

ANTH/AMST 281: Museums, Collections, Ethics

Professor: Dr. April M. Beisaw: Blodgett Hall 318 - apbeisaw@vassar.edu
Course days/times: Mondays & Wednesdays - Blodgett Hall 101 - 1:30-2:45 pm
Office hours: Mondays 3-4:30pm BH 318 or by [appointment](#)



Figure 1. Dr. Jen Shannon provides some context for repatriation as a museum collections issue, as illustrated by John Swogger in: Atalay, Sonya, Jen Shannon, and John G. Swogger (2017) *Journeys to Complete the Work...and Changing the Way We Bring Native American Ancestors Home*. Copies available from Sonya Atalay satalay@umass.edu.

Course Description

Collecting Native American objects and human remains was once justified as a way to preserve vanishing cultures. Instead of vanishing, Native Americans organized and asked that their ancestors be returned, along with their sacred objects. Initially, museums fought against the loss of collections and scientists fought against the loss of data. Governments stepped in and wrote regulations to manage claims, dictating the rights of all parties. Twenty-five years after the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) repatriation remains a controversial issue with few who are truly satisfied with the adopted process. This course examines the development of American museums and the ethics of collecting cultures to anchor our study of repatriation. Perspectives of anthropology, art, history, law, museum studies, Native American studies, philosophy, and religion are considered. Recent U.S. cases are contrasted with repatriation cases in other parts of the world, for repatriation is not just a Native American issue.

Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss the history of collecting art, objects, and human remains within the contexts of colonialism and nationalism,
2. Analyze repatriation claims and cases from multiple perspectives, including those of indigenous peoples, museum curators, academic researchers, artists, and lawyers,
3. Apply contemporary museum ethics to a local history museum and experience the challenges of running this type of museum,
4. Connect NAGPRA's repatriation regulations to larger issues of restitution, repatriation, and decolonial practice to answer the question "who do museums serve?"

Required Textbooks

There is one required textbook for this course. All other readings are provided through Moodle.

Fine-Dare, Kathleen S.

2002 *Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Additional Readings

Atalay, Sonya, Jen Shannon, and John G. Swogger

2017 *Journeys to Complete the Work...and Changing the Way We Bring Native American Ancestors Home*. Copies available from Sonya Atalay satalay@umass.edu.

Beeksma, Anne and Chiara D. Cesari

2019 Participatory Heritage in a Gentrifying Neighbourhood: Amsterdam's Van Eesteren Museum as Affective Space of Negotiations. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25(9):974-991.

Beisaw, April M. and Penelope H. Duus

2016 Repatriation as Inspiration: Multigenerational Perspectives on American Archaeology-Museum Relationships. *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research* 4(2016):95-110.

Blakkisrud, Helge and Faruh Kuziev

2019 Museums, Memory and Meaning-Creation: (Re)Constructing the Tajik Nation. *Nations and Nationalism* 25(3):997-1017.

Brown, Karen

2019 Museums and Local Development: An Introduction to Museums, Sustainability and Well-Being. *Museum International* 71(3-4):1-13.

Colwell, Chip

2017 *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America's Culture*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Cooper, Karen Coody

2008 *Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices*. AltaMira Press, Lanham.

Erdrich, Heid E.

2008 National Monuments. *Museum Anthropology* 33(2):249-251.

Gould, D. Rae

2017 NAGPRA, CUI and Institutional Will. In *The Routledge Companion to Cultural Property*. edited by Haidy Geismar and Jane Anderson. Routledge, London.

Lynch, Bernadette T.

2011 Collaboration, Contestation, and Creative Conflict: On the Efficacy of Museum/Community Partnerships. In *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum*. edited by Janet Marstine. pp 146-163. Routledge, London.

Nakamura, Naohiro

2017 Cultural Affiliation is Not Enough: The Repatriation of Ainu Human Remains. *The Polar Record* 53(2):220-224.

Ocello, Claudia B.

2011 Being Responsive to be Responsible: Museums and Audience Development. In *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum*. edited by Janet Marstine. pp 188-201. Routledge, London.

Rose-Greenland, Fiona

2017 Cultural Internationalism and the Italian Model of Repatriation. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 23(Fall):143-154.

Shannon, Jen

2019 Posterity Is Now. *Museum Anthropology* 42:5-13.

Stern, Pamela and Peter V. Hall

2019 "I Don't Want My Town Turned into a Spectacle": Community Museums as Tactics. *Museum Anthropology* 42(1):28-41.

Straughn, Celka and Howard Gardner

2011 GoodWork in Museums Today...and Tomorrow. In *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum*. edited by Janet Marstine. pp. 41-53. Routledge, London.

Wakeham, Pauline

2008 *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Williams, Paul

2011 Memorial Museums and the Objectification of Suffering. In *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum*. edited by Janet Marstine. pp. 220-235. Routledge, London.

Grading

Final course grades will be assigned using a 1000 point scale. To receive an A in the course, 950 or more points must be earned. Below 950 points the following scale will apply.

A- = 900 to 949 points

B+ = 867 to 899 points

B = 834 to 866 points

B- = 800 to 833 points

C+ = 767 to 799 points

C = 734 to 766 points, etc.

Class Participation = 10% (up to 100 points)

Class participation points can only be earned by being present and active in class each and every week. Active participation in class means that you regularly ASK and answer questions, challenge or defend positions, and generally help move the entire class towards new levels of understanding without dominating class discussion. Your overall course participation will receive a single grade based on the following criteria: more than five absences (0 pts), passive but present (50 pts), present and occasionally active (75 pts), or present and regularly active (100 pts).

Repatriation Exam = 20% (1 @ 200 points)

Because the concepts, regulations, and ethics of repatriation are foundational to this course, and exam will occur in Week 5. This will be an open-notes exam but not open book. Students are allowed to use any hand or type written notes from class or the readings but cannot use class handouts or the readings themselves.

Reflection Essay = 20% (1 @ 200 points)

An 800-1000 word reflection essay is due by the end of Week 7. This essay must follow the Written Assignment Formatting guidelines (below) and properly cite at least 5 assigned readings to support a clear argument. Books count as one assigned reading unless the chapters have different authors (an edited volume).

Community Museum Project = 30 % (proposal=100, deliverable=100, time=100)

In order to experience how museums and collections intersect with communities and audiences, we will undertake a project to help revive the local history museum and archives of the Town of Olive (Ulster Co). Because this is a collaborative community project, we will have to be flexible with schedules and activities. Doing what “we want to” is not as important as working collaboratively to meet agreed upon goals. Students who cannot travel to Olive are expected to invest the same amount of time to the project and support those who can travel by making phone calls, producing digital content, and handling project management responsibilities. Those who can travel to Olive will receive hands-on experience organizing and cataloging collections, designing exhibits, and interacting with community members. An overnight trip to Olive is planned and Vassar is providing funding for food and housing.

Case Study Take Home Exam = 20% (1 @ 200)

On the last day of class, a take home exam (see below for faculty regulations) will be distributed. The exam will ask students to analyze multiple case studies and offer expert opinion regarding how the museum, exhibit, collection, or site should be handled using contemporary museum ethics and/or knowledge of NAGPRA and international repatriation. **This is a cumulative exam.** Students will be expected to spend 2-3 hours completing the exam. It is due via Moodle by 5pm on Friday, May 15th.

Take-home Examinations--May be assigned any time after the last day of classes. A take-home final should be recognized as a final examination, and NOT A TERM PAPER. It is due at the end of the third day of the exam period and should not be a research paper. All parties should keep in mind that it replaces a two-hour scheduled examination. Grades are due no later than 72 hours after the fourth day of the exam period.

Extra Credit

Opportunities for extra credit will be announced as they arise. Each student can apply up to 100 extra credit points to their course total. Be sure to take these opportunities as they come up. There is no guarantee that there will be opportunities at the end of the semester.

Written Assignment Formatting

Word Counts

For assignments completed in this course, word counts include title and body text. Word counts do not include the reference list or figure captions or abstract. Abstracts have their own word count guidelines.

Titles

The title of a written work reflects the thesis of that work. The title must be specific to the argument your paper will make, revealing both the topic covered and method, theory, and or case study being used to explore that topic.

If your paper does not have a title then you probably aren't sure what your thesis is.

If your paper title is vague then you probably aren't sure what your thesis is.

If your title would work for a murder mystery novel then it is a bad title for an academic paper.

Figures

All tables, charts, and images included within written work must have a numbered caption that explains the figure and what it represents. This caption is an abbreviated form of the description that appears within the text. Every figure must be cited within the text and cited in the order in which they appear. An example is below.

On the first day of the course I brought the students to the house and asked them to write down what they thought of it. Most students had never noticed the distinctive octagon-shaped building (Figure 1) that they walked past to arrive at our classroom.



Figure 1. The Octagon house on the campus of Heidelberg University, Tiffin, Ohio. Photograph by April M. Beisaw.

Bibliography vs References or Works Cited

A reference list is **not** the same as a bibliography. A bibliography is a list of recommended readings. A reference list is a list of what you have **read** and **used** to make your argument. A reference list is the same as “works cited” because all references must be cited to show where and how they informed your research. References are your evidence.

Referencing and Citing Sources

In this course, we will use the Society for American Archaeology's format for references and citations. The full style guide is available through this [link](#). Every source you cite must be in your reference list and every source in your reference list must be cited in your text.

The basic reference formats are below. Additional authors are listed First Name Last Name after the first author's Last Name, First Name entry. Reference lists are sorted alphabetically by that first author's last name. Two sources with the same authorship are sorted chronologically with the oldest first. There are two spaces before and after the date.

Last Name, First Name

Date Article Title. *Journal Name* Volume(No):page-page.

Last Name, First Name
Date *Title*. Publisher, Publisher City.

The city in which a book was published is always included. If the city is not well known, then a two letter abbreviation for the state or country is added after a comma to clarify the location of publication. Such as:

White, Tim D. and Pieter A. Folkens
2005 *The Human Bone Manual*. Elsevier, Burlington, VT.

Some books include chapters written by different authors. When citing and referencing such works you must use the specific chapter title and author, not the book title and editor. Each chapter you use gets its own line in the reference list. See the list of additional readings for more examples of properly formatted references.

Last Name, First Name
Date Chapter Title. In *Book Title*, edited by First Name Last Name, pp. page-page. Publisher, Publisher City.

Citations point a reader to your reference list so that they can find the same exact information in the source you used. Ask yourself “could I have made this statement without having read a specific work?”. If the answer is no, add a citation to that statement. Use author and date when the concept being pointed to occurs throughout the source. Specific page numbers are included in citations when the information being pointed to occurs only on a certain page of the source. The title of the source is never included in the citation. Examples of citations are below.

- Facial recognition is a forensic technique of last resort and is rarely used (Ubelaker 2008).
- “Social identities are deeply rooted in historical visions which are strongly defined along intersecting axes of race/ethnicity, class, and gender” (Reckner 2002:97).
- According to Beisaw (2016:12), citing sources is not fun, but it is necessary. This perspective helps to contextualize the suffering of her students.

Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources

When you use the exact words of someone else, you must put those words within quotes and cite the source. Direct quotes should be reserved for instances when the way the original author said something is the point of the quote.

- During ethnographic fieldwork with ghost hunters, Michelle Hanks recorded the thoughts of one ghost tourist: “you get to know a lot of history doing this. ...Certainly more than I learned at school” (Hanks 2015:130).

When using a direct quote that will take up more than 3 lines of your paper, you must set that quote off as a block quote using a space before and after the quote and tab each line. This makes it obvious when the bulk of your paper is relying heavily on the words of others. Block quotes are discouraged.

The majority of your citations should **not** be direct quotes. Instead you should paraphrase the words of others and restate them in a way that is applicable to the argument you are making. Those citations do not get direct quotes because it is the idea that matters, not the exact words used to convey that idea.

- Archaeology, once the stuff of exciting stories (Holtorf 2010), took on the unfathomable labels of “boring” and “tedious.”
- One archaeologist advocated storytelling as a way to enhance archaeological practice by presenting possible explanations along with much-needed imagination (Lewis 2000:7). Another archaeologist suggested that the fear of seeming unscientific has kept archaeologists from developing better ways of speaking to and writing for the public (Majewski 2000:18).

Whether or not a paraphrased citation gets a page number depends on whether the idea being cited occurred throughout the source (was the subject of the paper) or appeared in only one place in the source (may have been a tangential idea just touched on).

Generating Reference Lists With Refworks

All Vassar students have a free Refworks account that is accessible through the library home page. Refworks can expedite the creation of bibliographies and reference lists.

library.vassar.edu -> Research -> Citation Tools -> Refworks

Create an account if you don't already have one

Go back to library.vassar.edu -> Databases to do your searching

For peer-reviewed sources in sciences, social sciences, humanities try Scopus

For peer-reviewed anthropology & archaeology sources try Anthropology Plus, AnthroSource, and Annual Review of Anthropology

When you find sources to use for your paper choose Export -> Refworks

In Refworks

Select the sources you want to include in your paper's reference list

Put them all in one folder for handy access

Create Bibliography -> Style Editor OR Manage Output Styles

Search for American Antiquity

Authors Publish Date (Year) Title. Edition ed. Vol. Volume, Pages (other) Publisher, Place of Publication.

Create Bibliography

You now have a **draft** of your reference list that you need to check for accuracy

Check every capitalization and every punctuation for consistency

Delete any references that you don't end up citing in your paper

Policies

Academic Integrity

As a Vassar student, you have agreed to the academic integrity policy in "[Vassar College Regulations](#)." This includes:

1. Each student's work shall be the product of the student's own effort.
2. Each student shall give due and appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others when that work is incorporated into the writing of papers.
3. Unless otherwise directed, every student working in a laboratory is expected to make all necessary measurements, drawings, etc., independently, from his or her own observations of the material provided.
4. Collaboration in preparation of written work may take place only to the extent approved by the instructor.

Penalties for violating Vassar's academic integrity policy can be found in the same regulations document.

Appointments

Students are welcome to drop in unannounced during office hours. This time is available on a first-come first-served basis. If you need to speak with me outside of those scheduled times, use the [Google Calendar link](#) on Moodle to schedule an appointment. Make sure you have your Google Calendar set to Eastern Standard Time zone before reserving an appointment time.

Assignment Submission

Unless otherwise indicated, all work is to be submitted electronically through Moodle. Files cannot be sent through email or handed in on paper or electronic media. Work not submitted according to the assignment's instructions or by the assignment deadline will be subject to the Late Work Policy.

Attendance

Class content and assigned readings are related but they are not the same. Therefore all students are expected to attend every class as well as complete every assignment. Some class meetings may take place in alternate locations and during alternate times. Attention to the course schedule is essential. Tardiness may result in a missed exercise. Accommodations for health-related issues require a health advisory from Health Services. Accommodations for personal issues require communication from the class Dean.

Changes and Moodle

This syllabus is general outline of the course content. The professor reserves the right to deviate from this outline. All changes will be posted on Moodle. Therefore the content on Moodle is what students are expected to follow for successful completion of this course.

Class Participation

This is an interactive course that requires full participation in order to meet the course objectives. Students who find it difficult to speak in class are expected to discuss course material with the instructor during office hours or by email. When course exercises take place outside of the classroom students are expected to maintain classroom behaviors: pay attention, stay with the group, and stay engaged. Unacceptable behaviors include listening to music, reading material not related to this course, and napping while being transported to a field site.

Collaboration

Unless otherwise indicated, each student's work should be easily distinguishable from that of any other student in multiple ways. Don't share files. Do share ideas. Don't produce one result and turn it in with different names. Do work independently alongside one another. Don't rely on anyone else to get you through. Do be sure you can and do complete your own work. See Academic Integrity policy above.

Disability

If you have a condition that requires special accommodations (speech or hearing problems, attention disorder, etc.) it is your responsibility to have that disability documented by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity and provide me with a copy of your AEO accommodation letter before accommodations are needed.

Late Work

Unless otherwise indicated, all late work will be penalized according to the following schedule: 10% for first 12 hours, 20% for second 12 hours, 50% for the third 12 hours. Beyond 36 hours past an assigned deadline, late work is only accepted when accompanied by a communication from Health Services or the Dean's office.

Letters of Recommendation

Requests for letters of reference or recommendation must be made two weeks before the submission deadline for that letter. Before I consider a request, you must provide the following: 1) who the letter should be addressed to, 2) the submission deadline, 3) why you are applying for the position/funding, and 4) what you hope to get out of the experience/funding.

I am happy to write letters for students who go beyond the basic requirements of attending class and completing assignments. Before requesting a letter from any professor, consider how well the professor knows you as an individual. The best letters of recommendation tell stories about how students work independently or as part of a team, how they deal with adversity, what their goals and aspirations are, and what related strengths or weaknesses they have. If I don't know these things about you I cannot write a good letter.

Office Hours

See Appointments above.

Territory Acknowledgement

The Vassar campus exists on lands that were once home to the Delaware Nation, the Delaware Lenape Tribe and the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians. Although many sources reference the Wappingers as the indigenous peoples of our campus, they were a confederacy of Native peoples who organized at one time in response to Euro-American incursions into the area and no longer exist as an organized group.

Textbooks

I do my best to keep the of textbooks under \$100/course. Students are expected to obtain a copy of each required textbook but are encouraged to explore cheaper options such as purchasing used or electronic copies or renting books. Anyone who elects to use an electronic version of a text should be able to bring an e-reader to class so that they have access to the textbook material for class discussion and exercises.

Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction to Museums as Sites of Contention

Wednesday - Watch these videos before class

Understanding Art Repatriation by Sotheby's Institute of Art, The Debate Over Europe's Stolen African Art by Trevor Noah, Why Museums Are Returning Cultural Treasures by Chip Colwell

Week 2 - Critiquing Museums and Exhibits

Monday - Read Beisaw and Duus (2016) and Chapter 1 of Wakeham (Reading the Banff Park Museum)

Wednesday - Read Cooper pgs 1-28 (American Indians, Protesting Exhibitions, Politics & Sponsorship)

Week 3 - Creating the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

Monday - Read Fine-Dare pgs 1-62

Wednesday - Read Fine-Dare pgs 62-97

Week 4 - Enforcing the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

Monday - Read Fine-Dare pgs 97-160

Wednesday - Read Fine-Dare pgs 160-196

Week 5 - Knowing Repatriation

Monday - Read Atalay, Shannon, and Swogger (2017)

Wednesday - **Repatriation exam (20%)**

Week 6 - Applying Repatriation

Monday - Read Gould (2017) - Dr. Gould visits us in class - Extra credit lecture in evening

Wednesday - Read Colwell (2017) pgs 199-224 (Hardest Cases, Long Since Disappeared, & Unidentifiable)

Week 7 - Transforming Museums into Cultural Centers

Monday - Read Straughn and Gardner (2011), Lynch (2011), Ocello (2011)

Wednesday - Read Erdrich (2008)

Friday - **Reflection essay due by 5pm (10%)**

Spring Break

Week 8 - Re-Constructing a Community Museum

Monday - BEFORE class review online Local History collections of Olive Free Library come to class ready to discuss

Wednesday - **Field Trip to Olive Library (1:30-5:15) for up to 10 students**

Saturday - **Field Trip to Olive Library (9-1) for up to 10 students**

Week 9 - Planning Our Project

Monday - Read Williams (2011) and Explore the "Taking Their Water" storymap - In class brainstorming & creation of teams: Archives, Community Outreach, Digital, and Exhibits

Wednesday - **Proposals from each team are due by 5pm, with detailed timelines and deliverables (10%)**

Week 10 - Project Work - Schedule to be Determined - 10 hours/student invested (5%)

Monday - Read Stern and Hall (2019) and Brown (2019) - In-class project work

Wednesday - **Field Trip to Olive Library (1:30-5:15) for up to 10 students** OR (whichever most can do)

Saturday - **Field Trip to Olive Library (9-1) for up to 10 students**

Week 11 - Our Community Event - Schedule to be Determined - 10 hours/student invested (5%)

Week 12 - Connecting Olive to the World

Monday - Read Beeksma and Cesari (2019) and Blakkisrud and Kuziev (2019)

Wednesday - Project deliverables due by 5pm **(10%)**

Week 13 - Collections Around the World

Monday - Read Nakamura (2017), Rose-Greenland (2017), and Shannon (2019)

Wednesday - Come to class with a case study to discuss in small groups

Week 14 - Conclusions

Monday - Take-home exams distributed and basic questions answered, then course evals completed

Finals week - Take-home exam due (20%)

Carolyn Grant '36 Endowment Funded Community Event

Community Storytelling and Local History Preservation at the Olive Free Library

Anthropology students have already begun engaging with the communities of Olive and Hurley, Ulster County, NY. In four days, Vassar students contributed a total of 38 volunteer hours to revitalizing the local history museum and archives in the basement of the Olive Free Library. They sorted piles of papers and boxes of photographs that have been donated to preserve a memory of the changes brought there by the City of New York. From 1906-1915, residents endured the forced removal of 2,000 homes and businesses and 2,800 ancestors removed from their cemeteries. New York City government came to Olive and Hurley, almost 100-miles from Manhattan, to build a water reservoir in the foothills of the Catskills Mountains. The City is still bringing changes to the community. The hamlet of Boiceville, relocated in 1912, will be partially demolished in the coming months.

Funding is being requested to have the Spring 2020 semester course ANTH 281: Museums, Collections, and Ethics **assist with cataloging of the Olive Free Library's local history archives and to develop a new exhibit for their museum using those collections.** This project is both embodied and contemplative as students will be interacting with and interviewing long-term residents who will help us identify people and buildings in photographs and documents. We will also **organize story-telling sessions with residents and add these to the museum collections and a dedicated website.** Students will practice **deep-listening as they attempt to connect donated collections to the stories being told.** The entire project has a social justice focus as we explore how the needs of these rural communities intersect with, or are overcome by, the needs of New York City.

The budget includes lodging costs for **an overnight trip that will allow students to host evening dinner with community residents.** Sharing a meal will help to break down barriers and create more informal opportunities for story telling. Staying overnight in the community they are working with will **help them understand the peoples and lives they are learning about.** Also included are **funds for museum exhibit supplies that go beyond foam boards.** Students, community members, and the library board will **collaboratively develop exhibit content.**

Description	Amount requested
Equipment and Supplies	\$500.00
Travel (unfunded)	\$200.00
Lodging	\$500.00
Other (specify) - community dinners	\$300.00
Total \$ requested	\$1,500.00