Cultural Heritage on Display: Fairs, Festivals, and Museum Exhibitions in the American Public Sphere

The University of Texas at Austin, Spring 2013
Anthropology 325L (31305); AMS 321 (30730)
MWF 10-11am
SAC 4.118

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Course Description:

This course is designed to take you behind the scenes in the public construction, negotiation, and display of “traditional American culture” by focusing on a number of cultural heritage sites in the public sphere. In particular, the course will examine the political economy of fairs, festivals, theme parks, history sites, and museum exhibitions as contested sites of heritage production in American history—focusing especially on those moments when an almost crusade-like obsession with defining and displaying the “true American” becomes an active agent in the process of nation building and ideological construction. We will focus closely on the histories and agencies of specific “exhibitionary complexes,” paying close attention to what one critic calls ‘the problematic relationship of their objects to the instruments of their display.” (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett). Each student will have the opportunity to participate directly in creating and/or critiquing the process of cultural heritage production, documentation, and display—including conducting original field research, planning and designing a specific mode of display, or providing a critical analysis of an historic example of cultural heritage production.

Readings and Requirements

The class format will be structured around discussions, in-class activities, out of class fieldwork, and lectures. In-class discussions, weekly discussion blogs based on the readings, two written assignments and an original research project are required for this class.

Required Textbooks:
• Thatcher Freund; Objects of Desire: The Life of Antiques and Those Who Pursue Them. (Reproduced Co-op Packet) (or check online for used copies)

Course Requirements and Grading:

Success in this course involves using both the concepts and the tools of the cultural researcher. Thus, you will be asked to do certain things as well as display certain knowledge. There will be a variety of different types of assignments and opportunities to tailor the assignments to your own interests. All written assignments should be double-spaced and typed.

A Note about Due Dates and Academic Integrity

Academic life places all of us under demanding time constraints. Please mark your calendar with due dates for the assignments and begin working on these projects early in the semester. I will not accept assignments that are turned in late or give incompletes unless your work was delayed due to a religious observance, a death in the family, or a serious illness just prior to the due date. If this is the case, I will ask you for written verification from your doctor or from a family member.

And finally, the university's policy on academic integrity will be followed in this class.

Grading:

1. ESSAYS: (30%) 
Two short (5 page) papers based on readings, in-class materials, and student-initiated research. I will hand out specific project assignments at least two weeks in advance of each due date. The first assignment requires interviewing a collector and analyzing the collection and the collector’s story; the second assignment is an analysis of an “exhibitionary complex” of your choice: a history museum, a mall, a themed environment, a festival, a cultural heritage site. Please follow the instructions for the projects carefully. No credit will be given for projects that are handed in late without prior approval from the instructor. Each of these projects will be worth 15% of your grade.

2. WEEKLY DISCUSSION BLOG (20%) 
Students will be required to respond to a weekly prompt on our Blackboard discussion board and keep up with it each week. There will be a total of 10 blogs—one for most weeks and each entry should be a full typewritten page:
1) the entry will be based on a written prompt from the instructor which will be posted at the beginning of each week (for the next week). Some of the prompts are listed in
your syllabus as well, but be sure to check on the discussion board site which will have the most up-to-date assignment.

2) In most cases, students will respond to the posted blog by 9pm, Sunday evening before our Monday morning class.

3) Students should use simple, direct language that expresses your ideas as clearly as possible.

4) The blog will be based on the readings for the upcoming week, in most cases. So, if your blog is due on a Sunday night at 9, in most cases, the topic of the blog will be taken up in class the next day, Monday, and will include the readings for the upcoming week. In other words, the blogs are a way to ensure that you come to class on Monday morning prepared to discuss the readings and topic for that week.

Each blog entry will be worth two points, for a maximum of 20 points. Students will receive one point for turning the blog in on time and addressing all aspects of the question. Students will get the maximum 2 points by demonstrating a command of the reading and showing insight and effort in your response to the prompt. No points if your entry is late, skipped, or grossly incomplete.

3. RESEARCH PROJECT (30%):
One research project on the topic of cultural heritage representation will be due at the end of the semester. Projects could be done in the form of a video documentary, a mock museum exhibit, an online social networking experiment, a handmade book, or some other creative form of expression. Possible topics for these projects will be discussed during class. Projects can be based on academic library research, or first-hand ethnographic field research conducted by one or more students during the semester. This project can incorporate one or more of the smaller writing assignments conducted throughout the semester, or can tackle a completely new topic. Because of the in-depth nature of the project, however, assignments must be selected in consultation with (and prior approval from) the professor, before Spring Break. Students may work together in pairs if desired. An annotated bibliography will be required as part of the assignment—to be turned in two weeks in advance of the assignment’s due date, and a two page, written, final reflection piece will complete this assignment.

4. IN CLASS ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION (20%):
Attendance in class, careful and critical reading of the assigned material each week, and participation in class discussions is essential. Discussions, field trips, videos, and readings complement rather than duplicate each other. In order to do well in, and get the most out of, this course, you should come to class regularly and keep up with the reading assignments.

Attendance will be taken each week and will be worth 10% of your final grade. I will take 2 points off of your grade for each absence after the first unexcused absence. You will be allowed one missed class with no penalty. In other words, if you miss five classes, without written excuse from a parent or guardian or doctor, you will receive no points for attendance and final grade will be “docked” the full 10 points. (you can still get points for participation, however). Attendance will be 10% of your final grade.
There will be five “pop quizzes” during the course of the class which will cover specific vocabulary or concepts from the readings. Each pop quiz will be worth one point for a total of five points. If attendance is good, I may let you know in advance when the quizzes will be but if attendance or reading starts to slack off, I will give the quizzes on a “surprise” basis. (5%)

Active participation in class discussions will constitute 5% of your final grade. If you contribute regularly to class discussion—either when called on or on your own—you will receive the full 5 points; if you only contribute to class discussion when called on, but are otherwise attentive to the discussion and up on the readings, you will receive 3-4 of the total 5 points. If you come to class, participate in small group discussion, but do not contribute at all to full class class discussion, you will receive 1-2 points. If are reprimanded for falling asleep in class more than once, or consistently come to class late, you will receive 0-1 points for participation.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Scholastic Dishonesty:** Students are required to do their own research and work. All students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis.php). Plagiarism, using research without citations or using a created production without crediting a source, is forbidden; will result in a grade of zero for the assignment or for the class, or even expulsion from the university, depending on the severity of the plagiarism. This applies to any non-credited websites as well as written sources!

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own.
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source.
- to commit literary theft.
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

*All of the following are considered plagiarism:*

- turning in someone else's work as your own.
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit, including from a website.
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks.
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation.
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit.
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.
• Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your readers with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. Web site for more information:
  • [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism)

**Documented Disability Statement:** Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd). Students need to inform the instructor and the teaching assistant(s) about their disability right at the beginning of the semester.

**Incompletes:** A grade of "I" is only given in cases of documented emergency or special circumstances late in the semester, provided that you have been making satisfactory progress. A grade contract must be completed and the criteria adhered to, in order to fulfill the requirements to take an incomplete. Please note that you must have some written documentation of your reasons for the incomplete—either from a parent, a counselor, a doctor, or some other official in charge of your mental or physical welfare.

**Withdrawals:** Students are responsible for finding out the appropriate dates for dropping the course and/or withdrawing without penalties.

**Use of Blackboard and Electronic Reserves**
The course has a Blackboard website which will be demonstrated during the first week of the class. It includes an electronic gradebook and access to required readings. As noted in the below schedule of assignments, a number of these readings will be available through Blackboard.

Announcements concerning the course will also be made on Blackboard. Students in the class are responsible for checking this website regularly, which you can access by clicking on “Blackboard” under “Popular Sites” on the upper left side of the UT home page. Students are also responsible for regularly checking the e-mail account that is registered with the University. All e-mails to the professor should either be done through Blackboard, or include “ANT 325L or AMS 321” in the subject line; otherwise they may inadvertently be missed. This course is cross listed in Anthro and American Studies. I will create a MASTER section for this class which will include all of you in the class. Thus you will always use this MASTER section to access our blackboard including readings, discussion blog prompts, etc. The MASTER will be called: sp 13 Cultural Heritage on Display MASTER. After the first week of class, you should only have to access the MASTER blackboard for all your course needs!

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**
Week One (1/14-1/18) --Orientation: Cultural Representation of the Self: Personal History on Display

Course introduction: identifying expectations and goals for this course; exploring the concept of cultural heritage, visual culture, representation and display.
Introduction to the idea of “critical reading” of a “text”—including objects, performances, events, displays, as well as printed media.

Exercise: 1. Introductions: I Show and You Tell: Representing the Self to Others: My cultural heritage on display.

Exercise 2. Introduction: You Show and You Tell: Representing Others

Read for the Week:
Blackboard: Lowenthal. The Heritage Crusade. Ch. 2: Personal Legacies
Blackboard: "Why We Need Things" by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, In History from Things, Lubar and Kingery, eds

Discussion Blog Topic Prompt Wk 1: Personal Legacies:
Due Date: Tuesday night 9pm, January 22nd, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board: (Note: All other discussion board prompt responses will be due on Sunday night at 9pm. This one is due on Tuesday night because of the MLK holiday!)

a. Make a list of all of the ways that you can think of that you participated in past-related activities in the past year (i.e., looked at photos with family and friends, took photos, told stories, watched movies about an historical event, attended a reunion, visited a history museum, read a history book, took a course, wrote in a journal, worked on a collection, created a collage or a scrapbook or a quilt for a friend, cleaned out an old closet etc.)
b. Write a sentence or two about the nature/context of each type of participation (did you “narrate” history, “read” history, analyze history, critique a particular presentation of history, etc)
c. Mark which of these activities involved practices of “looking.”

Assignment for next week:

Select an object, or an image of an object from a magazine or other mass media form, that you feel is "representative" of the United States and bring it in for the next class on Wednesday, 1/23/13. This could be an advertisement, a product wrapper, a postcard, a cartoon, a toy, a piece of cloth--an object, or an image that sums up or illustrates what the USA "stands for" to you. The image/object may be positive, critical, ambiguous, or with multiple meanings, as long as it represents some aspect of the United States you feel is important. Please do not “create” an object or collage yourself. I want you to find/select an image or object that is already in existence. I am not looking for any particular kind of image; use your imagination.

**Monday, January 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday**

Exercise: Class Presentation and discussion of "representative" icons of American culture:
How objects change in meaning over time and in different contexts

Read for this Week:
Lowenthal, David. Collective Legacies. Ch. 3.
Blackboard, under Course Documents: Tim O’Brien: “The Things They Carried.”
(Read for Wednesday)
Sturken and Cartwright: Ch. 1: Images, Power and Politics pgs. 9-48 (you may want to read the introduction as well).

**Discussion Blog Prompt: #2: The Changing Meaning of Things.**
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, January 27th, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.

In our reading for this week, Sturken and Cartwright caution that "to interpret images is to examine the assumptions that we and others bring to them at different times and in different places and to decode the visual language that they "speak." (46). They go on to say, "All images contain layers of meaning that include their formal aspects, their cultural and socio-historical references, the ways they make reference to the images that precede and surround them, and the contexts in which they are displayed." Your task in this assignment is to take the image or object you selected to "represent America to you" and analyze the different "layers of meaning" encoded in them--from their formal aspects, their iconic referent, their socio-historical references, and the ways in which the meaning of the object or image has changed over time and in different contexts of history, performance, or use in American popular culture. Be sure to adequately describe what it is you brought in--whether it is an object, an object that is a replica, photograph of an object or thing, a digitized collage of a photograph of an object or thing, a cartoon depicting the object or thing. or whatever. Also, of course, the object may have many different meanings to many different people based on its context of consumption.

**Assignment for next week:**
Part I. Bring to class on Monday (January 28th) an example of an object (could be an image of an object taken from a magazine or advertisement) that would be considered by an art connoisseur to be “good taste” and an example of an object that would be considered by a connoisseur to be “bad taste”.

Part II. Select a collector or dealer from the "cast of characters" described in Freund's Objects of Desire, and prepare to discuss what "moral" qualities are used to describe him--or that others use to define him-- as a "connoisseur" or arbiter of taste in the realm
of folk furniture or classic Americana furniture. Your "character" could be someone from history--i.e., Thomas Willing--or one of the collector/dealers in whose hands the piece of furniture has passed in more recent times. Note that some of the collectors--such as Richard Rosen--are described not so much as "connoisseurs" but as "knowledgeable" in a sort of plodding, uncreative way.


Read for the week:
Freund: *Objects of Desire* 1-68
Sturken and Cartwright: “Aesthetics and Taste” Ch. 2, pgs. 56-62
Sally Price: “The Mystique of Connoisseurship”. In *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Blackboard article)

**Discussion Blog Prompt: #3: Distinguishing “Taste”**
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Feb 3rd, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.

Using the definitions and description of “taste” from this week’s readings, discuss the object you brought to class and why you identify it as exhibiting good taste or bad taste in the American public sphere. Note: The idea of “taste” is one that the media wants us to believe is not individual and personal, but inherent in the object itself. Please pay close attention to the readings for this week—especially Price and Sturken and Cartright to understand this idea of “taste.”

Week Four (2/4–2/8); On Collecting Things; On Collecting Cultures

Read for This Week:
Finish Reading Freund's *Objects of Desire* (69-end of book)
Blackboard article: Stewart, Susan, “The Collection; Paradise of Consumption’ In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir and the Collection*.

**First Written Essay: An Ethnography of Collectors and Collecting: Due: 3/1/13**

**Discussion Blog Prompt: #4: Theorizing Heritage**
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Feb 10th, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.

In her article, Theorizing Heritage, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses five propositions about cultural heritage as a contemporary practice. (The five propositions
are introduced on page 369.). Select one of these propositions and discuss how it does or
does not fit with David Lowenthal's notions of the purpose and practice of heritage.
(After four or five of you have written on one of BKG's propositions, the next student
should select another one so that we get a range.)

Week 5: (2/11-2/15) : Recovering the Meaning of America’s Past or Producing that
Meaning: How does History compare to Heritage Production?

Read for the Week:
David Lowenthal: *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* : Chs. 5 and 6
(bblackboard)
Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara, “Theorizing Heritage” (blackboard)
Tony Cherian: Ch. 2: Washington on the Brazos

Film and Guest Speaker: Dr. Tony Cherian, Friday, February 15 (pending availability)

**Discussion Board Prompt: #5: Exhibitionary Complexes and the Idea of
Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge**
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Feb 17th, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.

In chapter 3 of the Sturken and Cartwright book, the authors discuss the relationship of
the gaze to questions of institutional power, power/knowledge, and the other. They also
discuss the ways that theories of the gaze play a role in understanding spectatorship. For
this prompt I’d like you to discuss Tony Bennett's idea of an exhibitionary complex in
terms of these notions of the gaze and spectatorship and their relationship to institutional
power or power/knowledge in the modern age. How does Bennett define an exhibitionary
complex? What function does it serve in the modern age? And how does Sturken and
Cartright’s idea of the gaze, or spectatorship help us understand the nature of such
complexes?

Week 6 : (2/18-2/22): Exhibitionary Complexes: What Does it Mean to Show?

Read for This Week:
Tony Bennett: “The Exhibitionary Complex” In Boswell and Evans; *Representing
the Nation* (Blackboard)
Sturkin and Cartwright, ch. 3: Modernity: Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge

**Discussion Board Prompt: # 6: American Museums as Exhibitionary Complexes**
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, Feb 24th, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.

Based on your reading of the first two Conn chapters from Museums and American
Intellectual Life, and/or Donna Harraway's "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" discuss the ways in
which natural history museums of the 19th century in America reflect the characteristics
of an exhibitionary complex as described by Tony Bennett, and be explicit about what the
overarching "narrative" or "discourse" is about America that is forwarded through these museums?

Week 7: (2/25-3/1): Cultural Heritage on Display: The Rise of the Museum as an Exhibitionary Complex in America

Read for this Week:
Donna Harraway: “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden”
Blackboard
Steven Conn: Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926, ch. 1-3
Blackboard
Hooper-Greenhill, ch. 1, 2

Field Trip: Blanton Museum of Art or Texas Memorial Museum

First Paper Due in Class: 3/1/13

Week 8: (3/4-3/8): The Exhibitionary Complex of the World’s Fair in 19th and early 20th century America

Read for This Week:
Robert Rydell “The Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893: And was Jerusalem Builded Here?” In Boswell and Evans Ch. 13 Blackboard Article
Beverly K. Grindstaff: “Creating Identity: Exhibiting the Philippines at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition” (Blackboard article)

Film: Bontoc Eulogy

Discussion Board Prompt: # 7: Representation of the Philippines: 1904-2004
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, March 17th, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.
Do you think the presentation of Filipino folk culture at the 1998 Smithsonian Folklife Festival differed significantly from the representation of Filipinos at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Expo in St. Louis? Name one example of difference in presentation and how this affected whether or not Filipinos might have been viewed by visitors as uncivilized or depersonalized? Try to give a different example or aspect from other students who have entered the discussion board before you.

Second Written Essay: A Critical Analysis of an Exhibitionary Complex or Themed Environment of Your Choice: Due Date: 4/5/13

Week 9: SPRING BREAK: (3/11-3/15)

Read for This Week:
Journal of American Folklore Vol 1221 Winter 2008. Special Issue: Constructing Folklife and Negotiating the National: The Smithsonian Folklife Festival (PDF Blackboard articles):
Diamond and Trimillos: “Introduction: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Smithsonian Folklife Festival”
Trimillos: “Histories, Resistances, and Reconciliations in a Decolonizable Space: The Philippine Delegation to the 1998 Smithsonian Folklife Festival”
Satterwaite: Imagining Home, Nation, World: Appalachia on the Mall”

**Discussion Board Prompt: #8: Disneyland as a Themed Environment**
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, March 24th, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.

Drawing on Gottdiener's article on Themed Environments, explain why you think Disneyland is or is not a themed environment and what some of the advantages and/or disadvantages might be of such an environment for the presentation of history.


Read for this Week:
Michael Gottdiener, “The Las Vegas Casino, Theme Parks, and the General Trend of Theming, ch. 4 (Blackboard)
Michael Sorkin: See you in Disneyland (Blackboard article)

No Discussion Blog this week

Week 12: (4/1-4/5) The Politics of Public Display: The Disneyfication of Museums: Who can Tell the Story and Whose Story is Important to Tell?:

Read for this week:
Cary Carson, “Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, Whose History is the Fairest of Them All? (Blackboard article)
William Van Wert, “DisneyWorld and Post History” (Blackboard article)
Hooper-Greenhill Ch. 4: “Words and Things: constructing narratives, constructing the self.” Pg 76-102

Due Date: 4/5/13: Second Written Essay: Exhibitionary Complex
Discussion Board Prompt: # 9:
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm April 7th, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.

Drawing on your readings for next week, discuss some of the ways in which scholars have argued that the Ellis Island Immigration Museum "upgrades, updates, or excludes" history (Lowenthal’s terms for the practices of heritage) and give an example of a technique that you can think of that might redress one or more of these criticisms.

Begin annotated bibliography for final project. Due date for bibliography: 4/27/13

Week 13 (4/8-4/12) Case Study: Immigration Museums as Cultural Heritage Sites: Who Can Be An American, Disney Style:

Read for This Week:
Mike Wallace: “Boat People: Immigration History at the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island” in Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory. (1996). (Blackboard article)
Erica Rand: “Coming to Ellis Island,” In The Ellis Island Snow Globe (Blackboard Article)
Barbara Kirshenblatt Gomblett, “Ellis Island’ in Destination Culture (Blackboard Article)

Film: The Forgotten Door: Ellis Island


Read for this Week:
Ruth Abrams: Kitchen Conversations: The Lower East Side Tenement Museum (Blackboard)

Friday Film: Gateway on the Gulf

Discussion Board Prompt: # 10: Museum Practice in the Postmodern Age: “The Post Museum”
Due Date: Sunday night 9pm, April 21st, to be posted on our Blackboard discussion board.
Drawing on your readings for this week, especially the theoretical discussion of the "post museum" in Hooper Greenhill's chapter (and the chapter preceding it called Exhibitions and Interpretations), discuss the revised role and conception of the "audience" as active agents in this new model of museum engagement, and propose one concrete way in which you think contemporary museums might be successful in reorganizing museum culture and museum exhibitions to promote this new relationship between museums and their audiences.


Note: There will be no class on Monday, April 22, so students can concentrate on Final Project Production.

Read for this week:
Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Chs. 6, 7, The Rebirth of the Museum, in Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture
Seriff

Due Date 4/27/13: Annotated Bibliography for Final Project

Film: Fred Wilson: Mining the Museum (utube 32 minute interview)

Week 16 (4/29-5/3): Cultural Heritage on Display: Student Presentations

Final Exam: Student Presentations, cont. Date TBD