

MUSEUM PRACTICES



Museums have been key institutions in the development of modern concepts of citizenship, collective identity, and public space for over two centuries. For decades, museum professionals, artists, community groups, visitors, and scholars have been asking critical questions of the museum as a contemporary institution: What are museums for? Who are they for? What belongs in them? What purposes do they serve? Is a museum meant to preserve tradition or to challenge it?

This course examines museum histories from the present moment, and explores the potential roles that museums might play in the future. We will speak with professionals in the field about how they do their jobs, and we will use research into the museums of the past to imagine what museums might be in the future. The course will take place in the classroom, in local museums, and with guest speakers on zoom. You will participate in a student-led group project, and lectures and discussions with museum professionals such as curators, publishers, administrators, preparators, installers, and educators.

Our goal is to develop a broad grasp of museum histories, operations, responsibilities and problems, with students gaining greater expertise in a specific field of museum work. While much of what we learn will be applicable to museums in general, our primary focus will be the art museum. We will meet each week to discuss readings and exhibitions, learn from professionals in the field, and work on creating our own museum.

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