

**Collecting Culture**  
**FSP 121-04**  
**Fall 2009**  
**Thursdays, 5:30pm-8:20pm**

Professor: Sarah Cunningham

Email: [cunningh@tcnj.edu](mailto:cunningh@tcnj.edu)

Office Hours: by appointment

Office Phone: 609-771-2633

Office: Holman Hall 310 (inside of 308)

*Note: I'm on campus every day, so it's easy to schedule a time to see me.*

**Summary:**

This seminar will explore the practice and theory of collecting from both the personal and institutional perspectives. Why are so many people compelled to collect? How does the individual desire to own and catalog objects relate to museum practice? How were the methodologies that determine museum holdings established? Through fiction, autobiography, critical theory, and museum field trips we will study collections ranging from personal ephemera to contemporary art and everything in between.

**Weekly Schedule:**

*Note: Subject to change, announcements will be made in class and/or by email.*

Week 1: August 27

In-class: Review of Syllabus

In-class: Pogrebin, pp. 1, 21

Week 2: September 3

In-class: Sign up for Group Discussion Leadership

Discuss Paper #1 Assignment

Reading due: Pearce, 89-117

Baudrillard (in Elsner), 7-24

**September 7: Labor Day**

**September 8: Monday Schedule**

**September 9: Opening Reception for Family: An Exhibition by the TCNJ Art Faculty,  
5-7pm, TCNJ Art Gallery, 111 Holman Hall**

Week 3: September 10

Reading Due: TBD/Oral History Methodology

In class: Begin Oral History CEL Project

Week 4: September 17

Project Due: First Draft Paper #1

Reading Due: Blom, 75-136

Stewart (in Elsner), 204-223

Week 5: September 24

Reading Due: Weschler

Week 6: October 1

Project Due: Final Draft Paper #1  
Discuss Paper #2 Assignment  
Reading Due: Muensterberger, 1-70  
Forrester (in Elsner), 224-251

**October 6: Peter Balakian Poetry Reading, 4pm (tentative), Business Building Lounge**

**October 7: Community Learning Day/Peter Balakian Lecture, 12pm, Kendall Hall**

Week 7: October 8

Reading Due: Belk, 1-21  
Clifford (in Daring), 49-73

**October 12-13: Fall Break**

**October 14: Renaissance Families: Holy and Otherwise, Art History Lecture by Prof. Hetty Joyce, 5pm, Library Auditorium**

Week 8: October 15

Project Due: First Draft Paper #2  
Reading Due: Stewart, 132-169  
Benjamin, 59-67  
Karp, 11-31, 315-329

Week 9: October 22

Reading Due: King

**October 28: Distortions: Contemporary Media Art from Mexico Opening Reception, 5-7pm**

Week 10: October 29

NO CLASS: Museum Fieldtrip and extra CEL time instead (dates TBA)

Week 11: November 5

Project Due: Final Draft Paper #2  
Discuss FINAL paper assignment  
Readings Due: Corrin (in Carbonell), 381-402  
McShine (in Carbonell), 506-520  
Cardinal (in Elsner), 68-96

Week 12: November 12

Project Due: Collage  
Progress Screening of Oral History/CEL Project

Readings Due: She, 211-225  
Chow, 286-304

Week 13: November 19

Project Due: First Draft FINAL Paper

Readings Due: Su, 684-712

Byatt, Chapters 1-13

**November 25-29: Thanksgiving Break**

Week 14: December 3

Project Due: Oral History/CEL video + Write Up

Reading Due: Byatt, Chapters 14-Postscript 1868

Week 15: Final papers due on date as posted in SOCS

\*\* Also, Museum Field Trip and additional CEL days as scheduled\*\*

**REQUIRED READING:**

*Note: Subject to change, others as assigned, announcements will be made in class and/or by email.*

Belk, Russell W., *Collecting in a Consumer Society*, London & New York: Routledge, 1995

- Chapter 1: The Rise of Consumer Society, pp. 1-21

Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968

- Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting, pp. 59-67

Blom, Philipp, *To Have and to Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting*, Woodstock & New York: Overlook Press, 2002

- Part II: A Complete History of Butterflies, pp. 75-136

Byatt, A.S., *Possession*, New York: Vintage Books, 1991

Carbonell, Bettina Messias, Ed., *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, Cornwall, UK: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2004

- Chapter 38: Mining the Museum: Artists Look at Museums, Museums Look at Themselves by Lisa G. Corrin, pp. 381-402
- Chapter 49: From The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect Introduction by Kyanston McShine, pp. 506-520

Chow, Rey, "Fateful Attachments: On Collecting, Fidelity, and Lao She," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Things (Autumn, 2001), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp.286-304

During, Simon, Ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993

- On Collecting Art and Culture by James Clifford, pp. 49-73.

Elsner, John and Roger Cardinal, Eds., *The Cultures of Collecting*, London: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 1997

- Chapter 1: The System of Collecting by Jean Baudrillard, pp. 7-24
- Chapter 4: Collecting and Collage Making: The Case of Kurt Schwitters by Roger Cardinal, pp. 68-96
- Chapter 10: Death and Life, in that order, in the Works of Charles Wilson Peale by Susan Stewart, pp. 204-223
- Chapter 11: Freud and Collecting by John Forrester, pp. 224-251

King, William Davies, *Collections of Nothing*, Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2008

Karp, Marilyn Gelfman, *In Flagrate Collecto (caught in the act of collecting)*, New York: Abrams, 2006

- Chapter 1: The Act of Collecting, pp. 11-19
- Chapter 2: The Object's Voice, pp. 20-31
- Chapter 20: Lists, Mental Collections and Deaccessioning, pp. 315-329

Muensterberger, Werner, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994

- Part I: Preludes to Collecting, pp. 1-48
- Part II: Magic Objects, pp. 49-70

Pearce, Susan M., *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992

- Chapter 5: Museums: the Intellectual Rationale, pp. 89-117

Pogrebin, Robin, "And Now, an Exhibition from our Sponsor," Arts & Leisure, *The New York Times*, August 23, 2009, pp. 1, 21

She, Lao, *Blades of Grass: The Stories of Lao She*, translated by William A. Lyell and Sarah Wei-ming Chen, Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1999

- Attachment, pp. 211-225

Stewart, Susan, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 2007

- Chapter 5: Objects of Desire, pp. 132-169

Su, John S., "Fantasies of Re(Collection): Collecting and Imagination in A.S. Byatt's 'Possession,'" *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Winter 2004), Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, pp. 684-712.

Weschler, Lawrence, *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and Other Marvels of Jurassic Technology*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996

**Grading:**

Final grades will be based on performance in the following areas:

Weekly Blog Posts (150+ words/week) -5% of final grade **DUE: Wed @ 12 midnight before class**

Museum Field Trip Write-Up (600-900 words) – 5% of final grade **DUE: 1 week after field trip TBD**

Class Participation – 10% of final grade

Group Discussion Leadership – 10% of final grade **DUE: as assigned Weeks 4-12 (sign up on Sept. 3)**

Collage – 5% of final grade **DUE: Nov. 12**

1<sup>st</sup> Paper: Museum/ Collection (1500 words) – 15% of final grade **DUE: Oct. 1 (draft due Sept. 17)**

2<sup>nd</sup> Paper: Personal Collection (1500 words) – 15% of final grade **DUE: Nov 5 (draft due October 15)**

Oral History/Community Engaged Learning Project (video + 900 words) – 15% of final grade **DUE: Dec. 3 (progress screening on Nov. 12)**

Final Paper: Possession (1500 words) – 20% of final grade **DUE: Final Date/Time as per SOCS (draft due Nov. 19)**

### **Weekly Blog Posts:**

By midnight on the Wednesday before a reading is due, you must post a 150+ posting on the class SOCS blog. You can start a conversation by responding to a reading or class discussion or continue a discussion started by me or one of your peers. These responses can be casual, but should be coherent and courteous. As with class participation, to receive an “A” in this area of performance, students must demonstrate an ability to incorporate knowledge from the required readings, lectures and research.

### **Museum Fieldtrip:**

Date/location TBD. Reflection on museum collection due 1 week after fieldtrip. If you are unable to attend class fieldtrip, you may arrange to visit the museum on your own.

### **Class Participation:**

Students must not only speak in class and engage in small group work during the class sessions but they must also demonstrate an ability to incorporate knowledge from the required readings, lectures, and research. Furthermore, if a student misses more than three classes, he or she will leave serious gaps in his or her record of participation. This is grounds for failure.

### **Group Discussion Leadership:**

In teams of 2 students, you will be responsible for leading the group discussion of the weekly reading material. Each team will prepare a presentation. You may use visual aids, hand-outs, or other materials and you should prepare discussion questions for your classmates. If you want to add an interactive activity for the class, you may. Your team must meet with me the week before your presentation to discuss your plan.

### **Collage:**

Create a collage out of a collection of found materials.

### **Oral History/Community Engaged Learning (CEL) Project:**

Working with the Bonner Center, the Hedgepeth-Williams Jr. High School students and faculty, and members of the Hedgepeth and Williams families, you will create a series of oral history videos and/or posters.

**Papers:**

There will be three (3) papers of 1500 words each (approx. 5 pages depending on font type and size). The papers are due uploaded to SOCS by 5pm on the day assigned. No need to hand in a paper copy. Use MLA formatting for “Works Cited” lists and in-text citations. All papers must include print, as well as electronic sources and electronic sources must be from reputable and vetted sites (Note: Wikipedia is not vetted, but can help direct you to vetted material). You should place the following information in the upper, left side of the first page: Sarah Cunningham, Collecting Culture, FSP121-04, your name, and date. Below this, centered on the page, should be the title of your paper. All papers must include your own interpretation of your research and not be merely a reporting of facts and be the original written work of the submitting student.

**Grading Rubric for Papers:**

See attached

**Helpful website for formatting “Works Cited” lists and in-text citations:**

<http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/citation/mla/#intext>

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

If you honor religious observances that conflict with the class schedule, please contact me at the beginning of the semester.

If you have extracurricular activities (e.g., sports or theater) that conflict with the class schedule, please contact me at the beginning of the semester.

If you have diagnosed learning-needs that I should know about, please contact me at the beginning of the semester.

If medical or personal problems effect your performance, please contact me as soon as possible. An excused absence will be give for legitimate situations and if you provide documentation of the problem.