

Lakehead University | Department of Gender and Women's Studies
 WOME 3111 FDE | Dr. Miranda Niittynen
 Term: Fall 2021



Human Rights and the Museum

Term: Fall 2021
 Zoom (Synchronous) Course

Instructor: Dr. Miranda Niittynen
Email: mniitty1@lakeheadu.ca

Meeting Time:
 Pre-recorded Lectures Posted Tuesdays
 Online-class Discussion on Thursdays,
 8:30-10:00am

Office Hours: Virtual Office Hours,
 by appointment only

Course Description:

The contemporary museum is an educational and representational space born from a fraught and complicated past. Sixteenth-century *Wunderkammers* (cabinets of curiosities) were displays of objects accumulated by European travellers seen as 'worldly' and 'well-traveled' due to their imperial expeditions. These cabinets of stolen objects were preserved for encyclopedic purposes, becoming markers of privilege and high-class status for European men. Likewise, the natural history museum was informed by the school of *taxonomy* (classifications) from Swedish Botanist Carl Linnaeus' writings, which not only compartmentalized species and plants, but also produced fixed categories of gendered and racial difference and stereotypes. Anthropology museums were guilty for racist scientific experiments, the exploitation of live human exhibits, and the continual display of precious cultural objects yet to be repatriated. Anatomy museums continue to display preserved 'matter' to educate onlookers about the bodily 'pathology' of physiological 'differences.' What are we to do with all of this historical violence, exploitation, and controversy?

In the contemporary moment, museums remain in tension with human rights activism, as a number of decolonizing social justice movements have shed light on the insensitive (mis)representations of Blackness in museums such as the Whitney Museum in New York, US, or the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. In addition to the call to decolonize the oppressive roots of the historical museum, the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg, MB, is under review for workplace harassment and allegations of racism and 2SLGBTQ* censorship.

In this course, students will gain knowledge in – and definition of – international human rights discourse and will be given critical skills in recognizing the ways in which museums aid in educating and normalizing institutional oppression. Informed by the schools of feminist, queer, critical race, critical disability, and social justice studies, this course will closely analyze violent mistreatment and representations in museum spaces, simultaneously reflecting on, decolonizing, disrupting, and protesting against unequal power relations. Complimentary to activist movements that continue to protest for better and more responsible illustration of human diversity, we will also look at contemporary artists who fight against museum narratives of oppression, mass exploitation, and dehumanization. We will look to the ways in which museums, as systems and structures, are being decolonized and reclaimed by contemporary artists and activists. Artists and performers include Rachel Herrick, Meryl McMaster, Kent Monkman, Coco Fusco, Lisa Reihana, and Kim Anderson, to name only a few.

WOME 3111 Student Evaluation:

1. Attendance / Participation (Thursdays)	20%	ongoing
2. Online Posts (3x10%):	30%	Due Sundays
3. Final Project / Creative Project Proposal (1 page):	10%	Due September 28
4. Final Paper / Creative Project:	40%	November 23

Required Texts:

- All pdfs will be offered through the course website. For your organization, each reading is organized alphabetically by the author's last name.

Email Note:

- Please include our course code (**WOME 3111**) in the subject line of any and all email correspondence to avoid any confusion throughout the term

Note on Class Content:

This course is a study on human rights and the museum, where we will be given the opportunity to analyze museum exhibits, practices, and representations related to the topic of human rights. Subsidiary to these examples, we will look at a number of artists and activists who have creatively and critically responded to human rights abuses as they relate to the museum space.

Because the materials focus on a number of social and emotional issues, such as slavery, genocide, racism, extreme violence, postmortem bodily rights abuses, and other forms of oppression it is important to practice self-care, good health, and wellness *set by your own individual needs*. While some of the materials might be difficult to navigate, students will be given a number of critical outlets through activist inspired artists, performers, and curators to help reflect on the realities of the past and the pressing oppressions of the present.

If you are struggling this term, please seek out help through campus counselling. More information can be found at the following url:

Student Health and Counselling:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/wellness-recreation/student-health-and-wellness>

Course Evaluation and Assignments:

1. Seminar Attendance/Participation: 20% of overall course grade.

Students are expected to review all virtual classes, read class readings, screen video materials, and participate in class discussion. Without a valid reason, student's absences will be reflected on their final grade. Completing the readings and screening videos/lectures for each week are essential for participation and attendance.

Due Date: Participation/attendance will be **ongoing** throughout the course term.

2. Online Discussion Posts (3 posts total): 30% of overall course grade.

Students will be graded on their participation and engagement with course materials (readings, lectures, videos, art examples) in the virtual classroom via the submission of online discussion posts. Weekly posts are graded out of 10, making up 30% of students' final grade (from weeks 2-5; 7-13). All online posts are due on the Sunday (before 11:59pm) after the weekly seminar. Each week, students will respond to class materials. All posts should be under 800 words. In every post, students are required to demonstrate their engagement with the weekly readings and course materials and are encouraged to share other materials including art examples, news articles, blog posts, and audio/visual material such as films and YouTube videos to the online classroom. Posts should not simply summarize but pose questions and showcase critical arguments. You can support your argument with examples or (short) passages from the course readings or by pulling in outside research and examples from scholarly sources. Posts should be comprehensible, edited before posting, and should be written within the allotted word limits. Style, grammar, and punctuation should be considered.

ALL POSTS WILL BE SUBMITTED ON D2L UNDER 'DISCUSSIONS'

Due Date: Online Posts are due **Sundays before midnight after class** on the D2L forum.

Note: Assignment guidelines and rubrics will be posted on D2L.

***Remember: You are only required to complete **three** online posts – any posts exceeding the three requirement will not be graded. The decision is yours of what three topics you will post on throughout the course.*

3. Final Paper / Creative Project Proposal: 10% of overall course grade.

Each student will write a research paper or produce an creative project on the topic of their choice, as it relates to the topic of human rights and/or museums. Proposals will be **1 page**, excluding preliminary bibliographic research. The proposal should form the preliminary "skeleton" for your research essay / creative project.

Research Paper Proposal (Option A): will include each student's introductory statement, short description of the chosen topic, your research question, preliminary thesis statement, and the key points you intend to use to prove your argument/analysis (you may also include questions that you are still grappling with as you continue your research).

Creative Project Proposal (Option B): will include each student's introductory statement, short description of the creative project idea, some background research on what you are addressing

through this project, preliminary insights, and any anticipated roadblocks / or areas you are still grappling with as you layout the project.

Citation style: you can use the following style: *MLA*

ALL ESSAY / PROJECT PROPOSALS WILL BE EMAILED TO ME IN DOCX FORMATTING

Please send proposals with document title: Last Name, First Initial – Proposal (ex., Niittynen, M – Proposal)

Due Date: Paper / Project Proposals are due **September 28** before 12:00am submitted by email.

4. Final Essay/Creative Project: 40% of overall course grade.

Students are given two options for their final assignment. **Option A:** write a final research paper on a topic, museum, exhibit, or theme of your choice related to the topic of human rights and/or museums; **Option B:** create an artistic project that incorporates or responds to a topic or issue as it relates to human rights and/or museums

Option A: Argumentative Research Paper (12-13 pages) 40%:

Each Argumentative Research Paper should be 12-13 pages in length, and should critically analyze a topic, museum, exhibit, or theme of your choice related to the topics of human rights and/or museums. Research papers must include two course readings/concepts, as well any relevant secondary research materials.

Option B: Creative Project and Short Paper (4-5 pages) 40%:

Come up with a creative / activist project that addresses a human rights and the museum issue and speaks to the politics of representation and institutional power.

Project / Art piece 10%:

Example ideas:

Stage a small scale museum installation; create a visual art piece; create a sculpture or painting; create a photography project; create an activist project and stage it; create a short comic strip; write a short scene for a musical; write a short act for a play; create a short film; write a short story; choreograph a dance and perform it / tape it; create a performance piece; write a song and perform it/tape it. *The limit to options are endless.*

Note: Keep all projects manageable to be completed within the course term, as there is also a written component to the project.

Written Component for Creative Project (4-5 pages) 30%:

Each creative project submission should include a short written component (4-5 pages). Written components must include two course readings/concepts. The short paper is each student's opportunity to explain the ways in which their creative project fits in the themes of the course. Each student will be asked to critically reflect on their art piece and discuss how it relates to the course themes.

Creative Projects will be photographed and emailed alongside the written assignment

Reminders

- Put your Name on your paper/project
- Include a Paper/Project Title
- Times New Roman font; pt. 12 size font
- Double-spaced
- Page numbers
- Be sure to properly cite IN-TEXT the sources you are using throughout
- Include a formal bibliography
- **Citation style:** you can use the following style: *MLA*

Due Date: Final Research Papers / Creative Projects are due **November 23** before 12:00am submitted by email.

ALL FINAL PAPER / PROJECs WILL BE EMAILED TO ME IN DOCX FORMATTING

Please send final papers/projects with document title: Last Name, First Initial – Essay / Project (ex., Niittynen, M – Final Paper)

Reading Schedule

W1|Sept 9: Introduction: Human Rights and the Museum

*Introduction to the course
Syllabus*

W2|Sept 14/16: History of the Museum

Readings:

- Alice Procter – “Introduction,” *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in our Museums*
- Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander – “The Art Museum”; “Natural History and Anthropology Museum”

Art/Video Clips:

- *Why do we have Museums?*
- *The Myth of Race, Debunked in 3 Minutes*
- *Victorian Pseudosciences: Brain Personality Maps*
- *Crania Americana: History of Scientific Racism*
- *The Problem With Museums*

W3 | Sept 21/23: The Order of Things: Natural History Museums

Readings:

- Anthony Anemone – “The Monsters of Peter the Great: The Culture of the St. Petersburg

- Kunstkamera in the Eighteenth Century”
- Stephen Asma – excerpts from *Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums*
 - Amy K. Levin – “Straight Talk: Evolution Exhibits and the Reproduction of Heterosexuality”

Art/Video Clips:

- MOTHA – “Speculative Futures and Histories: A Talk by Chris E. Vargas”
- Museum of Trans Hirstory and Art
- *Are there Homosexual Animals?*
- *Are there Transgender Animals?*

W4|Sept 28/30: Controversial Museums / Museum Controversies

Readings:

- Lara Atkin – “Looking at the Other/Seeing the Self: Embodied Performance and Encounter in Brett Bailey’s Exhibit B and Nineteenth-Century Ethnographic Displays”
- Vicky Van Bockhaven – “Decolonising the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium’s Second Museum Age”
- Stephanie Eckardt – “The Whitney Museum’s Latest Controversy Might Be Its Messiest Yet”
- Catherine Porter and Ian Austen – “‘Racism is Pervasive and Systemic’ at Canada’s Museum of Human Rights, Report Says”

Art/Video Clips:

- *King Leopold II and the Congo Free State (1885-1908)* [***Content Warning*** The history of violence in the Congo under Belgian King Leopold II is extreme]
- *Why We Need to Decolonize The Brooklyn Museum*
- Brett Bailey – *Exhibit B* (2010-2016)
- Brett Bailey – *Exhibit B* (Video Content)
- *Exhibit B: Art that Shook Black Britain*

**Proposals are Due Tuesday
September 28, before 11:59pm**

W5|Oct 5/7: Reclaiming / Rethinking the Contact Narrative

Readings:

- Anne Folke Henningsen – “Ethnographic Mannequins”
- Diana Looser – “Viewing Time and the Other: Visualizing Cross-Cultural and Trans-Temporal Encounters in Lisa Reihana’s *In Pursuit of Venus [infected]*”
- Vivienne Webb – “Re-animating Encounter”

Art/Video Clips:

- Lisa Reihana – *In Pursuit of Venus [infected]*
- Kent Monkman – *The Casualties of Modernity*
- Meryl McMaster – *Ancestral*

W6|Oct 12/14:**Reading Week**

Rest and Relax ☺

W7|Oct 19/21:**Objectifying Culture: Human Zoos and Living Exhibits**

Readings:

- Warren Cariou – “The Exhibited Body: The Nineteenth-Century Human Zoo”
- Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Gilles Boëtsch, Éric Deroo, and Sandrine Lemaire – “Human Zoos: The Greatest Exotic Shows in the West”
- Coco Fusco – “The Other History of Intercultural Performance”

Art/Video Clips:

- Dr. David Pilgrim – *The New Jim Crow Museum* [***Content Warning*** This museum contains objects, imagery, and music related to Jim Crow violence in the American South]
- Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña – *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*

W8|Oct 26/28**Space and Body: Anatomy Museums**

Readings:

- Anna Kérchy and Andrea Zittlau – “Introduction,” *Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Freak Shows and ‘Enfreakment’*
- Richard Sandell and Jocelyn Dodd – “Activist Practice”
- Tom Shakespeare – Exhibit: Re-Imagining Disability”
- Stephanie Snider – “An Obeast Walks into a Museum: The Politics of Fat Oppression, Performing the Other, and Museum Display in Rachel Herrick’s Museum for Obeast Conversation Studies”

Art/Video Clips:

- *Developing Disabled Access in Galleries and Museums*
- The Hunterian Museum (England and Scotland)
- Decolonizing the Hunterian Museum
- Developing Disabled Access in Galleries and Museums
- Virtual Museum of Disability
- Kelly Jean Drinkwater – “Enough with the Fear of Fat” TedX Talk
- Rachel Herrick – *Museum for Obeast Conservation Studies* (2013)

W9|Nov 2/4:**Feminist Interventions in Cultural Writing**

Readings:

- Paul Basu and Sharon Macdonald – “Experiment in Exhibition, Ethnography, Art, and Science”
- Lila Abu-Lughod – “Writing Against Culture”
- Judith Stacey – “Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?”

Art/Video Clips:

- *What is Ethnography?*
- *Babakiueria* (1986)
- *Trinh T. Minh-ha Films*
- Trinh T. Minh-ha – *Forgetting Vietnam*
- Trinh T. Minh-ha – *Reassemblage*

W10|Nov 9/11: Taxidermic Bodies on Display

Readings:

- Miranda Niittynen – “Interspecies Blendings and Resurrections: Material Histories of Disability and Race in Taxidermy Art”
- Giovanni Aloï – Taxidermy: Subjugated Wilderness”

Art/Video Clips:

- The Art of Taxidermy
- *Zero Patience*, miscellaneous clips (1993)
- Carnegie Museum of Natural History Exhibit, *Lion Attacking a Dromedary*
- Miscellaneous Rogue Taxidermy Art
- Sarina Brewer, Rogue Taxidermy Sculptor
- Robert Marbury and Katie Innamorato interview

W11|Nov 16/18: Repatriation and Postmortem Bodily Rights

Readings:

- Norman Denzin – “You Can Call Me Ishi”
- Neil Parsons and Alinah Kelo Segobye – “Missing Persons and Stolen Bodies: The Repatriation”
- Mark Quinn – “Beothuk Remains Returned to Newfoundland After 191 Years in Scotland”
- Connie Rapoo – “‘Just Give us the Bones!’: Theatres of African Diasporic Returns”
- The Lancet – “Bodies Revealed, But Whose?”

Art/Video Clips:

- Body Worlds: The Art of Plastination
- *Body Worlds: Animals Inside Out*
- Bodies Revealed Controversy
- *The Extermination of the Yahi Peoples*
- James Luna – *Ishi: The Performance Archives*
- *The Tragic Life of Sara Baartman*
- *Sara Baartman Exhibition Allows Space for Discourse*

W12|Nov 23/25: Dark Tourism and Ethical Debates

Readings:

- Jane Brown – “Dark Tourism Shops: Selling ‘Dark’ and ‘Difficult’ Products”
- J. John Lennon and Malcolm Foley – “Interpretation of the Unimaginable: The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., and ‘Dark Tourism’”
- Emma Willis – “Notes for the Traveller: Introduction to the Journey Ahead”

Art/Videos Clips:

- *Dark Tourism* (Netflix), Episode 2
- *The Rise of Dark Tourism*
- *Fast Track Episode: Dark Tourism* (first 10 minutes)
- *How to do Dark Tourism 'Respectfully'*

**Final Papers/Projects are Due
Tuesday November 23, before
11:59pm**

W13|Nov 30/Dec 2: Decolonizing Public Monuments*Readings:*

- Jen Chung – “Controversial Theodore Roosevelt Statue will be Removed from the American Museum of Natural History’s Front Step”
- Lisa Perhamus and Clarence Joldersma – “What Might Sustain Activism of this Moment? Dismantling White Supremacy, One Monument at a Time”
- Ten-Hereng Lai – “Political Vandalism as Counter-Speech: A Defense of Defacing and Destroying Tainted Monuments”

Art/Video Clips:

- *The Meaning of a Monument*
- *Women’s Equality Monument Project*
- Kim Anderson, Lianne Leddy, Brittany Luby – *Kika’ige Historical Society*
- *Removal of King Leopold II Monument*
- *Teddy Bear Patriarchy: A Conversation with Donna Haraway*

Course Policies:

Active Online Participation/Zoom Attendance: Students are expected attend all classes, read all readings and screen/view artistic/video examples before classroom discussion. Expectation is that students will critically engage with all assigned course materials before scheduled class date.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to know Lakehead University’s policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Lakehead University’s policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the following url: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/provost-vice-president-academic/academic-integrity-plans-policies/academic-dishonesty-regulations>

Policy on Missed/Late Assignments: Students are required to submit all assignments on the assigned due date. If accommodations are needed for an assignment, students should make arrangements with the instructor ahead of time otherwise late assignments will be penalized 2% for each day (including weekends) that the assignment is late.

- Late work will not be accepted after two weeks from the due date unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances.

- Arrangements can be made for accessibility needs regarding due dates. Please make sure to sort out arrangements with the instructor prior to the due date

Email Etiquette:

All correspondence should be polite, respectful, and professional. Email inquiries must include:

- a salutation (i.e. “hello”, “dear”, “To”, etc.) and **the course code WOME 3111**
- a detailed question, or polite request
- a signature (i.e. your name). Emails that do not follow this format will be discarded.
- *Before* you email a question, be sure to read the course syllabus to see if you can find the answer there.
- If you have to discuss an in-depth issue, please email the instructor and make an appointment during office hours or request a meeting time that works for both you and the instructor.

Every effort will be made to respond to emails within 48 hours (excluding weekends). If you have not received a response after 48 hours, please send a polite reminder as sometimes emails can get lost in the shuffle.

Copyright

© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., lectures, audio lecture, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

As the university policy stipulates:

“In the course *Human Rights and the Museum, WOME 3111 FDE*, in the context of remote instruction and participation, video, and audio recordings of class activities will be made to ensure students' and instructors' easy and comprehensive access to those activities. The recordings are confidential and are intended only for the use of the course students and instructors. They may otherwise not be used or disclosed. During recording, to protect others' privacy, each student should ensure that no one else is present in the location where they are being recorded without that non-student's consent. The recordings are made under the authority of sections 3 and 14 of *The Lakehead University Act, 1965*. Questions about the collection of the images and sounds in the recordings may be directed to Dr. Elizabeth Birmingham the Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities, BB 1072D, Lakehead University Campus, (807) 343-8167.”

Submitting Assignments:

All assignments that are submitted by email must include the students name and be in docx formatting (Microsoft word). Please send essays with document title: Last Name, First Initial – Assignment Name (ex., Niittynen, M – Final Project).

Lakehead University Resources:

Lakehead University offers a number of resources for students who need additional accessibility and resources for their individual learning. “Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities and/or medical conditions to ensure they

have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible.” For more information on these services contact Student Accessibility Services.

Student Accessibility Services:

<http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

Office: SC0003

Tel., 343-8047

Email: sas@lakeheadu.ca

Other LU Resources:

Student Success Centre:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-success-centre>

Academic Support Zone / Writing Tutors:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/academic-success/student-success-centre/academic-support-zone>

Tutoring and Peer Assistant Learning:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/academic-success/student-success-centre/academic-support-zone/>

Student Health and Counselling:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/wellness-recreation/student-health-and-wellness>

Aboriginal Cultural and Support Services:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/tb/aboriginal-services>

Pride Central:

<http://pride.lusu.ca/>

Gender Equity Centre:

<http://gic.lusu.ca/>