London in 1000 Objects

In recent years, art historians, intellectual historians, and historians of science have all turned their attention to collections: museums, private collections, botanical gardens, and the ways that bringing objects together shape our sense of their organization.

This course will be rooted in the collections of the city of London. We shall visit Tate Britain and the British Museum to consider the relationships between empire and collections; the Natural History Museum to consider both the collecting of flora and fauna and the systems by which they were organized; Kew Gardens to consider the movement of flora and fauna within the Empire.
Assignments:

Written:

1) For each of the collections we visit (7 in total), you are to write a brief report (50-100 words) on a single object. Describe it, its provenance if that is given, placement both in a case and in the larger floor plan of the museum, and defining characteristics. (15%)

2) One large research paper on a single collection: its origin, the persons who started and shaped it, the principles by which it was organized and displayed, the ways display may have shaped perceptions of relations. The paper, due in class April 19, is to be 3500-5000 words long. (25%)

Oral:

During the semester, students will present oral reports on the stages of their research. You may do powerpoint presentations or simple oral reports.

a) identifying a collection (5%)
b) the biographies of the founders or shapers (5%)
c) the process of collection (the Duchess of Portland, for instance, was in regular correspondence with Cook and others, requesting shells from them) (5%)
d) the space of display and the spatialization of relations (5%)
e) the principles of organization (10%)
f) modern systems of organization and their relationship to those earlier principles (10%)
Grading:
Class participation is 20% of your grade: each of you will be expected to help one another think through her or his collection.
You must also complete every component in order to receive credit for the course. Missing components will result in an Incomplete. The more effort you put into the course, the higher your grade.

Reading ():
In addition to the reading you will do for your own individual research project, everyone will also read selections from *The History of Museums*, which is available in pdf on Learn@UW.
Class Meetings:

January 12  Introductions and the Natural History Museum

January 19  Tate Britain: “Artist and Empire”

January 26  “Collecting” and “Displaying”

📖 The History of Museums individual reports

February 2  The British Museum and Imperial Collecting

February 6 (Saturday) class visit: Stonehenge and Bath

February 9  Identifying the Subject of Research – class presentations

February 16  The Victoria and Albert Museum and the Study of Culture(s)

February 23  Founders – class presentations

February 29- March 4  BREAK

March 8  The Foundling Museum

March 15  Collecting – class presentations

March 22  Spaces for Display – class presentations

March 29  Chelsea Physic Garden – meet there at 2

April 5  Principles of Organization – class presentations

April 9 (Saturday) class visit: Brighton

April 12  Kew Gardens

April 19  The Structuring of the World
Suggestions for Possible Research:
http://www.londonupclose.com/london-museums-by-theme.html
The British Museum
The Chelsea Physic Garden
Fenton House
The Foundling Museum
Kew Gardens
The Museum of Science
The National Gallery
The Natural History Museum
Sir John Soane’s Museum
The Victoria and Albert Museum
The Wallace Collection