Art, History, & Culture in Context

English Museums & Libraries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Era

Instructor: Dr. Earle Havens, William Kurrelmeyer Curator of Rare Books & Manuscripts, & Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of German and Romance Languages and Literatures, JHU

Teaching Assistant: Neil Weijer, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of History, JHU

Dates: May 30 to June 10, 2016, generally meeting Mondays to Fridays, 10 am-1 pm, in London with afternoon research/reading assignments at the Victoria & Albert Museum Archive. We will also have an, overnight visit and two-day tour of Oxford University, and a special final-day luncheon at the historic Athenaeum Club, St. James, London. One weekend afternoon excursion to the National Gallery of Art on Sunday, June 5, otherwise weekend dates are free.

Overview: This course will involve behind-the-scene tours with the instructor and curators of the major art, science, and cultural museums, palaces, and historic rare book and manuscript libraries, as well as private collections, in greater London and Oxford. The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the unique historical circumstances that shaped each of these unique museums, collections, palaces, and their respective missions over time, from the late Middle
Ages to the foundation of the first great public museums and libraries from the second half of the 18th into the 19th centuries, and beyond.

Students will meet with the Instructor and the respective curators of each collection during the mornings for guided tours and presentations on the respective histories of these institutions, and collective analysis of specific items on exhibition in terms of curatorial and scholarly organization, narrative museological strategies, and historical content and context.

Additionally, during the afternoons, each student will work directly with the Instructor and Teaching Assistant to identify a specific item, or small collection of items, from the holdings of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Your final research papers will be based on your original archival research under the direction of the V&A Archivist, Dr. Nicholas Smith, in their Blythe House archival building in Olympia.

This research will culminate in a final paper that will address the following: (1) physical and historically contextual description of the item(s); (2) the history of its ownership from the time of its creation (i.e., provenance) up to its accession at the V&A; (3) identification, transcription, and analysis of original archival documentation surrounding the consideration, acquisition, disposition, and display of the item within the museum; and (4) a final consideration of the item’s potential relevance to a present-day audience. All papers must be 15-20 double-spaced pages with footnotes, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman font, size 12, and must include, in addition to the 15-20 pages, a full bibliography and images of the item(s) and documents consulted. Style of bibliography and footnotes is not too important, though emulate basic attributes encountered in the scholarly literature (full author, title, imprint, date, &c.; with original archival documents, identify collection location, folder numbers, etc.).

Please note that you will also need to bring your Hopkins ID to confirm you full-time status as a student. Several venues offer reduced rates or free tickets for full-time students.
Assignments/Grading

Your final grades for this course will be based on three components:

(1) Classroom participation (50%): your active and creative/critical engagement in classroom discussion, including clear evidence of your thoughtful completion of all assigned readings in advance of each meeting.

(2) Presentation (10%): each student will select an item from a London museum or library which you will research in advance and describe on the day that we attend that museum, the first presentations begin on January 9th. Presentations should not simply regurgitate the exhibition label. Your instructor will give you recommendations on where to go to find out more information. Presentations should be in situ with the object in question and should normally take about 15 minutes, followed by some discussion/Q&A, 20 minutes in all. Since it is not practical for all students to visit venues not conveniently located near your residence, I have limited presentations to the National Portrait Gallery, Victoria & Albert Museum, and the National Gallery.

(3) Final paper (40%): topic chosen in consultation with your instructor, TA, and the V&A Archivist, physical requirements described above.

Reading Materials

All assigned readings will be available via EReserves through the Sheridan Libraries of Johns Hopkins. Note that much of the reading is HEAVILY ILLUSTRATED, so the amount indicated
below does not accurately reflect the daily reading load. I strongly encourage each student to print out the packet and bring to London so that pages can be annotated and marked with useful notes.

**COURSE SCHEDULE & ITINERARY**

**WEEK 1 London**
*Private collection of fine Renaissance bindings
*British Museum, Elgin Marbles; Department of Coins & Medals; Enlightenment: George III’s Royal Collections
*British Library, Ritblat Gallery
*National Portrait Gallery
*Hampton Court Palace
*National Maritime Museum, Greenwich Observatory
*National Gallery

**WEEK 2 London**
*Victoria & Albert Museum
*Lambeth Palace and Library
*Tower of London
*Sir John Soane Museum
*Athenaeum Club, Pall Mall

**Week 2 Oxford**
*Bodleian Library
*Codrington Library, All Soul’s College
*Ashmolean Museum
*History of Science Museum
*Punting on the river