



## Fall 2018 London Study Abroad

**HIST 433/O**

*3 credits/35.75 contact hours*

*prereq: sophomore standing or above*

**Medieval Cultures:**

**Pre-Modern World History through the  
Eyes of the British Museum**

*What does human history look like through the lens of the British Museum's collection of artifacts?  
Does it tell us more about European colonialism in the modern world than it does about "pre-modern" world cultures?  
What does its collection reveal about what is not there: what are we not seeing?*

This study abroad course explores the wealth of objects in the British Museum as a way of understanding world cultures. However, this is a more advanced survey of pre-1500 world history than HIST 151. We take a serious look at how museums put cultures—their own and others—on display, and how they construct narratives of the past to account for similarity and difference, change and continuity in human history. Coming from Hawai'i, we will pay particular attention to Pacific artifacts, their acquisition, display, and repatriation.

We will use the British Museum and BBC program "A History of the World in 100 Objects" as our main access point to the collection and compare its overview of world history to the *Tradition and Encounter* textbook narrative. Students will develop their own projects around objects they explore on field trips to the British Museum and other sites in England, and will present oral and written interpretations of their artifacts as historical evidence.

As an "Oral Communications" Focus course, this class will offer opportunities for students to develop public speaking skills of a particular type, that of the tour guide. Students will learn to balance brevity with accuracy and nuance: how to give a short, concise explanation of an object's main features (origin and traits); how to contextualize an artifact in a cultural narrative demonstrating historical empathy; and how to politely answer questions, both basic factual and more value-laden. Student presentations on their objects to the class will include practice sessions, peer and instructor feedback, and question and answer. The final presentations by pairs or groups of three students will be to give a gallery room tour in the British Museum.

The written papers accompanying these presentations will be more analytical than the oral presentations, engaging with the historiographical questions raised at the outset of the course as applied to the objects students are studying. The final gallery paper is individual.

## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will recognize and acknowledge the inter-relationship between fact, evidence, and interpretation in historical narratives and how these narratives are culturally constructed.
2. Students will learn to analyze primary source artifacts and demonstrate how to use this evidence with historical empathy in their own arguments.
3. Students will demonstrate an awareness of how modern western values construct “pre-modern” world history by offering alternative historical narratives to explain the evidence in its own cultural context.
4. Students will learn to give short “tour guide” oral presentations on objects to an audience of non-specialists: clearly identify the main features of an artifact, explain its historical context, and answer questions politely and accurately.

## Readings:

Jerry H. Bentley, Herbert F. Ziegler, and Heather E. Streets-Salter, *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*, Vol. 1, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (McGraw-Hill, 2015). Paperback, loose-leaf, or electronic formats. TE in the schedule.

British Museum, [“The Museum’s Story”](#) (History of the Museum, History of the Collection, Sir Hans Sloane).

Neil MacGregor, [“A History of the World in 100 Objects”](#) (British Museum and BBC). BM Themes in the schedule.

*National Museums: New Studies from Around the World*, ed. Simon J. Knell, Peter Aronsson, et. al. (Routledge, 2010), chapters 1, 3, 7. Laulima Resources

*Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience*, ed. Sarah Longair and John McAleer (Manchester University Press, 2016), introduction and afterward. Laulima Resources

Jerry H. Bentley, “Beyond Modernocentrism: Toward Fresh Visions of the Global Past,” in *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World*, ed. Victor Mair (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 17-29. Laulima Resources

Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2002), Introduction and Chapter 1. Laulima Resources

Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), “Introduction” and “Epilogue.”

<b>Grading</b>	
10% Presentation/Paper 1	A+ 97-100
10% Presentation/Paper 2	A 93-96.9
10% Presentation/Paper 3	A- 90-92.9
10% Presentation/Paper 4	B+ 87-89.9
20% Final Presentation/Paper	B 83-86.9
20% Participation	B- 80-82.9
	C+ 77-79.9
	C 73-76.9
	C- 70-72.9
	D+ 67-69.9
	D 63-66.9
Grades are calculated on a 100 point scale:	D- 60-62.9
	F 0-59

## **Presentations and Papers 1-4 (40%)**

In each of the four main sections of the syllabus, we will have one week of class discussion correlating the textbook with the British Museum exhibits, then a second week of oral presentations on objects from that section. In the first week, students will choose their object and begin researching it at the British Museum. In the second week, students will practice and peer-review their presentations at Roehampton and then present formally at the British Museum.

Each of the four oral presentations (3-5 minutes) are accompanied by a short paper (3-5 pages). The grade is split evenly between the oral and the written. While the oral presentations on an object are aimed at a general audience, the paper should be an analytic history essay engaging with the issues of historical narrative and problems of representation relative to that object. The papers are due one week after the oral presentation.

## **Final Gallery Presentation and Paper (20%)**

The final oral presentation is a group one: students in pairs or threes will choose a gallery room in the British Museum and give the rest of the class a docented 10-minute tour of that room, highlighting specific objects and narrating their connections to one another. This means we will be in the British Museum itself, with the potential for other visitors to overhear and ask questions as well. The final paper is individual: a critique of the gallery room in terms of cultural representation and historical narrative.

## **Participation (20%)**

The participation grade is based on class discussion, peer review activities, and field trip attendance. Grades and comments will be posted in the Lulima gradebook at the end of each section so that students know how they can improve.

A lively class discussion depends on students doing the assigned reading or viewing for each day. Participation includes listening well, asking questions, and offering different points of view.

For the four oral presentations in class, peer review participation includes: 1) a written evaluation of two presenters in your study group during the practice session, using the review form provided by the instructor; 2) questions and comments at the formal class presentation.

For the final gallery presentations, participation will be assessed based on: 1) group self-evaluation; 2) peer review of the other groups' gallery presentations, using the review form provided by the instructor.

Study groups will be rotated through each of the four presentations. Students may choose their own partners for the final gallery project.

## **Field Trips**

Students are encouraged to participate in the field trips planned for HIST 335 to gain field experience in evaluating the landscapes and environments outside of museums, as well as explore other museums, libraries, and historic sites in the UK. Students should use these experiences to enhance their presentations. Those unable to attend a planned field trip should substitute their own exploration of another site in the UK or on the continent.

## Oral Presentation Grading Criteria

The following will be provided on a peer-review sheet and also used by the instructor to grade the formal presentations. The sheet includes boxes in all three categories for both “Strengths” and “Areas to Improve.” Peer reviewers will be graded on how well they fill in these boxes with specific responses.

Content (60%):

- Accuracy of historical information
- Interpretation of context with empathy
- Significance and human interest

Structure (20%):

- Strong opening (ice breaker or anecdote drawing the audience in)
- Clear flow (parts lead to one another, transitions sign-posted)
- Crisp ending (closing summary or question)

Performance (20%):

- Volume, pace, eye contact, body movements, visuals
- Timing: within 3-5 minutes, no dead air or “ums.”
- Answering questions honestly (“That is a good question I don’t know the answer to, however...”) and concisely (short, complete).

## Paper Grading Criteria

The four presentations papers and final gallery paper are analytic essays engaging with historiographical issues. We will be introducing these issues of modernity, historical narrative, and cultural agency in the first two weeks of class, but the critical question students should address in each of their papers is: what interpretive frameworks surround this object and how is it made to fit into a historical narrative? With the final paper, students are analyzing a gallery room, so the paper will be longer and more complex, focused on how the room itself creates a narrative framework, using objects from the room (or elsewhere—the artifacts not seen) as evidence to support the paper’s line of argument.

I look for three things in your essays:

- 1) clear thesis and argumentation, indicated in the introduction and in the organization of the paper;
- 2) adept analysis of sources and other information as evidence or examples; and
- 3) vigorous, readable prose style free of grammar and syntax errors.

These three standards are interrelated, in part because developing a historical argument takes a lot of thought and much rewriting to make it clear. First drafts are pretty obvious in being stream of consciousness and uncertain: you start with some vague ideas or questions, follow several paths in the middle, and then end up with a clear thesis only in the last paragraph. Redrafting means starting from that conclusion as your introduction and marshaling your sub-arguments systematically under the umbrella of that main thesis. Arguments should then govern the organization of your paper, leading off each paragraph. Further, arguments are only as good as the evidence or examples you cite to support them, normally in the body of the paragraph. Rewriting also involves the careful choice of words, especially active verbs that explain why something is significant.

Papers should be submitted by noon of the due date (one week after the oral presentations), into your Laulima Dropbox. Papers should be double-spaced, 12-point font. Citations should use footnotes or endnotes following the Chicago Manual of Style for Humanities/History.

## Schedule

[dep. Mon. Sep. 10, arrive Sep. 12; orientation Sep. 13-15; classes begin Sep. 24] Contact hours (35.75): This class meets 75 minutes per week at Roehampton and two hours per week in the British Museum, except for reading week.

### Introductions Sep. 16-22

Preview: familiarize with British Museum and getting around

**Field Trip:** Sutton Hoo with HIST 335

### Themes and Issues

#### Week 1 09/24 **The British Museum: Its Own History**

British Museum, [“The Museum’s Story”](#) (History of the Museum, History of the Collection, Sir Hans Sloane).

Neil MacGregor, [“A History of the World in 100 Objects”](#)

#### Week 2 10/01 **Issues: Colonialism and Modernocentrism**

Lead discussants assigned for:

*National Museums: New Studies from Around the World*, chapters 1, 3, 7.

*Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience*, introduction and afterward.

Jerry H. Bentley, “Beyond Modernocentrism: Toward Fresh Visions of the Global Past.”

Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Introduction and Chapter 1.

Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, Introduction and Epilogue.

### Part 1: Early Complex Societies, circa 3500-500 B.C.E.

#### Week 3 10/08 **Correlations**

TE chapters 1-6 and BM Themes 1-5

#### Week 4 10/15 **Object Presentations**

#### Week 5 10/22 **Reading Week**

optional field trip to Northumbria with HIST 335 OR explore other museums wherever you travel

### Part 2: Formation of Classical Societies, circa 500- B.C.E.-circa 500 C.E.

#### Week 6 10/29 **Correlations**

TE chapters 7-12 and BM Themes 6-10

#### Week 7 11/05 **Object Presentations**

### Part 3: PostClassical Era, circa 500-1000 C.E.

#### Week 8 11/12 **Correlations**

TE chapters 13-16 and BM Themes 11-12

optional field trip to Winchester with HIST 335

#### Week 9 11/19 **Object Presentations**

### Part 4: Acceleration of Cross-Cultural Interaction, circa 1000-1500 C.E.

#### Week 10 11/26 **Correlations**

TE chapters 17-21 and BM Themes 13-15

#### Week 11 12/03 **Object Presentations**

optional field trip to Canterbury with HIST 335

### Closing

#### Week 12 12/10 **Final Gallery Presentations**