INSTRUCTOR: Rebecca Tucker
CREDITS: 4

COURSE DESCRIPTION

‘Collecting’ is a ubiquitous human activity, spanning all ages and all kinds of societies. Studying it can reveal an extraordinary range of connections between the world of ‘things’ and the human world of ideas, values and meanings. But we are interested too in the psychology and anthropology of collecting, which have their own histories. This course takes us on a survey of this topic in relation to Italian collections and museums, using diverse perspectives on the practice, histories and cultures of collecting. We will develop a set of interdisciplinary approaches to answer important questions: why do we collect? why do we collect what we collect? what is revealed by the ways in which individuals, institutions, and political entities accumulate, hoard, display and disperse their collections? how do these things change across time and differ between cultures? what are the implications of these activities for relationships between people, political and social entities, the natural environment, and religious concepts? This course will introduce you to aspects of the histories of collections and their display, historically and in the present (including, to name a few of these aspects, the history of architecture, the history of museums, the history of the natural sciences and technology, court culture and diplomacy, gender and collecting, economics and material culture). The class will consider the ramifications of collections as a form of creating order, as civic enterprise, nation- and state-building, private identity construction, investment, and/or philanthropy.

The course will start with an examination of the deep past by looking at collecting in antiquity and establish how this history influenced Italian Renaissance activities. We will then use a series of primary and secondary texts to examine changing trends in collecting, from the Renaissance phenomena of the “cabinet of curiosities” and the aristocratic “studioso,” to the use of royal collections under absolute monarchs to create an atmosphere of kingly and national power. We will explore the growth of the public museum and the impetus to both create order in the world and to collect the world. In the 19th century, we’ll examine the shift to the gallery, an economic and social system central to contemporary art. Key developments, such as the growth of middle-class patronage, the increasing professionalization of the artist, the emergence of an international art market, the problem of forgeries, and the impact of new sites of display upon taste and collecting practices will be examined in both the 19th and early 20th centuries. The course includes site visits and day trips in Florence and overnight field excursions to significant sites in central Italy.

Core Questions:

1) What does collecting tell us about a culture? In what ways does collecting contribute to historical understanding? Anthropological or artistic understanding? Ideas of social justice and labor?
2) How do historians interpret patterns of collecting activities in relation to changes in economic, political, historical, and social realms?
3) What are the psychological aspects of collecting? Why do we (humans) do it?
4) What does ownership mean in today’s culture? Did it mean something different in earlier cultures, particularly pre-capitalist ones?
5) How does collecting work? How do people go about creating networks for accumulation of objects? Does collecting create social inequalities or opportunities among the participants? How do these elements in the practice of collecting affect our understanding of a society’s material culture?
6) How have people understood *things* and/or *art*, and how have those concepts changed in different times and regions?

**COURSE OBJECTIVE**

1) Knowledge of collecting, display, ownership in different cultures and historical moments.
2) Ability to recognize and evaluate work in interdisciplinary modes (art history, museum studies, anthropology, economics, political science, etc.)
3) Understanding of how ownership reveals cultural structures and political realities
4) Ability to perform disciplinary research; to analyze visual materials and discover, evaluate, and utilize visual evidence; to work in disciplinary specific writing and citation systems
5) Developing writing and reading strategies: text and context, primary and secondary sources, description and analysis, gathering and using data, constructing arguments and interpretations.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Mandatory readings, illustrations and other didactic materials will be provided. Readings will be distributed by flash drive; any hand-out materials must be checked back in to the instructor in person, unmarked and in otherwise good condition. You must provide your own paper for printing out materials.

- Books from the ACM library placed on reserve for the course must not be removed from ACM spaces at Linguaviva, 4th floor

**COURSE CONTENT**

Regular meetings fall on the days and at the times indicated on the schedule below. Meeting times are scheduled in accordance to museum and monument openings. When we convene on site rather than in the classroom, please plan your route and estimate travel time carefully to ensure prompt arrival. Punctuality is a must. Dress for conditions and be forewarned that 1) many times you will have little or no opportunity to sit 2) churches are not heated or air-conditioned 3) museums are minimally heated and air-conditioned 4) there are strict dress codes for entering religious sites 5) we cannot re-schedule because of unfavorable conditions.

**Tentative Weekly Course Schedule**

This schedule outlines where you need to be, what reading you need to have done for class, when assignments are due, etc. This is a tentative schedule that may undergo changes.

**Week 1**

**Introduction; Antiquity**

Session 1  Examining Objects, Owners, and Viewers
Session 2  Collecting in the Ancient World: Triumphs and Spoils

**Week 2**

**Medieval Collections**

Session 1  Relics: Before and After Iconolasm
Session 2  Art vs. Artifact: Intersections of Science and Art

**Week 3**

**Renaissance Collections**

Session 1  The Collector’s Cabinet: Owning the World
Session 2  A Gentleman’s Mind: Inside the Studiolo

**Week 4**

**The Age of Discovery**

Session 1  Commodities Everywhere: Global Trade and The Expanding Art Market
Session 2  Collecting as Political and Social Practice: Kings and Connoisseurs
Week 5  Enlightenment
Session 1
Session 2  FIELD TRIP
The People’s Collections: Growth of the Public Museum

Week 6  The 19th Century
Session 1  Colonial Visions: Power, Race and Gender in the Museum of Natural History
Session 2  Follow the Money: Galleries, Dealers, and Owners

Week 7  Early 20th Century
Session 1  Art and Taste at the Turn of the 19th Century
Session 2  Final class presentations

ASSESSMENT
TBD

ACM POLICY ON ACADEMICS
A complete listing of ACM policies can be found in your student handbook.

Class attendance and participation: You are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips.

Academic honesty: Actions of dishonesty are destructive to the well-being of the academic community, and ACM staff respond to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course.

ACM POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION
The Associated Colleges of the Midwest does not discriminate in the operation of its educational programs, activities, or employment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, marital status, or disability.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT
Expectations will be discussed at the first class session.