

# Museums, Monuments, and American Culture

Fall 2018  
(01:050:355)

Monday/Wednesday, 2:15 to 3:35 PM  
Ruth Adams Building 206

Prof. Andy Urban

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Office Hours: 11AM – 1PM, Mondays, or by appointment

Ruth Adams Building 205E



*The Katyn Memorial, Jersey City Waterfront*

## **Course Description:**

This course examines the role that museums and monuments, as well as historic sites, memorials, and other places of public commemoration and education, have in American culture. It will focus on how acts of memorialization produce public and collective memories, and the politics that surround how the past is remembered. At a moment when Americans debate whether monuments to slaveowners and Confederate generals should remain standing, how public institutions can be made more inclusive to different groups and histories, and what roles museums should have in the twenty first century, so too will the course wrestle with these pressing contemporary concerns. In addition, we will also explore the complicated dynamics between education and entertainment; celebration and criticism; and vernacular and official forms of commemoration.

## **Required Readings:**

- Jay Aronson, *Who Owns the Dead? The Science and Politics of Death at Ground Zero* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), ISBN# 9780674971493.
- Jason De Léon, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), ISBN# 9780520282759.

Additional required readings – listed in this class schedule portion of this syllabus – will be posted as .pdf files on the course’s SAKAI site, in the section titled “Resources.”

Readings correspond to the day they will be discussed and need to be completed before class meets. You are required to bring readings to class, and there may be occasional spot checks to see if you have done this.

## **Assignment and Grading Summary:**

*Assignment details to follow.*

- Exhibition Review – 15%, Due Friday, October 12
- Monument Poster for NJ History Forum - 25%
  - Abstract due Sunday, September 30
  - Poster due Friday, October 26
  - NJ History Forum Presentations (optional), Friday, November 2

- Exam - 25%, In-Class, Monday and Wednesday, November 12 and 14
- Aronson/De Leon Essay - 20%, Due Wednesday, December 19
- Attendance, Discussion - 15%

Attendance is mandatory. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in deductions to your attendance grade.

Participation in class discussions is required. This is how you will demonstrate that you have kept up with the readings and are engaging them critically. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class or have other questions about how to improve your participation in discussion, I'm happy to meet with you to discuss strategies for improvement in this area.

#### **Grading Scale:**

92-100=**A**; 87-91=**B+**; 81-86=**B**; 77-80=**C+**; 70-76=**C**; 60-69=**D**; 0-59=**F**

**Note:** there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

#### **American Studies Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:**

Students will learn to synthesize interdisciplinary sources and methods of analysis and to conduct investigations into American culture and history. Students will learn to use scholarship in history, politics, literature, and art to analyze and interpret the varied experiences, perspectives, and events that define American life. Students will be able to write well; speak articulately; and think critically, analytically, and creatively.

#### **Class Policies:**

##### **SAKAI and Class Announcements:**

Please make sure that you are receiving and checking SAKAI announcements via email, as I regularly use this tool to post important information relating to class. You are responsible for the information and instructions posted to SAKAI.

##### **Special Accommodation Requests:**

All special accommodation requests should be brought to my attention during the first two weeks of class. Full disability policies and procedures are available for review at: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>.

### **Missing Class:**

If you have to miss class due to sickness, an emergency, or another excused reason, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

### **Phones and Computers:**

Computer and phone use should be limited to activities related to class. If I see you regularly using your phone or computer for purposes unrelated to class, this will result in a deduction from your discussion grade.

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

If you are unsure about how to research and write a paper - the most common cause of violations of the academic integrity policy - please ask me for help!

### **Honor Pledge:**

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy

By accepting this syllabus and enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for knowing the above policies and the possible penalties - including suspension and expulsion - should you violate the Honor Pledge.

## Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

### **September 5 (Wednesday) - Introductions**

### **September 10 (Monday) - The History of American Museums (part one)**

- Gary Kulik, "Designing the Past: History-Museum Exhibitions from Peale to the Present," in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (University of Illinois Press, 1989), 3-37.
- Courtney Fullilove, "The hair of distinguished persons in the patent office building museum," *Museum History Journal* 10, no. 1 (2017): 50-67.

### **September 12 (Wednesday) - The History of American Museums (part two)**

- Wendy Bellion, "Theaters of Visuality," in *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 23-62.

### **September 17 (Monday) - The History of American Museums (part three)**

- James W. Cook, Jr., "Of Men, Missing Limbs, and Nondescripts: The Strange Career of P.T. Barnum's 'What is It?' Exhibition," in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York University Press, 1996), 139-57.
- "A Word About Museums," *The Nation*, July 27, 1865, courtesy of the *Lost Museum Archive*.
- "Mr. Barnum on Museums," *The Nation*, August 10, 1865, courtesy of the *Lost Museum Archive*.

### **September 19 (Wednesday) - Silence and Mythology**

- Michel Rolph Trouillot, "The Power in the Story," from *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 1-30.
- Laura W. L. Scales, "The Museum's Part in the Making of Americans," 1915, in *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy* (Left Coast Press, 2008), 191-4.

"Lisa the Iconoclast," *The Simpsons*, S7, E16 (1996), in-class screening

### September 24 (Monday) – Revisions and Inclusions

- Philip J. Deloria, “The New World of the Indigenous Museum,” *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (2018): 106-115.
- Tiya Miles, “Review: National Museum of African American History and Culture,” *The Public Historian* 39, no. 2 (2017): 82-6.
- Fred Wilson, artist, “Mining the Museum,” and Howard Halle, “Review: ‘Mining the Museum,’” *Grand Street* 44 (1993), 151-172.
- Shiv Kotecha, “Review: Danh Vo: ‘Take My Breath Away,’” *Frieze*, March 15, 2018, <https://frieze.com/article/danh-vo-take-my-breath-away> (read online)

### September 26 (Wednesday) – Slavery and Public Landscapes (part one)

- Savage, “Imagining Emancipation,” in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 52-88.
- Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan, “Campus history as public history: Interpreting slavery through historical walking tours,” National Council for Public History, History at Work Blog, <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/campus-history-as-public-history-interpreting-slavery-through-historical-walking-tours/>

### October 1 (Monday) – Controversies and Commemoration on the National Mall (part one)

- Michael Lewis, “The Idea of the American Mall,” in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington’s Monumental Core* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 11-25.
- Exploration of “Histories of the National Mall” website, <http://mallhistory.org/> (details TBA)

### October 3 (Wednesday) – Controversies and Commemoration on the National Mall (part two)

- Maya Lin, “Making the Memorial,” *The New York Review of Books*, November 2, 2000.
- Kristin Haas, “‘We Leave You Our Deaths, Give Them Their Meaning’: Triumph and Tragedy at the National World War II Memorial,” in *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall* (University of California Press, 2013), 152-95.
- Mike Wallace, “The Battle for the Enola Gay,” in *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Temple University Press, 1996), 270-305.

## **October 5 & 6 (Friday & Saturday) – Planned Trip to Washington DC**

*Details to follow.*

## **October 8 (Monday) – No Class**

## **October 10 (Wednesday) – Slavery and Public Landscapes (part two)**

- Jane Stancill and Andrew Carter, “The unfinished story of Silent Sam, from ‘Soldier Boy’ to fallen symbol of a painful past.” *Charlotte News and Observer*, August 25, 2018.

“Confederacy,” *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, October 8, 2017, in-class screening

## **October 15 (Monday) – Rethinking Local Landscapes**

- The Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers in New York, Report, January 2018
- Rick Rojas, “Jersey City Argues Over a Statue, and Politicians in Poland Weigh In,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2018

## **October 17 (Wednesday) – Sex, Censorship, and the Defense of Public Morality**

- Jennifer Tyburczy, “All Museums Are Sex Museums.” *Radical History Review* 113 (2012): 199-211.
- Isaac Kaplan, “Censorship, ‘Sick Stuff,’ and Rudy Giuliani’s Fight to Shut Down the Brooklyn Museum,” *Artsy*, December 23, 2016, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-censorship-sick-stuff-rudy-giuliani-fight-shut-down-brooklyn-museum> (read online)

## **October 22 (Monday) – Rethinking the Goals of Educating the Public**

- Wendy Brown, “Tolerance as a Museum Object: The Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance,” in *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 107-48.

### **October 24 (Wednesday) – Vernacular Forms of Commemoration**

- Tom Zarrilli, “Crosses, Flowers, and Asphalt: Roadside Memorials in the US South,” *Southern Spaces*, August 19, 2009, <https://southernspaces.org/2009/crosses-flowers-and-asphalt-roadside-memorials-us-south> (read online)

### **October 29 (Monday) – Inventive Curation**

- Lawrence Weschler, “Inhaling the Spore,” *Harper’s Magazine*, September 1994.
- Cathy Gudis, “Touring with Empire Logistics Group,” National Council for Public History, History at Work Blog, <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/touring-with-empire-logistics-group/>

### **October 31 (Wednesday) – Installations and Interventions (part one)**

*Exit Through the Gift Shop*, 2011, directed by Banksy, in-class screening.

### **November 2 (Friday) – New Jersey History Forum Poster Presentations**

### **November 5 (Monday) – Installations and Interventions (part two)**

- Anjali Nath, “Seeing Guantánamo, Blown Up: Banksy’s Installation in Disneyland,” *American Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2013): 185-192.

### **November 7 (Wednesday) – EXAM REVIEW**

### **November 12 (Monday) – IN-CLASS EXAM, PART ONE**

### **November 14 (Wednesday) – IN-CLASS EXAM, PART TWO**

### **November 19 (Monday) – Identifying and Memorializing the Dead (multipart unit)**

- Aaronson, *Who Owns the Dead?*, Introduction and chapter one

### **November 26 (Monday) – Identifying and Memorializing the Dead (multipart unit)**

- Aaronson, *Who Owns the Dead?*, chapters 2, 4, & 5



**November 28 (Wednesday) - Identifying and Memorializing the Dead (multipart unit)**

- Aaronson, *Who Owns the Dead?*, chapters 6, 8, & Epilogue

**December 1 (Saturday) - Trip to 9/11 Memorial**

**December 3 (Monday) - Identifying and Memorializing the Dead (multipart unit)**

- De Léon, *The Land of Open Graves*, Introduction, chapters 1 & 2

**December 5 (Wednesday) - Identifying and Memorializing the Dead (multipart unit)**

- De Léon, *The Land of Open Graves*, chapters 3 & 7

**December 10 (Monday) - Identifying and Memorializing the Dead (multipart unit)**

- De Léon, *The Land of Open Graves*, chapters 8 & 9

**December 12 (Wednesday) - Identifying and Memorializing the Dead (multipart unit)**

- De Léon, *The Land of Open Graves*, chapter 10, 11 & Epilogue