Museums are the treasure-houses of the human race. They store the memories of the world's peoples, their cultures, their dreams and their hopes. Through history, the museum, a dialectical structure, has been acting as a constant and solid bridge between the private and the public, the past and the present.

Museums generally derive most of their prominence and importance from their collections, and these holdings constitute the primary difference between museums and other kinds of institutions. The collections, whether works of art, scientific instruments or specimens from the natural world, are an essential part of the collective cultural fabric and each museum obligation to its collections is paramount. Most of the museums that we visit today are in fact the result of centuries-long history of “gathering” of beautiful, precious or just curious objects in various places, such as temples, churches, castles, palaces, studioli and other private chambers. Finally museums play a valuable role in providing an understanding of identity and in fostering a sense of belonging to a place or community for their users.

Course Description
The course combines a theoretical approach to the museum entity – carried out through readings and discussions on its mission and on the history of collections and museums from the classical world to the 20th century -- with a practical insight on the museum tasks and management today.

Using the Acton Collection at Villa La Pietra as a case study, this course examines the history and the nature of European museums, especially art museums and historic house museums in Florence. Themes such as the influence of artistic taste, the house museum as palimpsest, and the role of artists, collectors, art dealers, and philanthropists in the formation of the early public galleries will be discussed. Villa La Pietra will provide many behind-the-scenes opportunities to take a close look and study issues such as museum management, conservation and preservation, exhibition design, and museum education. The course includes many other museum and temporary exhibition visits where will be looking at different kind of displays and objects’ interpretation.

Main topics covered are:
a) Museum definition, mission and different typologies
b) The artistic taste
c) History of art collecting
d) The space of the private collection and the public museum
e) Museums architecture
f) Methods of research, documentation, registration (entry, catalogue)
g) Presentation and display techniques: temporary exhibitions and permanent displays
h) Collections care: preventive and remedial conservation
i) The museum users: the staff and the public
j) Communication and education
OBJECTIVE
This course aims to establish a basis of museum history, philosophy and practice on which students can build and advance. Most emphasis is given on the European system and management of museums, which students will come to know and will be able to criticize using the most recent “museological” and “museographical” parameters. Through the final group project students, will also gain a practical museum experience which will help them to better understand what really museum people do.

ORGANIZATION
The course consists of class lectures located at Villa La Pietra (top floor), lectures on site in Florentine museums and exhibitions, one field trip to Celle (Pistoia) and two mandatory evening lectures at Villa La Pietra (to choose from the ones indicated in the syllabus).

-Throughout the semester students are asked to undertake visits to as many museums they can. They will report their observations in their Museum Journal (C).

-Students will work as a group on a Final Museology Project (D) which will serve as a practical curatorial and educational exercise based on the material of the course.

REQUIREMENTS

A. ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (10%)
scribed

♠ Students are expected to attend all classes, site visits, mandatory lectures and field trip. Late arrivals are not tolerated. If you are late on-site we will not be able to leave a ticket for you at the ticket office.

♠ Absences and late arrivals will affect the final course grade (only 1 absence, this may include travel time with friends or family, can be justified without penalty). For any medical problem please inform immediately the Office of Academic Support and provide me with a written medical note.

♠ Please do not bring food in class and during our museum visits. Feel free to drink water, but please do not take out bottles when we are visiting a museum. Please, no telephone calls during class time. Computers can be used in class only for class related notes. When we are in class at VLP there will be a 10 min. break for coffee and restrooms.

♠ Bring your Museum Card and NYU ID with you during all site visits.

♠ I recommend bringing your camera during the site visits, but check with me before taking pictures.

♠ I suggest wearing comfortable shoes during site visits.

♠ All readings are designed to be most useful after the lecture day on which they are assigned. You must be ready to discuss and present them during the following class.

B. MIDTERM TEST: OCTOBER 20 (30%)
- Written test, with 10 questions related to the material of the first part of the course.
- Brief oral presentation in class of a work of art preserved in a Florentine museum, researching the meaning of the subject, the medium, its commission and provenance.

C. MUSEUM JOURNAL DUE: NOVEMBER 10 (30%) – Check with the professor when you choose the locations.

The journal must include notes from:
2 visits to Florentine museums, which we are not visiting with the class
1 visit to a museum in a major European city
1 visit to a temporary exhibition in Italy (including Florence)

Entries for the Museum Visits (5 pages):

1. Museum History: name, location, architect(s), date of opening, original use of building if not built to be a museum (half page)
2. Mission – if you find it on web or from what you can assess from your visit (1 paragraph)
3. Collection: describe the kind of collection(s) and indicate how they came together (1 page).
4. Display: Make a detailed graphic survey (drawing) of one room in the museum marking all the art objects, doors, windows, other structural elements or display devices. Indicate the visitors’ circulation. Comment on the display of the objects in relation to the visitors’ behaviour and feel free to make a few suggestions (drawing and 1 page of comments).
5. Object: chose 1 object and write a good label for it (including link with its original context). Indicate location of label next to the object and type of design (glass, plexi-glass, wood etc). Provide picture of object (1 page)
6. Education: plan an educational project that could help the museum to improve the quality of their service for the public, e.g. special tours for kids or adults, open lab, behind the scene, treasure hunt, a flyer etc (1 page).
7. Information: How well is the museum publicized? (website, signs in the street, other?). Recommendation on what would you do to increment its visitors, if needed (1 paragraph).

Entries for the Exhibition Visit (4 pages)

1. What does the exhibition want to demonstrate? Is the message clear? Is it connected to the museum?
2. What kind of display techniques and learning modes did the “museographer” and “museologist” choose to interpret the objects and present their thesis?
3. Is the exhibition flyer / brochure given with the ticket? If yes, does it represent well the exhibition? If no, how would you change it? Include all flyers in your Journal.
4. Ask to 2 visitors their impressions about the exhibit and record them on your journal.
5. What aspect of the exhibition would you change, if any?

D. Museology Group Project to present in class on Dec. 15 (30%) – to review with professor on Dec. 1

- The aim of this project is experiencing as a group the museum work (research & interpretation, loans, space planning, education, presentation of project) when planning for a different presentation of a section of the permanent collection or when creating a small exhibition, focused on a specific theme. The challenge is to develop and present the project in all its aspects and steps to a committee who will evaluate it in order to include in its programming.
- The project involves: meeting as a group and with the professor, visiting museums and other exhibition sites, planning and research; graphical work for the display presentation; creating text for labels and introduction panels; research and graphical work to develop and communicate the educational project; putting together a power point presentation to describe and present the project in class.
- The project will be presented:
a) As a portfolio, including:
- Poster size sheet of paper or cardboard to draw and plan the exhibition space
- Samples of labels (2) for objects and intro panel (1)
- Loan Request (1) and Facility Report
- Brochure for advertisement and/or special educational project.
- Written Paper: 8 pages (3 will be dedicated to the group work and 5 to your individual research and specific tasks’ description)

b) A power-point presentation to present the steps and scope of the project, including mission statement, to show the original museum space/room, to make references to other exhibitions, to show the proposed exhibition layout, the labels, introduction texts, works from other museums you are including in the exhibit, anything else you need to include to illustrate the project.

**Evaluation and Grading System**  * Credits for the course will be given only if all requirements are completed.

- 10% Attendance, participation and class assignments
- 30% Mid Term Exam
- 30% Museum Journal
- 30% Final Group Project

A = 100 - 94%,  A- = 93 - 90%,  B+ = 89 - 87%,  B = 86 - 83%,  B- = 82 - 80%,  
C+ = 79 - 77%,  C = 76 - 73%,  C- = 72 - 70%,  D = 69 - 60%,  F = 59 - 0%

**Required Books and Readings**

- **Selected readings**: Copies of the assigned readings will be available in the Art Collecting & Museology binder in the Library at Villa Ulivi. Some readings can also be found on line.

**Further References for this Course**

**Art Iconography and Technique**
- *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms*, New York, 1995

**Museum History, Management and Conservation**


- *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. by R. Greenberg, B. W. Ferguson, S. Nairne, Routledge, 2005

**COLLECTING, TASTE, ANGLO-AMERICANS IN FLORENCE**


**NYU Libraries’ databases and useful Search Engines:**

http://librarycatalog.nyu.florence.it/webif/user_nyu1/ (Villa Ulivi)
http://www.bobcat.nyu.edu/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?dscnt=0&vid=NYU&dstamp=1283354413486&fromLogin=true (NYU Bob Cats)
http://www.iris.firenze.it/ (art history inquiry in the Libraries in Florence)

**Bibliography and images for History of Art**

JSTOR; ICOM; RLG Cultural Materials


**Libraries in Florence**

The Harold Acton Library, The British Institute (Lungarno Lanfredini)

Biblioteca di Storia dell’Arte (via della Pergola, 56)
http://www.sba.unifi.it/biblio/umanistica/org/storiarte.htm

Biblioteca Umanistica (on line)
http://www.sba.unifi.it/biblio/umanistica/cataloghi.htm

Biblioteca delle Oblate (Via dell’Oriolo)
http://www.bibliotecadelleoblate.it/
SEPT. 8  Taste, collecting and Museums
What is the ‘artistic taste’? How would you define ‘the quality of an object’? Is collecting an art? - From the collector’s study to the public museum – What is the Museum role today?
Different kind of Museums (3 study cases: the Universal Survey Museum, the Territory & Regional Museum and the House-Museum)
Discussion and meanings of the terms: Museology, Museography, Curator, Conservator, Collection Manager, Registrar, Display, Exhibition, Gallery, Inventory, Catalogue
The Museum’s Mission and Management: Collect - Study – Preserve – Educate
The Museum and the Community – The Museum as ‘educator’

Readings: Museum Basics: pp. 4-16; 134-144; 206-209; The Cultures of Collecting: Introduction, pp. 1-6; J. Baudrillard, pp. 7-24 (Book in Villa Ulivi Library)
Binder 1 in Library: from Museum Studies: G. Bazin, 18-22; P. Findeln, pp. 23-50; C. Duncan and A. Wallach, pp. 51-59 (stop before The Louvre). (Book also available in the Library)

SEPT. 10  Looking at works of art in the museum context – The permanent collection from the Cathedral Complex: the Territory Museum
- Visit to the Piazza del Duomo and the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo.

Meeting Point: 9:00 – In front of the Duomo (central door).

Assignment for next week: Choose one work of art in this Museum and create with your own words a label to be placed next to it. Present small picture or sketch and text.


SEPT. 15  History of Art Collecting I
From the Antiquity to 16th century:
- The Greek Mouseion in Alexandria
- The Cathedral of Saint Denis and the Abbot Suger: the treasure of the Church
- The Wunderkammer
- Sisto IV and the Popes in Rome: the beginning of art legislation
- The Medici as Patrons of Art
11:15 – 11:45 Discussion in Sir Harold’s Salone at Villa La Pietra on the artistic taste and on assignments

Readings: The Cultures of Collecting: A. A. Shelton, pp.177-203 (Book in Villa Ulivi Library)
http://www.jstor.org/stable/27652548

Binder 2 in Library H. Taylor, 3-32; 55-72; Binder 3 in Library Haskell-Penny, pp. 3-15; 53-61.

**SEPT. 17**  
Field Trip to the Gori Collection in Celle (Pistoia) – Collecting today in Italy  
Meeting Point: On via Bolognese – time to be announced  
Readings: Catalogue of the Gori Collection in Celle (Book in Villa Ulivi Library)  

**SEPT. 22**  
Visit to Palazzo Vecchio  
Medici Collecting and Museum Education  
9:00 Salone dei Cinquecento and Appartamento degli Elementi  
10:00 Educational Department Itinerary: Percorsi Segreti  
10:30 Educational Department Itinerary: Percorsi Segreti  
(2 groups)  
Meeting Point: 8:50 - Piazza Signoria in front of the statue of the *Perseo* under the Loggia dei Lanzi.

*Museum Basics*, pp. 18-72.

**SEPT. 21**  
Evening Lecture at Villa La Pietra: The Harold Acton Lecture Series  
Mr. Mark Roberts *Harold Acton at Oxford*  
6:00-7:15 pm Salone Villa La Pietra  
*Reading for everybody: Memoirs of an Aesthete*, pp. 1-47 - binder 4

**SEPT. 28**  
Evening Lecture at Villa La Pietra: Janet Cox-Rearick: Bronzino Portraits of Women

**SEPT. 29**  
Display and Education: Visit to the Accademia Museum and the exhibition: *Virtù d’Amore*  
Permanent collection and temporary exhibition  
Meeting Point: 8:50 - In front of the Accademia (via Ricasoli 58-60)


**OCT. 6**  
The History of Art Collecting II (1700-1900)  
- The Age of Enlightenment: the interest in Antiquity and Science (The Belvedere and the Pio Clementino)  
- Napoleon and the beginning of Modern Loots (The Louvre and the British Museum)  
- Reinventing the past: the House Museums from John Soane to the Actons
Assignment: Paper on House Museum due by Oct. 20 (Villa La Pietra and the Actons, Stefano Bardini, Palazzo Davanzati, I Tatti; Rodolfo Siviero, Jacquemart André (Paris), Poldi Pezzoli (Milan); Bagatti Valsecchi (Milan), Isabella Gardner Museum (Boston)– 3 pages).

Binder 5 Haskell- Penny, chapters IX; XIV; Binder 1 in Library: from Museum Studies: C. Duncan and A. Wallach, pp.59-64. Binder 6 F. Baldry, Vivere Collezionando. Binder 7 Il Giardino delle Regine (Book also available in the Library)

Oct. 13 House Museums and Historic Properties
Visit to Villa La Pietra and the Acton Collection
History of the villa, the Acton Collection, Issues of conservation and preservation in the Garden and in the house (Dr. Nick Dakin-Elliot will guide us in the garden)

Meeting Point: 9:00 - Portineria at Villa La Pietra


Oct. 20 Mid term Exam
Written test with 10 questions on course material and oral presentation on work of art.

Oct. 27 Fall Break

Nov. 2 Evening Lecture at Villa La Pietra: The Harold Acton Lecture Series
Mr. Mark Roberts Harold Acton in China
6:00-7.15 pm Salone Villa La Pietra

Nov. 3 Museum Collection Management
Documentation, Interpretation, Display & Presentation
I. Study and Documentation system (record, visual documentation, data base, the registrar’s & curator’s tasks) II. The object record.
II. Interpretation techniques and installations for the display of the objects in the museum/exhibition space (showcases, light, panels, labels).
III. Orientation & atmosphere

Readings: Museum Basics, pp. 78-116; 144-162; 229-234; 229-234.

Nov. 10 Visit to the Uffizi
History of the Building and of the Collections
The Different displays through history
The “Tribuna” nel Cinquecento and its renovation today

Readings: http://www.uffizi.firenze.it/english/eventi/evento.asp?id=253

Museum Journal Due today by 6:00 – at Villa Ulivi

Meeting Point: - Piazza Signoria in front of the statue of the Perseo under the Loggia dei Lanzi.
**Nov. 17** Display and Education: Visit to Museo Marino Marini  
The Museum space and its collection  
Educational Itinerary with the Educational Department  

**Readings:** [http://www.museomarinomarini.it/home.php](http://www.museomarinomarini.it/home.php)  

**Meeting point:** 9:50 - In front of the museum in piazza San Pancrazio  

**Nov. 24** Visit to the Exhibition: *Bronzino: Pittore e Poeta alla corte dei Medici in Palazzo Strozzi*  

**Meeting point:** 9:00 – in front of the exhibition entrance in Palazzo Strozzi (piazza Strozzi)  

**Assignment for next week:** Exhibition Critique  

**Dec. 1**  
- Individual groups meet in class with professor Baldry to review Final Projects  
- Caring for museum collections: Preservation, Restoration and Conservation  
- Visit to the Textile Studio at Villa La Pietra (11.15 am).  

**Readings:** *Museum Basics*, pp.163-204.  

**Dec. 8**  
No class – Italian National Holiday  

**Dec. 15** Final Exam in class: written and oral presentation of the Group Museology Projects  
(about 20 minutes each). Students must be ready to answer to some questions related to  
the second part of the course.