetings, scheduled rehearsals, and all tests and exams. Attendance will be taken for every class. If a student misses more than the equivalent of a week of classes without an excuse, the final grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade (for example, A- to B+) for every additional unexcused absence.

Excused absences are permitted only when:
1) a student is ill (health issues),
2) when class is held on a recognized religious holiday traditionally observed by the particular student, or
3) in the case of a grave incident affecting family members;
4) exceptions may be made for conflicting academic commitments, but only in writing and only well in advance of missed class time.

Any other absences are unexcused.

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments/Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1-1</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td>Assignment: Ice breaker activities so students and instructor can get to know one another.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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| Week 1-2 | Museum, monument, memorial site | Readings:
|       | 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? |
| Week 2-1 | Museums as mechanisms of classifying, exhibiting, and exoticizing | Readings:
|       | 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 institution, with particular emphasis on the linkages between display and forms of social |
organization such as empires or nation-states. How did (and do) museums construct notions of race, nation, and class? How did museums legitimate notions of what constitutes “culture,” and how do they continue to do so?

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.

**Week 2-2**

**What is a “universal museum”? The ethics of exhibition**

Matti Bunzl, director of the Wien Museum, will speak on the topic of the “universal museum.” Students will learn about the various museums and sites under the Wien Museum umbrella, and will consider a few of the following questions: What does it mean to “curate” knowledge about Vienna? How does this act of curation serve to shape our cultural understanding of Vienna, Austria, and even Europe? What are the ethics of collection and exhibition, especially for an institution that represents such a broad range of Viennese and Austrian history?

Matti will also discuss the Wien Museum’s pending renovation and reconstruction in light of these questions, along with the challenges he has faced in shepherding the Wien Museum through this sometimes controversial process. Some of these issues include how the renovated Wien Museum fits into the architectural milieu of Karlsplatz, and how the permanent exhibition will represent some of Austria’s more contentious historical and political events while also giving voice to historically marginalized groups.

**Readings/Sources:**
- Images and design sketches (Moodle): With a nod to Otto Wagner’s late 19th and early 20th-century urban planning initiatives involving his designs for a city history museum, we will consider ongoing public debates about the Wien Museum’s reconstruction project on Karlsplatz.
- Optional class reading:

**Activity:** Wien Museum visit

**Assignment:** Journal Entry #1. Relating today’s lecture to last week’s readings on the museum as an institutional structure that produces knowledge.

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**Week 3-1**

**The work of museum professionals**

Classroom session to discuss readings about the work of museum professionals. Preview for the coming several weeks of intensive Wien Museum visits.

**Readings:**

**Week 3-2**

**The Production Department**

The production department works in conjunction with every other department in the museum (including physical and building services) along with external

**Activity:** Wien Museum visit

In a comprehensive session with Bärbl Schrems (head of the production department), students will learn
contractors (graphic designers and architects) to coordinate object loans, shipping, insurance, the catalogue, the appearance of the exhibition.

### Week 4-1

**Restoration/conservation of objects; object registration; object loaning and borrowing**

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 hear from Wien Museum professionals who will each speak for 15-20 minutes about what their role in the museum is. Students will also have the opportunity to explore their workspace and see what they do.

**Readings:**

**Activity:** Wien Museum visit with staff involved in the conservation, registering, and circulation of museum objects.

**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 during Weeks 3 and 4.

### Week 4-2

**The museum experience I**

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.

**Readings:**

### Week 5-1

**The museum experience II**

Continuation of theme from Week 4, with closer examination of the notion of affect, the social qualities of space, and the architecture of museums.

**Readings:**

### Week 5-2

**Midterm**

Assignment: Hand out prompt for exhibition review due Week 8-2.

**Due:** Journal Entries #1 and #2.

### Week 6-1

**Curatorial Work I: The “Idea” of Vienna**

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 accession or deaccession (in other words, they decide what is “museum-worthy”). They select and present the objects the public sees in the

**Readings:**

**Activity:** Wien Museum visit

Sándor Bekesi will speak about the “idea” of Vienna that drives collection policies and exhibition strategies. He’ll also recount the history of the Wien Museum as an institution before discussing some of the objects he chose for his 2017 exhibition “Bird’s-Eye Vienna.”
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.

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<tr>
<th>Week 6-2</th>
<th>Curatorial Work II: Representing Fraught Histories</th>
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<td>This week we will hear from curators involved in the historical-political exhibitions the Wien Museum stages.</td>
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<th>Week 7-1</th>
<th>How museums affect us</th>
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<td>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?</td>
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<th>Week 7-2</th>
<th>Representing the Other</th>
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<td>As a counterpoint to the Wien Museum’s collection and exhibition strategies, we will consider how Vienna’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 Austrian history. How has the Weltmuseum Wien collected and exhibited the objects and relics of other</td>
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<th>Readings:</th>
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<td>Mason et. al., “Display, Interpretation and Learning,” in <em>Museum and Gallery Studies</em>, pp. 164-188.</td>
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<td>Werner Schwarz will talk about the origins and development of the “Red Vienna” exhibition, which opens in the spring of 2019. Students will also hear about Gerhard Milchram’s restitution work for the Wien Museum.</td>
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<td>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 Week 7.</td>
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<td>Activity: Possible visit to the Volkskunde Museum to learn how curators have staged a series of recent</td>
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cultures in Vienna since the nineteenth century? How has the Volkskunde Museum represented Austrian folk traditions? How might these practices have reinforced what it meant to be “Viennese,” to be “European”? How have these visual narratives and exhibition strategies changed over time?

exhibitions that challenge our assumptions about identity while opening a space for underrepresented voices in Vienna’s museum landscape.

Assignment: Journal Entry #4. In light of the readings from Weeks 4 through 7, comment on one of the following: the ideological underpinnings of museum collections; the representation of controversial histories; or the ethics of restitution.

**Week 8-1**

The museum and the city I: Marketing, Press, Development

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.

Readings:
- Various brochures for temporary exhibitions around the city.

Activity: Wien Museum visit

Peter Stuiber, who has held a number of key posts at the Wien Museum over the past fifteen years, will talk about the events the Wien Museum programs for its public, along with the Wien Museum’s attempts to reach new audiences — increasingly via digital platforms.

**Week 8-2**

The museum and the city II: Education and Visitor Services

Education departments are the public face of museums. Students will hear from Education Department head Nathaniel Prottas about how museum educators “translate” the objects and exhibitions into terms that a range of museum visitors can understand.

Readings:
- Mason et. al., “Display, Interpretation and Learning,” in Museum and Gallery Studies, pp. 189-204.

Activity: Wien Museum visit

Due: Exhibition review.

**Week 9-1**

The future of museum work: critical perspectives

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’s at stake in this transition? How might curators cede authority while maintaining a

Readings:

Blog posts from major stakeholders and influencers, including: Museum 2.0 blog; MuseumHack.com; Dispatches from the Future of the Museum. I will
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<th>Week 9-2</th>
<th><strong>On the margins of a cultural metropolis</strong>&lt;br&gt;Today students will visit one of the fledgling “minority” museums in Vienna, such as Romano Centro. What challenges do these kinds of museums and memorial sites face, especially in a city like Vienna famous for its bounty of cultural activities? How are their missions both similar to and different from other museums students have encountered? How do they fund themselves? What kinds of outreach activities do they perform within the community?</th>
<th>select relevant posts that have been written over the several weeks that the class meets.</th>
<th><strong>Readings:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Crooke, “Museums and Community,” in in Macdonald (ed.), <em>Companion</em>, pp. 170-185.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Activity:</strong> Museum visit (TBD. Possibly to Romano Centro.)&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment:</strong> journal entry reflecting on how “dominant” museums legitimate a particular version of Viennese, Austrian, or European culture that leaves little space for voices at the margins of society.</th>
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<td>Week 10-1</td>
<td><strong>Student Presentations</strong></td>
<td>Assignment: Final project presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10-2</td>
<td><strong>Student Presentations</strong></td>
<td>Assignment: Final project presentations.</td>
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<td>Study Week</td>
<td>Make-up sessions. Check-in regarding final projects. Due: Journal Entries #3, #4, and #5.</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>Final project due by 12:00 noon on the first day of exam week.</td>
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**COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:**
- Visits to the Wien Museum in Weeks 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8. These visits 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 in their fields, will have ample opportunity to ask questions, and, in several cases, will gain hands-on experience with museum objects. All of these visits serve to prepare students for their final projects.
- Possible visit to the Volkskunde Museum in Week 7. With recent temporary exhibitions on topics ranging from the plight of Afghan asylum seekers, the lives of Austrian children of African-American occupation soldiers, and self-reflective examinations of the Volkskunde Museum between everyday life and the political sphere, the curators have challenged norms of exhibition, proposing alternatives to the dominant narrative of Viennese and Austrian history in the process.
- Possible visit to Romano Centro in Week 9. In a city as rich in world-class museums and memorial sites as Vienna, it is sometimes difficult for museums “on the margins” to make their voices heard. Students will learn about how the missions of these museums are both similar to and different from other museums students have encountered. They will also learn about the kinds of outreach activities that these museums perform on behalf of underrepresented communities.
- 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 (Week 6), and once for their exhibition review due during Week 8. 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 Wien Museum, encouraging them to think through similarities among, and differences between, a variety of museum genres. I will provide students with a comprehensive annotated list of Vienna’s museums when I circulate assignment prompts.

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

RECOMMENDED READINGS: