

# ArH 399: Inside the Museum

Spring 2007; Lectures M&W 3:00-4:20; “Looking” Sections Th&F; 107 JSMA; 4 credits

## Professor

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## I. Course Description

This course will take the UO Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art as its subject of inquiry, with class sessions and assignments designed around objects and exhibitions in the JSMA. We also will examine broader topics relating to historical and recent trends in museums of art. A key component of the class is a course exhibition, located in the JSMA Gilkey Center. Lectures by the course instructor will be supplemented by frequent guest visits from faculty in art history and other disciplines, as well as by staff at the JSMA. In addition to the twice-weekly lecture/discussion classes, students will take part in weekly “looking” sections that will allow for sustained, first-hand engagement with works of art. Assignments will include weekly “think pieces” about course topics, the writing of labels that will be placed next to objects in the museum, and a group project involving the conception of an imaginary exhibition designed around a work in the JSMA collection. These group projects will be presented on the evening of June 6 as part of the JSMA “MusEvening” program, which is open to the public. The intended outcome of the course is to encourage you to become museum *users*, rather than simply museum visitors.

Prerequisite: It is expected that students enrolled in the course will have taken, as a minimum, one of the 200-level Art History survey courses.

Support for this course has been provided by a grant from the Williams Fund for Undergraduate Teaching. In keeping with the goals of the Williams Fund, this is a writing-intensive course.

## II. Course Requirements

### *1. Attendance and Participation*

Due to the visual and interactive nature of this course, attendance at all class sessions is absolutely essential. Attendance will be taken at both lecture and looking sections. In addition, you should come prepared to take part in discussions at all class meetings. Half of your participation grade will be based on attendance at three art-related events on campus and a 1-2 page critical reflection on your experience in each case. (A list of events and guidelines on writing your critical reflections will be posted shortly on Blackboard.)

## ***2. Reading and Looking***

Due to the unusual nature of this class, there are not course textbooks. Rather, all course readings will be posted on Blackboard. You should come to class having carefully read any assigned readings. Please print out and bring a copy of readings with you to class so that we can refer to them together.

To supplement the required readings on Blackboard, I will put a selection of books relating to the course on reserve in the AAA library. Readings from the books on reserve are not required, but you may find them interesting if you wish to further explore a particular course topic. All will be on 4-hour reserve to maximize access.

In addition to readings, you will often be asked to look at objects or exhibitions in the JSMA in preparation for class. Please keep in mind the museum's hours: Wed. 11-8, Thurs.-Sun. 11-5. The museum is closed Mon. and Tues. This means any "looking" preparation for class on Monday will need to take place on Sunday at the latest. Preparation for Wednesday can take place earlier that day.

## ***3. Weekly Think Pieces***

In most weeks throughout the quarter, you will be asked to hand in a 2-page "think piece." These will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesdays and will require you to explore further readings and ideas from class and section in the previous week. In calculating your grade, your lowest scoring think piece will not be counted. No late think pieces will be accepted.

## ***4. Group Exhibition Project***

During the second half of the quarter, you will work on a group project with four other students that involves conceptualizing an exhibition for the JSMA Focus Gallery. Details on this project will be distributed in a few weeks. Your group's exhibition proposal will be presented in oral form at the JSMA "MusEvening on Wed., June 6, and a written version will be due no later than the beginning of our scheduled final exam time: 3:15 on Wednesday, June 13.

### **Grading Breakdown**

Attendance & Participation	30%
Weekly Think Pieces	40 %
Group Exhibition Project	30 %

## **III. Important Course Policies**

***Blackboard.*** Blackboard is an essential component of this course, and making good use of it is essential to doing well. Among the materials that I will post on Blackboard are: the course syllabus, detailed instructions on assignments, required readings, any powerpoints shown in class, and links to additional resources and important university policies.

***Photocopied Materials.*** In an effort to reduce our consumption of natural resources, I will limit the materials that I photocopy for in-class distribution. The course syllabus and assignments will be posted on Blackboard for you to make hardcopies if you wish. I strongly encourage you to make hardcopies of the readings posted on Blackboard so that you can refer to them easily.

***Email.*** I will make frequent use email to give you information about upcoming classes, remind you of deadlines, and to alert you to material on Blackboard. I will use your official UO email account to do so. When emailing Sara or me, please do so respectfully. A good rule of thumb is to address us as you would in person. We will do our best to reply to you within 24 hours.

***Special Accommodations for Learning Needs.*** To request special accommodations based on your learning needs, you must supply me with the appropriate documentation by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the quarter so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

***Student Code of Conduct.*** I will post a link on Blackboard to the student code of conduct regarding academic honesty. If you have not recently reviewed these policies, I encourage you to do so. I take academic honesty very seriously and, in keeping with UO policies, I have the authority report all cases of suspected academic dishonesty to the Director of Student Judicial Affairs in the Office of Student Life, who will take appropriate action. Please note that academic dishonesty may constitute grounds for a failing grade for the course.

## **IV. Course Schedule**

(Subject to minor revision to due changes in the schedules of guest speakers)

### **Week 1 Introduction to the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art**

- 4/2 *Course Overview / Thinking about Expectations*  
Assignment:  
Carol Duncan, “The Art Museum as Ritual” (*Civilising Rituals*)  
John Walsh, “Pictures, Tears, Lights, and Seats” (*Whose Muse?*)
- 4/4 *Introduction to the JSMA*  
Visitors: Larry Fong, JSMA; and Deborah Hurtt, Art History  
Assignment:  
Spend at least a half hour examining the JSMA, inside and outside  
Fong, “The Collector,” (*Precious Cargo*)  
Smith, “Architecture and the Museum”  
JSMA website ([uoma.uoregon.edu](http://uoma.uoregon.edu))  
UO Architecture website for JSMA  
([libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/architecture/oregon/museumart.html](http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/architecture/oregon/museumart.html))
- “Looking Sections” Examination of the architecture and public spaces of the JSMA  
(optional preparation: JSMA podcast by David Turner)

### **Week 2 Introduction to Objects**

- 4/9 *Objects in Museums*  
Assignment:  
Preziosi, “Art History and Museology: Rendering the Visible  
Legible” (*Companion to Museum Studies*)  
Cuno, “The Object of Art Museums” (*Whose Muse?*)
- 4/11 *Labels: Writing About Objects in Museum*  
Visitors: Lisa Abia-Smith, JSMA; and David Turner, AAA  
Assignment:  
Sayre, “Using Visual Information” (*Writing About Art*)  
Gopnik, “Here’s the Problem: Writing’s on the Wall”  
Additional readings TBA
- “Think Piece” Reflection on architecture and ritual in the JSMA
- “Looking Sections” Examination of the course exhibition

**Week 3      Exhibitions and Exhibit Design / Objects and “Things”**

- 4/16      *Issues in Exhibition Design / Focus on “From the Fire”*  
Visitor: Kurt Neugebauer, JSMA  
Assignment:  
McLean, “Looking at Exhibitions: One Approach to Criticism”  
Chiodo and Rupp, “Setting the Stage for Meaningful Exhibits”  
Bendo, “Museum Exhibitions: Past Imperfect, Future Tense”  
McLean, “Museum Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue”
- 4/18      *“The Not-So-Secret Lives of Things”*  
Visitors: A Panel Discussion organized by Dick Stein, English  
Assignment:  
View the exhibition, Jungjin Lee, “Things”  
Brown, “Thing Theory”  
Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History of Fiction?”
- “Think Piece”      Object label and analysis for a work in the course exhibition
- “Looking Sections”      Examination of “From the Fire: Contemporary Korean Ceramics”

**Week 4      Museums and Their Publics / “Objects-in-Depth” I**

- 4/23      *Museums and Their Publics*  
Visitors: Lisa Abia-Smith, JSMA; and Janice Rutherford, AAD  
Assignment:  
“A Brief History of the Museum Public” (*Art and Its Publics*)  
Additional Readings TBA
- 4/25      *Objects-in-Depth I*  
Visitor: Sherwin Simmons, ArH  
Assignment:  
Look closely at Goya and Pechstein in the course exhibition  
Goya, “Three Documents”  
Additional Readings TBA
- “Think Piece”      Analysis of “From the Fire”
- “Looking Sections”      “Behind the Scenes” with Jean Nattinger, JSMA

**Week 5      Objects-in-Depth II / Conservation**

4/30      *Objects-In-Depth*  
Visitors: Larry Fong, JSMA; and David Turner, AAA  
Assignment:  
Look closely at Bullock and Okanoue in the course exhibition  
Readings TBA

5/2      *Issues in the Conservation of Works of Art*  
Visitor: Jan Cavanaugh, ArH  
Assignment:  
Readings TBA

“Think Piece”      Midterm Project: Label of a museum object (counts as two)

“Looking Sections”      Discussion of group project to design an exhibition

**Week 6      Objects-in-Depth III / Public Art**

5/7      *Objects-in-Depth III: Art and Artifact*  
Visitors: Charles Lachman, ArH; and Richard Sundt, ArH  
Assignment:  
Look closely at the “Standing Male” and the “Yipon Figure” in the  
course exhibition  
Readings TBA

5/9      *Issues in Public Art*  
Assignment:  
Senie, “Reframing Public Art: Audience, Use, Interpretation, and  
Appreciation” (*Art and Its Publics*)  
UO web inventory of campus art  
Possible Additional Readings TBA

“Think Piece”      TBA

“Looking Sections”      Examination of the UO campus art collection

**Week 7      Museums and their Contexts**

5/14            *The Mid-Sized Museum of Art*  
Visitor: Chiyo Ishikawa, Seattle Art Museum  
Assignment:  
Readings TBA

5/15 at 7 pm   *Transforming the Seattle Art Museum*  
*Reflections on the Downtown Expansion*  
Required evening lecture by Chiyo Ishikawa  
177 Lawrence Hall

5/16            *The University Museum of Art*  
Visitors: TBA  
Assignment:  
“The Role of the University Art Museum and Gallery”

“Think Piece”      Analysis of a work of campus art

“Looking Sections”   Working session for group exhibition projects

5/19 6-9 pm      MFA Exhibition Opening – attendance strongly encouraged

**Week 8      Contemporary Art/Artists in the Museum**

5/21            *Artists in the Museum I*  
Visitors: Kate Mondloch, ArH; and faculty from Art  
Assignment:  
Zolberg, “Art Museums and Living Artists: Contentious  
Communities” (*Museums and Communities*)  
Possible Additional Readings TBA

5/23            *Artists in the Museum II: panel discussion with MFA students*  
Assignment:  
View the MFA exhibition

“Think Piece”      Reflection on the role of university art museums

“Looking Section”   Examination of the MFA exhibition

**Week 9           Controversies over Cultural Property**

5/28           *No class – Memorial Day*

5/30           *Recent Controversies Over Cultural Property*  
Visitor: Dom Vetri, Law (and possibly others)

Assignment:

Brodie, “Illicit Antiquities: The Theft of Culture” (*Heritage, Museum and Galleries*)

Additional Readings TBA

“Think Piece”           Analysis of MFA exhibition

“Looking Sections”   Final preparations for group exhibition presentations on 6/6

**Week 10          Conclusions**

6/4           *Panel discussion on student involvement in the JSMA*  
River Aaland, Meredith Buerkle, Jon Parks, and Hannah Pritzker

Assignment:

View “Divine Forms: South and Southeast Asian Art”

Listen to selected JSMA I-Tours

6/6           *Dress rehearsal of presentation of exhibition projects*

6/6 6-8 pm   MusEvening presentations of group exhibition projects and reception

No “Think Piece” or “Looking Sections”

**Week 11          Final Exam Week**

6/13           Written versions of group exhibition projects due by 3 pm