Queen Mary Summer School
SUM504G: Cultural Treasures of London: A Journey Through Time
School of History

Course outline
Level: 5
Credits: 15 (Queen Mary credits)
Module organiser: Dr Chloe Ward
Assessment: Presentation: 10 min (20%) and Exhibition Proposal 1500 words (80%)

Course description:
Through visits to ten of London’s most important institutions, this module will examine the development of how institutions curate culture from Renaissance ‘cabinets of curiosities’ to the modern ‘white cube’ gallery space. The module will equip students with the historical, theoretical, and practical knowledge necessary for studying culture through institutional collections. The class will analyse the techniques and practices museums use to collect, organise, and display their objects; we will consider the messages these institutions send through their architecture, patronage, and methods of display; and we will delve into some of the most important issues affecting cultural institutions today like decolonisation, repatriation, and social impact. Aside from the introductory class, the module will take place off campus, with seminar groups visiting a different institution in each meeting.

Module Aims:
• To introduce students to London’s museum collections.
• To present a critical overview of the key theories, approaches, and debates relevant to museums, their collections, and their displays.
• To provide opportunities for students to apply and examine these theories, approaches, and debates during class sessions in a variety of museum spaces.

Learning outcomes:
On completion of the module, students can expect to have acquired:
• Identify the role played by museums as institutional and educational bodies, both historically and in the present.
• Discuss primary and secondary source material related to the study of museums.
• Critically evaluate the methods and theories used to analyse museums, their objects, and their displays.
• Carry out in-depth independent research on a chosen topic in museology or museum history and apply key concepts to the critical analysis of displays.
• Evaluate, critique, and debate the way museums present themselves and their collections.
• Demonstrate how discipline-specific theories or approaches may be applied in broader cultural contexts.

Approximate cost:
All reading material is provided digitally so you are not required to purchase any books. Students must pay their own travel costs to and from visits.

Assessments:
The course assessments are not compulsory, however, if you wish to transfer credit for this course to your home university it is essential to complete the assignments.

Presentation: 10 min. (20%) and Exhibition Proposal: 1,500-word (80%)
Preparation:
Before you arrive on campus, it is advised that you familiarise yourself with the course content before it begins. You will be given instructions for accessing our Virtual Learning Environment (QMplus) before you arrive on campus.

Teaching:
The course is taught in two two-hour sessions per day (10.00 - 12.00 and 13.00 - 15.00), held Monday to Thursday each week.

Indicative Reading List

General museum texts:
• Sharon MacDonald and Helen Rees Leahy, The International Handbooks of Museum Studies, 4 volumes, (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015).

Museum history:
• Nikolaus Pevsner, Academies of Art, Past and Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).

Museum theory:

Please note that the information provided may be subject to change.