Interdisciplinary Studies Program
Spring 2005

World Fairs and Ethnographic Museums

Required Reading Texts


Additional reading materials will be distributed in class.

Dr. F. Demissie
Office 2352 N. Clifton Ave, Rm. 150.1
Office Hours, TTH 1-2:30 pm and by appointment
Phone: 325-7356
E-mail: fdemissi@depaul.edu
Course Web Page: http://condor.depaul.edu/~fdemissi/fairs
**Course Description and Objectives**

World fairs and ethnographic museums were established towards the end of the nineteenth and in the course of the twentieth century. World fairs designed as site for the display of the technological and scientific development of colonial counties on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, these world fairs also became the sites for exhibiting and displaying people of other cultures often in degrading ways. Ethnographic museums on the other hand were meant to illustrate the ways of life of the populations on which new knowledge was made available because they had just been brought under colonial control. Colonial administrations required knowledge about the subjected populations, and part of that knowledge was produced by anthropologists. While anthropological knowledge had previously been used to demonstrate the validity of Darwinian and other evolutionary thought, anthropology now started using objects to demonstrate the validity of new theories. The new academic discipline of anthropology also depended on the establishment of ethnographic museums for its popularization. The material objects in the ethnographic museum were displayed as 'fragments' that embodied the ways of life of particular populations. Non-western societies were thus represented as living in isolation, outside history. After decolonization this mode of representation was recognized as problematic, and contemporary ethnographic museums still struggle with this 'crisis of representation'.

The emergence of world fairs and ethnographic museums as distinctive products of modern societies came into being with the rapid explosion in intellectual energy of the "Enlightenment" period. Their distinctive configuration, mode of operating and the discursive knowledge was stamped by the culture of the very societies that gave rise to these important modern institutions. How and why did these institutions emerge? Why did they assume the forms and structures that they did? What were the key processes that shaped their development? What role did they play in colonial empires?

Ethnographic museums and world fairs have much in common with other institutions such as the media. However, they are also very distinctive in the way they objectify particular orders of knowledge and experience, the classificatory possibilities that they offer to their audience, their authoritative and legitimizing status. As such both ethnographic museums and world fairs constitute a distinctive cultural complex.

Since ethnographic museums and world fairs are crucial institutions, the course focus upon how these institutions articulate notions about cultural differences through the space(s) they provide to their audiences? How do images purveyed and displayed by these institutions affect our perception of other cultures? How did these institutions reproduced colonial images? How do these institutions mediate social, cultural and "racial" constructs in America? In what ways are images of the future and the "World of Tomorrow" projected? Given the increasing emphasis on "multiculturalism" how do these institutions position themselves to tell stories of those who are often marginalized and excluded? If these institutions are indeed "contested spaces", how do they articulate the boundaries of "race", class, gender, language and politics in American society?

The course will explore these issues and introduce students to develop conceptual and comparative perspectives to understand the role of ethnographic museums and world fairs as distinctive cultural icons in American society. Although the emphasis
will be on the specificity of American ethnographic museums and world fairs, appropriate comparative examples will be drawn from elsewhere to draw similarities and differences in the way ethnographic museums and world fairs are organized, their institutional location and the system of knowledge they produce and circulate.

**Objective of the Course:**

Gain knowledge of the roles and functions of ethnographic museums and world fairs in the construction of particular forms of representation.

Explore the distinctive contribution of ethnographic museums and world fairs in shaping the structure of knowledge and public consciousness about self and others regarding difference and diversity.

Engage in critical thinking through synthesis, analysis, evaluation and reflection on issues related to the practice of ethnographic museums and world fairs as cultural institutions in shaping of public knowledge about people and places around the world.

**Class Format and Method of Instruction**

The course is structured as a seminar. Students are expected to attend all class sessions, participate in all discussions, and complete all assignments in a timely manner, including assigned readings and museum reviews.

**Expectations and Classroom Discussions**

The required readings form the heart of the seminar and provide a common ground for class discussion. The common readings are selected not because they constitute some essential "truth" or in any way constitute the final word on the subject. Nor are these books chosen because I agree with all the views and propositions of the authors. Rather the common readings represent detailed historical and contemporary perspectives of noted scholars. By carefully reading the assigned books and reflecting upon them critically, you will develop analytical and critical skills in reasoning and argumentations which are essential for any intellectual pursuit.

The success (and everyone's engagement) of the course will depend on your willingness to complete the readings assignments. **Read actively, record your impressions, jot down notes, mark interesting or irritating passages; engage with the author(s) and come to class ready to contribute your thoughts about their work and issues they raise.**

Classroom review and discussion of reading materials are designed to clarify the main ideas, arguments and major assumptions. In order for discussions to be meaningful, enjoyable and engaging, students must come to class prepared to critically examine the issues addressed in the reading materials. The importance of this exercise is to allow each student to demonstrate his/her understanding of the reading material and to provide opportunities for a critical analysis of ideas, assumptions, and various points of view expressed in the reading materials. It is my expectation that all students will have read the assigned reading materials for the
class and come to class prepared for extended and in-depth discussion. It is only through critical discussion that the value of the reading materials can be appreciated.

The long tradition of academic freedom promotes free and open class discussion. My role as the instructor of the course is to ensure that this openness prevails. I will make every effort to honor differences of opinion and multiple perspectives, while at the same time encouraging critical analysis and reflection that is informed by readings and related course materials.

Attendance and participation in all activities of the course is mandatory. If you are having problems that prevent you from attending the class or if you have problems with the content of the course or if you want to talk about issues raised in the reading or in class, you should call me or send an e-mail massage. Missing class session(s) wholly or in part will adversely affect your grade.

**Code of Academic Integrity**

All students enrolled in this course are expected to abide by the university's Code of Student Responsibility articulated in the Handbook. In particular, academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism) will not be tolerated and will be subject to university sanctions. Click here for Code of Academic Integrity.

**Students with Disability**

Please identify yourself to the instructor early in the quarter. Appropriate arrangements will be made for you to take examinations with the Office of Disabled Student Services.

**Students who miss three class sessions without permission will have their grade dropped by a full letter**

| All cellular phone, page beepers etc... must be turned off during class time. Failure to do so will result in student being asked to leave the class. Such individuals will only be allowed to return to class if they agree to abide by this policy. |

**Grades and Evaluation**

Student’s final grade will be determined taking into consideration the following: attendance, consistence in active participation in class discussions, quality or work submitted, and performance on examinations. The weight of assignments and examinations is indicated below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation and Attendance</th>
<th>10 percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum Review</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Test</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>35 percent</td>
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All students should be mindful of the following framework regarding grades for all assignments and exams. Letter grades will be used in all evaluation of student work. In the determination of grade on assignments, the **issue of quality will prevail**.

**A** - Indicates **work of extraordinarily high quality and reflects unusual thoroughness, comprehensiveness, cogency or arguments, treatment and development of ideas, and creativity** in meeting stated requirements of assignments. Work is also characterized by exceptional writing ability: virtually free of serious grammatical, spelling, and syntactical errors.

**B** – Designates work **of high quality regarding the organization and development of ideas**. Work substantively addresses issues/topics and the like as stated in the guidelines for assignment(s). Writing is relatively free of serious grammatical and spelling as well as syntactical errors.

**C** - Designates work which minimally meets acceptable requirements as stated in guidelines for assignment(s). Writing skills reflect weaknesses in organization and development of ideas; may demonstrate serious grammatical and spelling, as well as syntactical errors and the like. Treatment of ideas and issues often characterized as superficial and simplistic. Work may only address a part of assignment, and not the complex of issues stated in guidelines,

**D** - Designates work which does not meet the minimum acceptable requirements of the assignment(s). Very poorly written in terms of organization and development of ideas, grammar and spelling, and syntax. May indicate that students have not followed direction.

**F** - Indicates that assignment has not been submitted at all, has not addressed topics or issues assigned whatsoever, or where relevant, has been turned in later than agreed upon extension. This grade will also be affixed to assignment(s) in which work has been plagiarized or in any way violates academic integrity.

**I** - An incomplete is not lightly given. It is designed for the rare occasion when the student has been seriously ill or suffered some other hardship beyond one’s control. Permission to receive an "I" must be requested in writing by the student no later than the last regularly scheduled day of class. If the "I" is not removed by the student with one academic year from the date of enrollment in the course, it become an "F". The student will then need to repeat the course.

**Late Assignments:** papers will be marked down one full grade for each day late; make-up exams will only be given with doctor's excuse. Papers more than two days will not be accepted, resulting in a grade of F.

**Code of Academic Integrity**

All students enrolled in this course are expected to abide by the university’s Code of Student Responsibility Handbook. In particular, academic dishonesty, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism) will bear the full weight of sections as stated in the Student Handbook.
Students with Disability

Please identify yourself after class to the instructor early in the quarter. Appropriate arrangements will be made for you to take all examinations at the Office of Disable Student Services.

Students who miss more than two class sessions without authorized permission will have their grade lowered by a full letter.
Weekly Reading Assignments and Video Screening

Week 1

Introduction to the Course

Visit to DePaul University Museum and Gallery

Week 2

Museums and World Fairs: Historical Perspective

Ames, M.,"The Development of Museums in the Western World: Tensions Between Democratization Professionalization and " in Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology and Museums, Vancouver, UCB Press

Rydell, Introduction and Chapter 1

Video viewing: Ishi

Week 3

Culture and Representation: The Politics of Exhibition

Rydell  Chapter 2

Henderson, A and Kaepper, A, Chapter 2

Week 4

Temples of the Empire: Displaying Others

Morton, Chapter 1 and 2


Apter, Andrew, "Reading the 'Africa' Exhibit," American Anthropologist, Exhibit Reviews Section, Vo. 9, No. 3, Sept. 1995,

Video Screening: Bontoc Eulogy
Week 5

Exhibition and World Fairs During the Inter War Period

Rydell, Chapter 2 and 3
Henderson, A and Kaepper, A, Chapter 4 and 10

Week 6

Imagining Tomorrow Through World Fair: Technology and Sciences of Expositions

Rydell, Chapter 5 and 6
Morton Chapter 5
Henderson, A and Kaepper, A, Chapter 4
Video: World’s Fair: Visions of the Future

Week 7

Museums and World Fairs in the Age of Globalization

Rydell, Chapter 7
Morton, Chapter 7
Henderson, A and Kaepper, A, Chapter 10
Video Viewing: Cannibal Tours

Week 8

The Future of Exhibition: Contest and Negotiation

Rydell, Conclusion
Morton, Conclusion
Henderson, A and Kaepper, A, Chapter 8 and 12
Project Assignments

Individual Museum Review

Ethnographic museums occupy a privileged position and play a critical role in the way social knowledge about other cultures is produced and disseminated. Since they operate in the context of a given social, economic and political environment, the practice of ethnographic museums, the way material culture of other societies are exhibited, displayed and consumed, raises important questions about representation of others cultures.

Recently, partly as a result of pressure from museum audiences, community, and professional organizations, ethnographic museums have attempted to address criticisms and new concerns by incorporating new forms of representation. These new forms of representation are mobilized to promote cultural diversity and the celebration of cultural difference.

As part of the requirements of the course, all students are required to select one of the permanent exhibits -- African, Americas, Asia and Pacific etc. -- at the Field Museum of Natural History. You will select two of the permanent exhibits in consultation with the instructor and write a review of the exhibit approximately 4-5 pages. Once you have selected an exhibit, make sure you take notes of the exhibition, audiences, signage, architecture, promotional materials, exhibit design, supporting research, exhibit rationale, and so on. What issues does the exhibit raise for you? You will probably want to do this in a hand-written notebook as you move through the exhibit. You might also want to take pictures of the exhibit. Make sure you take a working camera with a high speed film and flash or a digital camera with you.

The exhibit review would be evaluative. In other words, you should not only describe what you have seen, but you must also make judgments about the content and format of the exhibit and the ways in which the exhibit attempt to represent a particular culture. Relate your discussions to specific readings and issues raised in class. You will be expected to draw upon the readings and class discussions in terms of developing your analytical framework in the review.

It is important that you begin with a brief overview of the exhibit, its purpose and scope. You should show how the exhibit offers important insights about the particular culture and people it attempt to represent. You should also include your reflections about the exhibit, issues you thought were important to know about as well as issues the exhibit may have failed to address. I am interested in your reactions and critical insights about the exhibit and its treatment of other cultures (5 pages)
Students are required to make a short preliminary presentation a 5 minutes about the exhibits they are going to review during the 9th and 10th week of the course. **Presenters should prepare to discuss their project as well as the rationale for choosing to review the particular exhibit.**

Each student will be making a final 10 minutes presentation during the eight and ninth week of the quarter. The quality of your presentation, commentary and questions, as well as your effectiveness in facilitating discussion regarding your project will form a portion of your participation grade.