In America, therefore, animated Nature is weaker, less active, and more circumscribed in the variety of her productions; for we perceive, from the enumeration of the American animals, that the numbers of species is not only fewer, but that, in general, all the animals are much smaller than those of the Old Continent. No American animal can be compared with the elephant, the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the dromedary, the camelopard [giraffe], the buffalo, the lion, the tiger, &c

- Buffon

In the past several decades Atlantic History has demonstrated the entanglement of American, European and African histories in the wake of Columbian discoveries and the conquest and colonization of New Worlds. Individuals, families, faiths and empires traversed the ocean and gave life to an Atlantic World. Yet many self-professed experts of the extra-European world never stepped foot aboard a ship, nor even left the metropolitan capitals in which they studied, wrote and lived. Figures such as Buffon instead turned to local collections that metonymically stood in for entire continents and cultures. This course will examine the history of these collections from a variety of perspectives, focusing particularly on the collection of objects in the extra-European world, their assemblage into recognizable collections and museums, and how they became the stuff from which knowledge about the Americas and the world more generally was made. Our goal will be to consider these collections both historically and theoretically, interrogating – for example – the origins of the objects in museums such as Paris’ Musée du quai Branly, London’s British Museum and how early modern observers used them to produce knowledge. Weekly readings will draw upon recent and influential work in the history of science, history of art, museum studies and histories of cross-cultural encounter.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this graduate class, students will be able to:

1) Analyze historical objects from a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives
2) Outline the emergence of collections in the Atlantic World and trace their evolution into national and regional museums
3) Deliver their research into primary and secondary sources verbally and in writing
FORMAT

Each seminar will discuss a book or 4 - 5 articles / book chapters. Each week one or two students will additionally volunteer to read and present a summary of the argument of one of the additional readings mentioned on the syllabus. Although the content and format of these presentations are open, each presentation will be between 10 and 15 minutes in length and should focus particular attention on what the extra readings can offer to that week’s discussions.

EVALUATION

Class Participation - 30%

This grade will be assessed in relation to how you prepare for class (have you done the readings, have you prepared to discuss it), and your actual participation in class discussions.

Each week you will be expected to prepare 3 questions on the week’s readings and post them on the blackboard discussion site by 5pm the night before class.

Presentations – 20%

You will sign up the first week of class to do two presentations during the term. Each week there will be three possible choices of presentations. You must do two of the following three during the course:

1) If the reading is part of a book, you will present an overview of the critical response to the reading in question
   a. Summarize at least 4 book reviews in major journals, highlighting common critiques or disagreements among reviewers

2) You will present on the scholarly response to the work by tracing out the subsequent citation of the work in question
   a. Use google scholar to see who has cited the selected book / chapter / article, then look into these to see how this work has influenced them

3) Look closely at the opening of the reading to identify who the author has cited and connect this to the historiographical / methodological contributions that the author seeks to make.
   a. Look for relevant articles and books up to identify the authors, the journals / presses, the date, the number of times cited, etc. to make an argument about the network that the author draws upon.
Object or Collection Analysis - 50% (Three parts)

This term you will analyze a historical object or collection in a 12 – 16 page paper. Over the course of the term, you will hand in stages of the assignment (parts 1 and 2) before handing in the final paper at the end of the term.

- Part 1 (10%) Preliminary Object Analysis - Due October 27th, 2016 at 11:59pm. 
  3 - 4 Pages – Present a preliminary description of the object / collection that you will analyze in your final paper. Include descriptions of its present and historical locations, its physical characteristics, and a preliminary discussion of the existing (if any) literature on the object / collection.

- Part 2 (10%) Annotated Bibliography – Due November 10th, 2016 at 11:59pm
  3 – 4 Pages – Include, under specific headings, the primary and secondary sources that you will use to write your paper. Also, under a separate heading, include the work that is inspiring your theoretical perspective on the object that you will analyze. For each entry, include 2-3 sentences about how the specific source will help you in your paper. Citations should be in Chicago or Turabian format.

- Part 3 (30%) Object / Collection Analysis – Due December 11th, 2016 at 11:59pm
  The analysis of an object or collection (chosen in consultation with me) in which you examine the historical context of an individual artifact or historical collection before offering an assessment of opportunities for further research. Consider what sorts of questions you can ask of this source, what sorts of papers you could write or, alternatively, what sorts of limitations present themselves. The papers should engage with at least one theoretical / methodological perspective on the analysis of historical objects / collections. 12 - 16 pages long.

Page counts are double spaced, and do not include images, or required title pages and bibliographies.

All assignments are due on the dates given unless we have discussed an extension in advance. Each day an assignment is late (including weekends) will drop your mark by a grade i.e. An A will become an A- after one day, and a B after three.

ATTENDANCE
Attendance at each class is mandatory and will be factored in for the calculation of your participation mark. Students with more than 3 unexcused absences will receive 0 for their participation grade. Please inform me of expected absences as much in advance as possible to make sure that your do not miss important information.

PLAGIARISM
Please read and familiarize yourself with Northeastern University’s policy on academic integrity at [http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academicintegrity/](http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academicintegrity/) where plagiarism is defined broadly as “as intentionally representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one’s own in any academic exercise without providing proper citation.” Penalties for
plagiarism will range in relationship to the severity of the incident but, at a minimum, will involve an F on the assignment and will be referred to the University’s Student Conduct Board.

If you have any questions or are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me or visit the writing center.

**CONTACT**
Office hours are 1 – 2pm on Wednesday and Thursday or, you can email me to set up an appointment at a different time. This is my preferred method of contact for most questions and consultations. If you email me questions or comments (at c.parsons@neu.edu) every effort will be made to respond within 24 hours of receiving your email during the week. Please be advised, however, that I will not respond to emails during the weekend or on evenings.

**READINGS ( * marks readings that will be posted on blackboard)**

**September 8 - Week 1 - Introduction**
Introductory class, with no readings. Instead, please listen to these podcasts:

- Dürer’s rhinoceros: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tn9vp
- Inca gold llama: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tn9vj
- Double-headed serpent: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tt5tr
- Mexican codex map: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tz2d7
- Ship’s chronometer from HMS Beagle: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00v6htv

These are from the British Museum’s series, *The History of the World in 100 Objects*. Be prepared to discuss these objects, the collection that they are part of, and how they are used here to explore world history.

**THINGS**

**September 15 - Week 2 – Perspectives on Things**


- available online at http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/downloads/96-MTP-DING.pdf


September 22 - Week 3 – Individual meetings, no class

For this week, I want you to think about your object / collection analysis and meet with me to get you started on the right track.

You can book a time at: https://cmparsons.youcanbook.me/

In advance of our meeting (by midnight, the night before our meeting) send me 2 double-spaced pages with a description of at least 2 – 3 collections / objects that you have located online, in exhibit catalogues or in local area collections that you are interested in analyzing.

September 29 - Week 4 – Communicating with Things


Matt Cohen, The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in early New England (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), introduction


October 6 - Week 5 - Valuable Things


October 13 - Week 6 – Circulation


October 20 - Week 7 - Thingification: Race and colonialism

* Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Pages TBA


**COLLECTING**

October 27 - Week 8 – Collecting (in Early Modern Europe)


And, on collecting:


* S. Stewart, On Longing. Narratives of the Minature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection, (Durham and London, 1993), chap. 5

November 3 - Week 9 – Collecting New Worlds in the Old


November 10 – Week 10 - Meeting at the Massachusetts Historical Society


Optional:


November 17 - Week 11 – Colonial Collecting

* Richard Bushman, The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (1992), chapter 1

Sarah Easterby-Smith “Reputation in a Box: Objects, communication and trust in late 18th-century botanical networks,” History of Science 53, no.2 (2015): 180-208

* Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) chap. 3


**November 24 – no class, thanksgiving**

**December 1 - Week 12 – Early Museums**


**LEGACIES**

**December 8 - Week 13 – Legacies**

* Kathleen S. Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), Introduction and Conclusion
