CURE4408: Advanced Museum Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2025-26 Term 2)
Mondays, 2.30-5.15pm
YC Liang Hall (LHC), G03

Medium of Instruction: English

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This course while pegged as an 'advanced' museum studies, aims to read 'advanced' not so much as a 'higher level' compared to a 'basic' level. Rather, this course takes the premise of 'advanced' as how (else) to advance (ie. move forward) museum studies, and what are some of the existing efforts and thinking in this aspect of museum studies within Asia.

In other words, how (else) could we (re)think museums and their practices from its dominant Euro-American-centric histories, display logics and knowledge productions of 'culture', 'heritage' and 'art'? While a seemingly 'common-sense' tendency to counteract Western-centric histories and knowledges is to often focus on one's local contexts, this course attempts to respond to some of the above-mentioned questions by instead exploring scholars, creative intellectuals and practitioners in museum studies from the wider Asia, including South and Southeast Asia, as well as Western Asia (otherwise known as the 'Middle East' or the 'Arab world').

In so doing, this course attempts to (re)think museum studies and what museums are for. More specifically it does so negotiating with present-day concerns and phenomena which may continue to exist alongside lingering colonial logics and imaginaries. Some such issues and topics explored in this course include museum politics and affect of displays alongside the nation(al) and the regional; (re)thinking 'heritage', museums alongside technologies and disabilities, what could 'decolonising' museums mean for 'Asia', and what 'futures' do museums hold.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop critical and analytical perspectives towards the various aspects and types of museums, informed by both western and non-western discourses of museum studies
- Be familiar with non-western/wider Asian discourses, imaginaries and practices of museum studies
- Be able to articulate (even in part) what possible futures of museum/museum studies may look like

Assessment:

Class Attendance and Participation: 10%

You are expected to read the readings, and express your own thoughts and questions relevant to the readings. This would translate to your contribution during class discussions The questions I am looking for are not factual or general questions (eg. what is the history of a museum X, etc.) that can be quickly answered by searching online. Rather, the questions and thoughts should come from how you have understood the readings, what you may not still understand, or in relation to the main key ideas, points and argument of the readings.

If you have difficulties understanding the readings, you could use AI translation tools. The translation is often not perfect, but you may be able to get an initial and broad understanding of the article, and at least what the article is trying to say. However, please be prepared that you may need to go back and forth between reading the AI-translated Cantonese text and checking it again with the article in English.

Article presentation (15mins each group): 20%

After the add-drop period and starting 19 January, 2 groups of students would each present and discuss a case study, engaging with 1-2 key ideas in that week's readings and topic every week.

The case study could be of a museum, cultural site or an exhibition located in Asia. The case study presentation would need to demonstrate how and what are some connections/links between the readings and the case study; how the reading's key ideas/ concepts/argument have enabled a deeper analysis of the case study, and/or how the case study highlights new insights, strengths and/or limitations of the readings.

Short critical reflection (groupwork; 1000-1500 words): 30%

Choose and visit an exhibition (physical or online), museum or heritage space in Hong Kong, and conduct a critical group reflection and analysis on this, along with two topics and their specific readings' key ideas/concepts/theories/arguments covered in the course so far. Your critical reflection should not be a summary of the readings you have chosen to engage or a description of the exhibition/museum space. Rather, it should briefly state your understanding of the key ideas in your own words, and their links and relevance to the analysis of your chosen exhibition/museum space. This could also include how both the exhibition/museum space and readings' key ideas highlight one another's strengths and limitations, as well as new insights.

Please include proper citations and bibliography. Submission deadline is **6 March 2026 (Friday), 11.59pm/2359hrs** on Blackboard with Veriguide.

Final paper (groupwork; 3000 words) and presentation: 40%

Choose a museum exhibition or collection, or a museum or heritage space in Hong Kong/ Asia you would like to (re)imagine and (re)create. This final group project would include an analysis of an existing exhibition, collection, museum or heritage space and reasons to need a (re)imagination and (re)creation. The analysis and (re)creation should cover two to at most three topics/ideas from this course's readings, in relation to your museum exhibition or collection, or a museum or heritage space your choice. It should also include

at most three aspects of the museum exhibition or collection, or a museum or heritage space of your choice. This could include content such as curatorial texts, wall texts in the exhibition/collection and exhibition catalogs, how it's been described (eg. Through its own 'About' or 'mission statement' page, or (social) media; themes explored in the exhibition/collection, spatial arrangements, etc.

Your group's analysis may include questions such as, What were possible gaps that your group identified in relation to specific readings' key ideas and argument? How have the readings informed your groups' (re)imagination and/or (re)creation of this exhibition, collection, museum or heritage space? What is/are some imaginations of the 'future' of museums proposed in your final paper? Please include proper citation and bibliography.

Please submit a **proposal summary** of your final paper's topic on Blackboard by **13 March 2026 (Friday), 12 noon**. It could be written in short paragraphs or bullet points, but no longer than 1 A4 page. Your proposal summary should include the nature/object of your analysis (eg. Exhibition, collection, wall texts, museum or heritage space, etc.), the specific readings and key ideas you would be engaging with, as well as any preliminary thoughts, questions and difficulties. Submission deadline for your **final paper** is **17 April 2026 (Friday), 11.59pm/2359hrs** on Blackboard. Please include proper citations and Veriguide.

Academic Ethics

You are expected to abide by the university's principles and regulations on academic honesty. Please take some time to familiarise yourself with the information on the following webpage: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/

Violations such as plagiarised papers or multiple submissions to more than one course will not be tolerated in any form. These will be subject to disciplinary action. Remember that all words, phrases, or ideas taken from sources other than your own submitted assignment must be properly cited.

All written assignments must be accompanied by a VeriGuide receipt, a signed declaration acknowledging your awareness of and subscription to the university's policies and regulations on academic integrity. Written assignments submitted without a VeriGuide receipt will not be accepted and graded. For group work, all group members are required to sign on the Veriguide.

If you are in doubt about an assignment with a possible violation, please feel free to consult me.

Use of AI

This course takes **'Approach 2 – Use only with prior permission': Students are allowed to use AI tools in some scenarios or some learning activities and/or assessments but not in others.** This means I allow the use of AI tools for this course for translations of readings, or checking the grammar of your writing. However, please approach me beforehand to ask for **permission to the use of AI to create content in any of your written assignments.** You are also required to **declare it in your essay, and how AI has contributed to your content**. You should **keep a record of your AI sessions** (including screenshots of prompts and content created by the AI, as well as the time and date of these entries). You should also **cite the AI in your essay and bibliography.**

Course Schedule:

Week 1 (5 Jan): Introduction Lecture

Readings:

- Cai, Yunci. "A Manifesto for Museums in Asia." In *The Museum in Asia*. 1st ed. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2025, pp.1–18.
- Patrick D. Flores. *"Time to Unlearn": Urgency and Practical Intelligence in the Southeast Asian Museum. OnCurating: Contemporary Art Biennials-Our Hegemonic Machines in Times of Emergency*, Issue 46, June 2020, pp. 186-200.

Week 2 (12 Jan): Museums, the nation(al) and the regional

Readings:

- Ali Mozaffari. "Modernity and Identity: The National Museum of Iran." In *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed*, edited by Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson. 1st ed., Routledge 2007, pp. 87–104.
- Eric C. Thompson. "The World Beyond the Nation in Southeast Asian Museums." *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Volume 27, No. 1 (Apr, 2012), pp. 54-83.

Week 3 (19 Jan): What does/could 'decolonising' museums mean?

Readings:

- Desi Dwi Prianti and I. Wayan Suyadnya. "Decolonising Museum Practice in a Postcolonial Nation: Museum's Visual Order as the Work of Representation in Constructing Colonial Memory." *Open Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (Sep 22, 2022): 228–242.
- Savithri Preetha Nair. "Economic Logic Verses Enlightenment Rationality: Evolution of the Museum-Zoo-Garden Complex and the Modern Indian City, 1843-1900." In *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed*, edited by Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson, 1st ed., Routledge, 2007,pp. 61–71.

Week 4 (26 Jan): Museums and Politics of Representation

Readings

- Nav Haq. "The Invisible and the Visible Identity Politics and the Economy of Reproduction in Art." In *Decolonising Museums*, edited by Nick Aikens Başak Çaka Diana Franssen Nav Haq et al: L'Internationale, 2015, pp. 8-22.
- Sandra H. Dudley. "Unity in Diversity': Nuancing Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives, Museums and Representation in Myanmar and Beyond." In *The Museum in Asia*, edited by Cai Yunci. 1st ed., Routledge 2025, pp. 80–97.

Week 5 (2 Feb): The Everyday and the Social—Exploring Connections with Museums

Readings:

- Paritta Chalermpow Koanantakool. "Community-Based Museums in Thailand and their Indigenous Curatorial Practices." In *The Museum in Asia*, edited by Can Yunci. 1st ed., Routledge, 2025, pp. 129–142.

- Jordan Sand. "Chapter 4: Museums, Heritage, and Everyday Life." In *Tokyo Vernacular*. 1st ed. United States: University of California Press, 2013.

Week 6 (9 Feb): Museums and Heritage

*Visit to Sam Tang Uk Museum (to be confirmed)

Readings:

- Neel Kamal Chapagain. "Introduction: Contexts and Concerns in Asian Heritage Management." In *Asian Heritage Management: Contexts, Concerns, and Prospects*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2013, pp. 1–29.
- Lau, Chun Fat. "A Dialect Murders another Dialect: The Case of Hakka in Hong Kong." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2005, no. 173 (2005): 23–35.

Week 7 (16 Feb): No Classes (Chinese New Year Holiday)

Week 8 (23 Feb): Art Museums

Readings:

- C. J. Wee. W. -L. ""We Asians"? Modernity, Visual Art Exhibitions, and East Asia." *Boundary 2* 37, no. 1 (Mar 1, 2010): 91–126.
- Karen Exell. "Utopian Ideals, Unknowable Futures, and the Art Museum in the Arabian Peninsula." *Journal of Arabian Studies* 7, no. sup1 (Aug 7, 2017): 49–64.

Week 9 (2 Mar): No Classes (Reading Week)

*Midterm Assessment Submission due 6 March, 11.59pm/2359hrs.

Week 10 (9 Mar): Museums, Diversity, Inclusions: What do you mean, 'we'?

Readings:

- Stephanie Gibson and Sara Kindon. "The Mixing Room Project at Te Papa: Co-Creating the Museum with Refugee Background Youth in Aotearoa/New Zealand." *Tuhinga* 24, no. 24 (Jun 1, 2013): 65–83.
- Sarah Brophy and Janice Hladki. "Cripping the Museum: Disability, Pedagogy and Video Art." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 3 (Sep 1, 2014): 315–333.

Week 11 (16 Mar): Final Project Face-to-Face Consultations

*Final Project Proposal Submission due 13 March, 12 noon.

Week 12 (23 Mar): Museums, the Environment and Technologies

Readings:

- Peter Davis. "Chapter 15: Ecomuseums and Sustainability in Italy, Japan and China: Concept Adaptation through Implementation." In *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed*, edited by Simon Knell, Suzanne McLeod and Sheila Watson, Routledge, 2007, pp. 198–214.

- Natalie Grincheva. "Digital Heritage Imperialism: A History of the World in 100 Objects." In *Museum Diplomacy in the Digital Age*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2021, pp. 67–102.

Week 13 (30 Mar): Museums as Archives, Archives as Museums

*Visit to either Asia Art Archive or the Hong Kong Maritime Museum (to be confirmed)

Readings:
- Hal Foster. "The Archive without Museums." October Vol. 77 (Jan 1, 1996), pp. 97-119.
- Sandra Malenica. "Chapter 3: Archives and Museums in the Decontextualised Digital World." In *Sight as Site in the Digital Age: Art, the Museum and Representation*, edited by Tam Kwok-kan. Springer, 2023, pp. 45–64.

Week 14 (6 Apr): No Class (Day after Ching Ming Festival Holiday)

Week 15 (13 Apr): Final Project Group Presentations

*Final paper submission: 17 April, 11.59pm/2359 hrs.

Grading Rubric:

A (Exceptional):
The paper or project greatly exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented not only about the chosen example but also about the concepts used. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the concepts used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the concept and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organised. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

A- (Outstanding):
The paper or project exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the theory and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organised. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B+ (Very Good):
The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is coherently organised. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B (Good):
The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example could have been developed further. The paper or project displays a sufficient understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B- (More than Satisfactory):
The paper or project meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a sufficient understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is understandable. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

C+ (Satisfactory):
The paper or project meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a basic understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is understandable. The writing is slightly coherent. The chosen example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

C, C- (Fair):
The paper or project barely meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used are vaguely elaborated. The paper or project fails to display a sufficient understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is virtually understandable. The writing is incoherent. The chosen example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

D+, D (Pass):
The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this requirement. No additional insights are presented about the chosen example or the theory used on top of what was discussed in class. The language used to explain the theory and its application are almost incomprehensible. The writing is incoherent. The chosen example is irrelevant. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

F (Fail):
The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this requirement. The language and writing are poor. The chosen example is irrelevant. The theory used was not covered in class. The paper or project may have been submitted long past the deadline.