History of Collecting
Dr. Bonnie Effros
EUH 4930, W 6-8 (12:50-3:50)
Flint 113
(Spring 2011)
Office: Walker 200 Tel: 352-392-0796 Office Hours: Weds 10:00-12:00
and by appointment.
Email: beffros@ufl.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES
The desire to collect has been a part of human experience from the earliest of times. In the case of prehistoric hunter-gatherers, the collection and barter of foodstuffs and other necessities made human existence more tenable since they enabled communities to overcome shortages caused by natural or human disasters. Likewise, in more recent times, collecting has remained a constant, although its manifestations are more complex due to an overabundance of material culture, and in part, more esoteric in response to social change. Nonetheless, the collection of objects of many sort are essential to the creation of habitus, Pierre Bordieu’s concept of the elements of social space that contribute to identity. Also implicit to the rite of collecting is its implication of exclusivity, whether expressed in terms of access to wealth, healing or knowledge, which in turn may affect social status, power, and identity. In general, the ability of individuals or groups to amass goods defines their relationship to the other members of the collectivity.

The purpose of this course will be to assess in a very broad sense the human propensity to collect and arrange artifacts of various types from the medieval period onward. (This is not to say that collecting did not occur earlier, but we will not formally address earlier periods in our readings.) This practice, whether or not in each instance a manifestation of a conscious or clearly defined process, has traditionally played a variety of social and political functions. In the Middle Ages, the hoarding of specific goods such as massive vessels of silver and gold, for instance, served to demonstrate the power of a particular clan or social group in controlling a limited resource. The ability to give such objects away again was thereby used to create networks of patronage and dependence among kings and warriors. The way in which collected artifacts were represented also shaped the self-perception of the members of a community. For instance, the saints’ relics collected by a particular church contributed to the identity of the inhabitants in the region in which those relics were located, since the saint functioned as patron and protector.

In the early modern era, the retrieval, collection and display of various objects was gradually systematized through antiquarian developments followed by the birth of museums and the rise of archaeology. The artifacts discovered by archaeological exploration and displayed in the context of museums played a central role in the formation of national or ethnic identity and pride from the early modern period forward. In American examples closer to home, one need only think of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Colonial Williamsburg or the Smithsonian to see the impact that such collections may have on a population’s understanding of its shared past and heritage. While these museums and monuments have a very important role in education, the implicit
ability to manipulate such material goods means that their ultimate representation and interpretation may serve a variety of less objective or one-sided purposes.

In the course of the semester, we will therefore assess the significant power yielded by collecting, both formal and informal, and the way that it has shaped a multitude of local and national experiences. Through the discussion of these phenomena in a variety of contexts, we will seek to construct a historical-anthropological methodology by which we may better understand the implications of the collection and display of selected artifacts. The reading load for this course is relatively intense. It is advised strongly that students keep current with the readings so that they can discuss them critically in class. Time will also be devoted towards developing better composition and research skills, since the formulation, defense and presentation of an argument is critical to the mastery of historical analysis. Attendance is crucial to success in this course.

5 January General Introduction to the Course

12 January The Symbolism of Collecting

19 January The Politics of Relic Collections in the Middle Ages

Topic Proposal of Research Essay Due (One Paragraph)

26 January The Emergence of Museums in Europe

2 February The Collector and the Collection of Natural Wonders

Proposed Bibliography for Research Essay Due (Primary and Secondary Sources)
9 February Noble and Local History Collecting
Karel Sklenár, Archaeology in Central Europe: The First 500 Years, translated by Iris Lewitová
Susan Crane, Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany

16 February Colonialism and Collecting
Stocking, ed., Objects and Others, pp. 49-112.

Visit to Harn Museum of Art with Guided Tour by Curator (1:20-3:20 pm)
– We will meet at the Museum for this Class
23 February Defining Oneself through Others
Coombes, Reinventing Africa, pp.84-225.

Rough Draft of Research Essay Due (Two Copies - One for Instructor; One for Student Critique)
2 March Archaeology, Anthropology and the Construction of Race

9 March Spring Break – No Class

Return of Critiques of Drafts
Museum Exhibition Critique Due
16 March Voyeurism and the Exhibitions
Rosalind H. Williams, Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France
(Berkeley: University of California, 1982), pp. 1-209.

23 March Consumption as Collecting? The Rise of Department Stores
Williams, Dream Worlds, pp. 213-405.

30 March Creating Artifacts and Reconstructing Forgotten History: Feminism and Collecting
Gerda Lerner, “The Search for Women’s History,” in her The Creation of Feminist

Research Presentations (4)
6 April American Historical (and Pseudo-Historical) Collections

Research Presentations (6)
Final Draft of Research Essay Due
13 April The Politics of Antiquities Collecting

Research Presentations (10)
20 April

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

QUESTIONS ON THE READING
Students should formulate at least two questions each week and thereby contribute to discussion. These may be collected at the instructor’s discretion if discussion is slow and it appears that students have not done the reading, and in that case these assignments will affect the participation grade.

RESEARCH ESSAY
Each student will select a topic in a field reflective of his or her own interest and related to the subject of collecting. S/he will implement the core concepts discussed in class in an original research paper of 15-20 pages (two drafts required). This essay will constitute the main requirement of this course, and will count for 60% of the final grade. The topic proposal (due 26 January) and bibliography (due 9 February), although not graded, will be considered mandatory requirements for the research essay and no grade will be given until they are complete. The first draft of the essay, due 2 March, will be worth 20% of final grade, written critiques of a fellow student’s rough draft will be due 16 March (5% of final grade), and the second draft, due 13 April, will be worth 40% of the grade. Written critiques of the rough draft will be considered part of the participation grade. A formal note from a physician will be necessary for late essays; otherwise, 1/3 of a letter-grade will be subtracted for each day that the paper is late. Papers
which demonstrate evidence of cheating or plagiarism from other sources (including your colleagues in the course) will not be tolerated, and will be handled in accordance with university policy.

MUSEUM CRITIQUE
Students will be asked to critique a museum exhibit of their choice (upon approval of instructor) using the tools they have acquired in this course. This assignment of approximately 5 pages will be due on 16 March, and will be worth 15% of the final grade.

PARTICIPATION
Class participation (20%) will be judged on the basis of consistent attendance and active contribution to the ongoing discussion of the material read for the course, as well as the items listed above. Students will provide a response paper on a specified session of class during the semester which they circulate to the other students prior to class. They will also give a presentation on their research paper: this will consist of a synopsis and identification of the central problems they addressed in their research. Both of these assignments along with weekly participation in discussions will factor into the class participation grade. More than three absences in this course will constitute grounds for an automatic failure in this seminar.

GRADING SCALE
It is policy of the Department of History that students have only one opportunity to complete the History Research Seminar successfully (grade of C or better). Those who withdraw from or fail the course cannot register for another seminar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Values for Conversion May 11, 2009 and After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E, I, NG, S-U, WF</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMMENTS
I look forward to stimulating discussions, and encourage you to come to office hours with any questions or issues which come up during lecture, discussion or in the course of your readings.