Museums and Cultural Representation in Quebec

GSGS 2559 (3 credits)
January 3 – 16, 2016

Instructor: Richard Handler, rh3y@virginia.edu, 197 Nau Hall

Overview
UVA’s Kluge-Ruhe Collection of Aboriginal Art is making a loan of a considerable number of works to the Quebec City Musée de la civilization; these works will be on display at the museum during J-term 2016. Our course is timed to take advantage of this remarkable moment of “UVA in Quebec.”

The instructor carried out field work in Quebec on the politics of cultural representation three decades ago (1975-84). Quebec is a francophone society in North America where for the past 200 years there has been a lively (and at times dramatic) discourse and politics concerning what today we would call multiculturalism. The Kluge-Ruhe loan gives us an opportunity to compare how the Musée de la civilization depicts Australian aboriginals and First Nations peoples in Quebec; and both to other cultural communities in Quebec (and Canada). More generally, we will visit a selection of museums in Montreal and Quebec City to examine the politics of cultural representation, not only in history and ethnography museums, but in art museums and other types that are open to us. We will arrange talks with curators and/or museum professionals in as many of the museums as possible, to learn the objectives and obstacles that museum insiders face in representing cultures and cultural identities to audiences in Quebec.

Most mornings, we will meet in a classroom to discuss course readings. Afternoons, we will visit museums. We will schedule lunches together on working days, but students will have some free time in the evenings and on weekends.
Schedule of readings and museum visits:

Pre-departure session (November or December 2015), to orient students to the key ideas of the course.

Readings:


Day 1 (Montreal)

Readings:


Museum visit: Getting to know Montreal: guided tour of city

Day 2 (Montreal)

Readings:


Museum visit: McCord Museum

Day 3 (Montreal)


Museum visit: Musée des Beaux Artes
Day 4 (Montreal)

Reading:


Museum visit: Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal

Day 5 (Montreal)

Museum visits: Pointe-a-Callière

Weekend: Free time in Montreal, travel to Quebec City on Sunday

Day 6 (Quebec City)

Readings:


Museum visit: Musée de la civilisation

Day 7 (Quebec City)


Museum visit: Musée national des beaux arts du Québec

Day 8 (Quebec City environs)

Tourist sites: L’île d’orléans and Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré

Day 9, morning (Quebec City)

Free time in Quebec City

Afternoon (return to Montreal)
Assignments and grading:

1. Four-page paper in response to questions to be posed about the first readings (of the pre-departure session); due at the start of class session on Day 1. [15 percent of final grade]

2. Attendance to all class sessions and on-site visits is mandatory and it is recorded. Students are expected to adhere closely to the schedule fixed in the syllabus. It is the students’ responsibility to be punctual (delays are not acceptable). Failure to attend even a single session will drastically affect the grade for participation. In the unlikely event of illness, students should notify the professors immediately, certainly before the scheduled meeting time for the day. [35 percent of final grade]

3. Four-page paper commenting on any museum visited during the first week (Days 1-5), and incorporating insights from at least one of the course readings of that week; due on Day 6 at noon. [25 percent]

4. Four-page paper commenting on any museum visited during the second week (Days 6-10), and incorporating insights from at least one of the course readings of the second week; due Jan. 15, 5 PM. [25 percent]