CAST 216
NATIVE AMERICA COLLECTED

Steven Williams, Ph.D.
Office Hours: Tues & Thurs 1:30-2:30 p.m. or by appointment
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Class meeting Tues, Thurs 3:00-4:15 PM
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Course Description

From the first encounters between Europeans and North America’s Indigenous populations, Europeans and Americans have had a fascination with all things Indian which led “Indian” objects to be among the most collected in the world. From the mundane to religious objects, photographic and artistic images, even Indian bodies and bones have been collected and coveted; to this day collections appear in as diverse locations as national museums, private collections and eBay.

Through an overview of American collectors and collections of Indian “things” from the historic to the contemporary this class will examine ideologies that have been and continue to be behind Indian collecting with particular focus on issues of cultural representation and appropriation inherent in collections of “others.” We will also look at current legislation regarding Indian collections and art and critiques of Indian collecting from both Natives and non-natives.

This course is intended as an introduction and overview of the politics, history and contemporary implications of collecting Native American objects and is not a study of Indian objects from a direct anthropological or ethnographical standpoint. The focus of the class is not to understand Indian objects primarily through their symbolism or cultural meanings, although we will necessarily do some of this, but to locate them within a larger context of colonial relationships inherent in the collection, study, display, ownership, conflicts over cultural objects from “other” cultures.

Course requirements include weekly short journal/reading responses, a midterm take-home exam and a final exam. Other assignments such as brief response papers, mapping activities, or quizzes will be given at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Objectives

- Be able to trace historical practices/ideologies of collecting “Native” objects, images, bodies, etc.

- To understand the multiple and complex ways in which collecting “the Native” have perpetuated colonization of Native peoples in North America/globally

- Discuss the ways that Native peoples have contested or engaged with non-Native collecting/collections

- Understand/discuss legislation pertaining to Native collections and display of Native objects/bodies and its implications for museum practices, Native sovereignty and self-determination
Required Texts

All course readings will be located on BlackBoard:

Course Format/Expectations

This course will be a combination of lecture and class discussion. Lectures will supplement readings with historical background and/or context and images. Students should arrive to each class having read the assigned texts for that day and be prepared to engage those materials in class discussions. It is useful if you bring printed copies of the days readings to class.

The course is formatted roughly chronologically as a historical survey. However, many key concepts, themes and ideologies overlap historically and will either be consistent across time or reappear in varied eras. Students are expected to engage or read course materials comparatively over these eras and attempt to understand how they function, change, remain consistent over time and contemporarily.

The histories of Native collecting is a colonial history and as such will inevitably and necessarily bring out many difficult or sensitive issues including, for example, racism, genocide, ethnocentrism, classism, sexism, but it is my hope that as a collective group we can grapple with and work through these sensitive subjects and develop an intellectual community that is able to skillfully and respectably debate these pressing issues that affect not only Native/Indigenous peoples but extend also to U.S. and global futures.

Policies

Attendance

Class participation is essential to get the full learning process. The class is built, in great part, on class participation from all students so all students need to attend. Regular attendance and thoughtful preparation also show respect for other students and the instructor and help contribute to a respectful and productive class environment and intellectual community. Therefore, to receive full participation points students must be in regular attendance. I will make every effort to begin class at the scheduled start time of 3:00. Students should be in their seats and ready for class prior to the scheduled start time. It is quite disruptive to the class when students walk in late—please be respectful of the class and your fellow students by being on time. I will do my part to make sure you are released from class at the scheduled end time.

It is expected that students will make every reasonable effort to attend all classes and to notify me as soon as possible of any absence. If you miss class it is your responsibility to ask a fellow class member for details and catch up.

Cellphones

Off and stored in your bag. No exceptions. Using them during class is extremely disrespectful.

Laptops

All readings for the class will be in pdf or Word document form so I appreciate the usefulness of computers in class. You may use your laptop in order to have course readings immediately available or to take notes during lectures. However, use of laptops in class for anything not related directly to class lectures or discussions will result in loss
of the privilege. I reserve the right to at anytime restrict the use of laptops for individuals or the entire class if this privilege is being abused.

**Timeliness**

Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. I will deduct a ¼ of a grade for each 24 hours an assignment is late (i.e. B+ to B). Assignments submitted later than one week past original deadline without prior approval from me will be given credit at my discretion and generally earn no more than a minimum passing grade. Requests for extensions must be submitted at least one week in advance to the assigned due date and will generally only be granted for extenuating circumstances. Late papers may not receive written comments.

**P/NP:** If you are taking the course P/NP, you must fulfill all course expectations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course. Please let me know at the beginning of the class if you are taking it P/NP.

**Honor Code:**

This class will follow the policies as written in the Oberlin College Honor Code. Avoid plagiarism or quoting secondary sources without proper citation. If you have any questions about citations you may see me or a librarian or refer to the MLA or Chicago Style Handbooks.

The honor code requires that for each academic assignment you write the following statement and sign your name. “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” For more information on the code see: [http://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot](http://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot)

**Students with Disabilities:**

The college will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Office of Disability Services located in Peters G-27/G-28 and their instructor of any disability related needs.

**Assignments and Grading**

1. **(15%) Active participation in class discussions.** You are required to discuss the reading material in class and be prepared to address the comments/questions of your peers. The issues raised by the class are almost always complex and it is expected that as a class we will disagree and rarely come to consensus, which is a positive and not a negative aspect of our discussions. Your participation then is key to a process which creates a dynamic learning environment where we learn from each other (what my tribal elders sometimes term “shared mutual learning”). I may also assign small impromptu in-class individual or group assignments (most often graded on check/check plus/check minus only) which will be included in your participation grade.

2. **(20%) Reading Responses/presentations.** On a rotating schedule each student is asked to submit a written response to the day’s assigned readings and to help facilitate in-class discussion twice during the semester. At the beginning of class, we will take a few minutes for the day’s responders to kick off the day’s topic by briefly sharing their ideas with the group. These are intended to be informal presentations, a few minutes for each presentation. Each response that you submit will be accompanied by a 1 ½ -3 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins) outline or prose
response that organizes and documents your presentation. I will hand out detailed instructions and we will work out a schedule for semester responses in the early weeks of class.

3. **(30%) Midterm take-home exam.** You will be required to write two short midterm essays (4-5 pages total) answering 2 questions from a group of 3 or 4 (provided by me) drawn from the first half of the course materials.

4. **(35%) Final take-home exam** will be open-book, open-notes. You will have one week to finish the exam. Exams will be handed out the last week of class and will be due by the end of our scheduled final exam period (to be announced). You will be asked to complete essays for 3 out of 4 questions for a total exam length of 6-10 pages.

**Course Schedule**

*Note: Schedule is subject to and likely to change at instructor’s discretion*

**WEEK 1**

2/3 **Introduction**

2/5 **History of Collecting**


**WEEK 2**

2/10 **Early Collections: The Exotic from Europe to America “Indian”**


2/12 **“Indians” In the Revolutionary/Colonial Order**


**WEEK 3**

2/17  **Indians in Historical Art**


Arthur Einhorn, “Bonnets, Plumes, and Headbands in *West’s Painting of Penn’s Treaty,*” *American Indian Art: 44-53*

2/19  **George Catlin: Painting as Ethnography**


**WEEK 4**

2/24  **Study of Indians in the Formation of Academic Disciplines**


2/26  **Skull Science and the Collection of Indian Bones**


David Hurst Thomas. “A Short History of Scientific Racism” and “The Great American Skull Wars,” in *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the*


**WEEK 5**

3/3 **Franz Boas and the Museum Method of Display**


3/5 **Amateur Collectors and the Acquisition of Artifacts**


**WEEK 6**

3/10 **Visuality/Diorama/Photography and Colonialism**


**Midterm take-home exams assigned**

**WEEK 7**

3/17 **Visuality/Photography and Colonialism cont.—Edward Curtis**


**Midterms Due at beginning of class

3/24 & 3/26 NO CLASSES-SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8

3/31 Indian Corners


4/2 Souvenir and Tourist Arts


WEEK 9

4/7 Primitivism, Art and Culture


4/9 Primitivism, Authenticity the Art Market and the New Age Movement


WEEK 10

4/14 Native American Responses to Collecting/Commodification


Trudie Lamb-Richmond. “K-mart’s Weekend Special” Indian Spirituality,” 269-270

WEEK 11

4/21 “Traditional” Native Art


4/23 Visit to Allen Art Museum—meet in front lobby at 3:00

WEEK 12

4/28 Legislation Dealing with Native Arts/Artifacts and Human Remains


WEEK 13

5/5 New Museology and Native American Communities


***Final Exams assigned


Class reflections and wrap-up

5/8 CLASSES END

5/15, by 9:00 PM ***FINAL EXAMS DUE (drop off too be arranged)