



MSL 2023: Difficult Heritages and Precarious Times
Fall 2024

Instructor: Prof. Joshua Arthurs

Meeting Time and Location: Tuesdays 3-6, BL 728

Email: joshua.arthurs@utoronto.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2:30 PM, BL 634

Course description: This course delves into discussions surrounding “difficult,” “dissonant” or “contested” heritages, and stories of conflict, pain and shame explored by museums, monuments, and other mnemonic sites. It also investigates the role that cultural institutions and sites play in times of conflict and crisis. Classes will be structured around a series of questions such as: what is “difficult” heritage? Who gets to decide what will be memorialized and what is forgotten? What are the sociopolitical contexts in which stories are told? We will consider a range of case studies connected to histories of war, genocide, colonialism, and oppression, as well as the range of strategies through which communities and institutions have confronted their material legacies. We will approach topics with criticality, curiosity and empathy, working together to reflect upon museum and heritage professionals as not only stewards and storytellers, but also as active and powerful community builders and change agents.

Important note: Our course content will include topics, readings, language, and images that some students may find controversial, disturbing, offensive and/or traumatizing. Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas; I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity. If you are aware of course material that may be traumatizing to you, I’d be happy to discuss any concerns you may have with it before it comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to such material with the class or with me afterwards, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework.

Course objectives: By participating in this course, students will:

- Investigate the evolving practice of “difficult” heritage and “dark tourism” within the realms of museums and heritage.
- Engage with critical and ethical issues related to museums and society, politics, memory and communities.
- Explore the relationships between collecting, curating and learning practices in regards to content creation, meaning making, and audience engagement.
- Reflect upon and analyze actions taken by cultural organizations in times of crisis.

- Consider the potentially powerful roles museums and museum professionals play in contemporary society generally and in times of conflict, crisis, and uncertainty specifically.

Course learning outcomes: By completing this course, students will:

1. Develop an understanding of the definition, ethics and issues surrounding “difficult” heritage and “dark tourism” museums, exhibitions and historic sites.
2. Increase their knowledge of the socio-political contexts in which museums operate, and the power and influence embedded in museum practice.
3. Build awareness of museum management in times of crisis.
4. Better understand how to participate in and manage discussions regarding challenging topics, and negotiate their own engagement with unsettling subject matter, in order to better serve communities and museum publics.
5. Be more familiar with leading community engagement as well as allyship, participatory and co-creative practices in museums.

These course-specific outcomes are designed to support the MMSt program’s outcomes in relation to students possessing awareness and applied understanding of:

- The history of museums and its effect on museums’ social and political roles in societies the centrality of representation within all facets of culture and heritage work.
- Ethical, legal and social issues shaping the work of cultural institutions, agencies, and professionals.
- Museological best practices and their continual evolution.

Readings: All readings and other materials will be posted in weekly modules in Quercus.

Assignments:

Research project (50% total): In consultation with the instructor, students will research and present a case of difficult heritage. The project will include an exploration of the site’s relevant socio-political contexts, stakeholders and audiences, as well as the application of the perspectives and strategies presented in the readings. Guidelines and grading criteria are available on Quercus.

- Project proposal – 10% of overall grade [CLO 1-5]
- Project presentation – 15% of overall grade [CLO 1-5]
- Reflective essay – 25% of overall grade [CLO 1-5]

Quercus discussion (30%): Every week, I will post discussion prompts related to the lectures and readings. By **noon every Monday**, students will post responses to discussion prompts on Quercus. These should engage critically and thoughtfully with key concepts from the texts and raise questions for further discussion. You may comment on your peers’ posts for additional points toward that week’s grade. Your two lowest marks (including zeroes if you opt not to post) will be dropped at the end of the semester. As these assignments are taken up in class, late posts will not be accepted after the meeting in which they are discussed. Guidelines and grading criteria are available on Quercus. [CLO 1-5]

Reading roundtable (5%): Every class, a group of students will frame the week’s readings and lead our collective discussions. Guidelines and grading criteria are available on Quercus. [CLO 1-5]

Attendance and participation (15%): Students are expected to attend all class meetings having completed the assigned readings, and with all materials and notes at hand. Be prepared to ask questions and contribute to our discussions. While there is no penalty for missing class, remember

that frequent absences will prevent you from contributing and thus may affect your participation mark. Participation criteria is available on Quercus. [CLO 1-5]

Late/missed assignments: Late assignments will be deducted 2% for every 24 hours that they are late, beginning at the time at which they are due, and including weekends. They will be accepted up to a week after their original due date (with the exception of the Quercus discussion posts, which must be submitted by the start of the class in which they are discussed). If you know that you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, please request an extension prior to the due date.

Grading Policies: Please consult the Faculty of Information's resources that will form the basis for grading in the course.

1. [Grade Interpretation Guidelines \(PDF\)](#)
2. [University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy](#)
3. [Guidelines on the Use of Incomplete \(INC\), Standing Deferred \(SDF\), & Withdrawal \(WDR\)](#)

Grading scale: A+ 90+; A 85-89; A- 80-84; B+ 77-79; B 73-76; B- 70-72; FZ 0-69.

Artificial Intelligence: Students may not copy or paraphrase from any generative artificial intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the purpose of completing assignments in this course. This policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development.

If I have reason to believe that an assignment was produced using AI, I will require an in-person meeting with the student to determine the originality of the work. If there is sufficient reason to believe that AI was used, or if the student does not attend the meeting, penalties will range from zero for an assignment to an F in the course.

Health and Wellness: The Faculty of Information has a Wellness Counsellor & Coordinator available to its students. Appointments are available Monday-Friday during the academic year. Contact Health & Wellness, 416-978-8030 ext. 5, to book an appointment with a Wellness Counsellor or for questions about the counselling service. Students can request that they would like to meet with the "iSchool Counsellor" to access counselling on campus.

Students can also choose to see a counsellor during the academic year and over the summer at the Health & Wellness Centre, located at 700 Bay St., during its [hours of operation](#).

Numerous additional health, wellness and counselling services are offered through the University of Toronto's Health and Wellness Centre.

You can access free mental health and wellbeing services at [Health & Wellness](#) such as [same day counselling](#), brief counselling, medical care, [skill-building workshops](#) and [drop-in peer support](#). You can also meet with a Wellness Navigation Advisor who can connect you with other campus and community services and support.

Call the mental health clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 5 to book an appointment or learn more at uoft.me/mentalhealthcare

The Health & Wellness Centre's Medical Services Clinic provides a wide range of medical services for U of T students. These services include routine health care services, such as [sexual and reproductive health counselling](#), [allergy care](#), [nutrition consultation](#), and support with many other health concerns. Call the medical services clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 2 to schedule an appointment or [explore services online](#).

Accommodations: Students with diverse learning styles and/or accessibility needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me, student services and/or the Accessibility Services

Office as soon as possible. Students who believe they require accommodations and are unsure where to begin can speak to an academic advisor in student services for guidance and referrals.

Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals to supportive services and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. Once you have obtained an accommodation plan from Accessibility Services, please share your accommodation letter with your instructor and student services.

Students who have already obtained accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office are encouraged to share their letter with their instructor and with student services in the first week of class. Students should discuss potential accommodations in consultation with their Accessibility Advisor and instructor to understand what may be possible and how the instructor wishes to be informed when an accommodation needs to be actioned. It is the student's responsibility to discuss any extension requests, where possible, in advance of course deadlines.

To book an appointment with an Accessibility Advisor, please connect with the Accessibility Services front desk via email at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or call (416) 978-8060. Consultation appointments are available to discuss any questions about the Accessibility Services registration process and/or potential accommodation support. The on-location Accessibility Advisor at the Faculty of Information is Michael Mercer.

Weekly drop-in appointments are available with Michael for registered students. For more information, visit [Accessibility Services](#) and find his name under the Contacts section.

Academic integrity: Please consult the University's site on [Academic Integrity](#). The Faculty of Information has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of the [University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters \(PDF\)](#). You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in Cite it Right and if you require further clarification, consult the resource [How Not to Plagiarize \(PDF\)](#). Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the U of T [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters \(1995\)](#). It is expected that all Faculty of Information students complete the [Cite it Right module and the online quiz](#) prior to the second week of classes of their first term.

Writing Support: As stated in the Faculty of Information's Grade Interpretation Guidelines, "work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects." With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the [SGS Graduate Centre for Academic Communication](#). The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current [SGS Workshops Schedule](#) for more information.

Declaring an Absence in ACORN: Students who miss an academic obligation and wish to seek academic consideration in a course may declare an absence using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students who declare an absence in ACORN should expect to receive reasonable academic consideration from their instructor without the need to present additional supporting documentation. Students can only use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool once per academic term (e.g., the fall term) for a maximum period of 7 consecutive calendar days.

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool requires students to select the course(s) they wish to have academic consideration granted, as well as provide the email address(es) to whom their course syllabus identifies as the contact (e.g., instructor, advisor). A record of the absence is sent to the self-

provided email(s) at the time of submission, and a receipt of the absence declaration is also sent to the student's University of Toronto email address.

Submitting an absence declaration does not initiate the process of academic consideration. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for academic consideration by contacting the course instructor using the contact information provided in the syllabus.

Students who have already used one absence declaration in a term will be restricted from declaring any further absences using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students are required to arrange any further academic consideration directly with their instructor and / or student services advisor. Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation as evidence of their absences such as the University approved verification of illness form (VOI).

Academic Dates & Deadlines: [Academic Dates & Deadlines](#). Conflicts with religious observances should be brought to the attention of the course instructor and the Office of the Registrar and Student Services no later than the second week of classes. For more information, please see the [Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances](#).

Schedule

Week I (Sept. 3): Introduction

Week II (Sept. 10): What Is Heritage and What Makes It Difficult?

- David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 1-11, 127-132.
- Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, 11-13, 29-43, 80-82.
- Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*. New York: Routledge, 2009, 2-7.
- Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, 25-68.

Week III (Sept. 17): Heritage of Dictatorship and Repression

- Sharon Macdonald, "Undesirable Heritage: Fascist Material Culture and Historical Consciousness in Nuremberg." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 1 (2006): 9–28.
- Monica Eileen Patterson, "Teaching Tolerance through Objects of Hatred: The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia as 'Counter-Museum.'" In *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*, edited by Erica T. Lehrer, Monica Patterson, and Cynthia E. Milton, 55–71. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Joshua Arthurs, "Fascism as 'Heritage' in Contemporary Italy." In *Italy Today: The Sick Man of Europe*, edited by Andrea Mammone and Giuseppe A. Veltri, 114–27. London: Routledge, 2010.

Week IV (Sept. 24): Heritage of Pain, Shame and Trauma

- Jennifer Bonnell and Roger I. Simon. "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters." *Museum and Society* 5, no. 2 (2007): 65–85.
- Heather Igloliorte, "'We Were So Far Away': Exhibiting Inuit Oral Histories of Residential Schools." In *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*, edited by Erica T. Lehrer, Monica Patterson, and Cynthia E. Milton, 23–40. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

- Amy Sodaro, “Politics of the Past: Remembering the Rwandan Genocide at the Kigali Memorial Center.” In *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*, edited by Erica T. Lehrer, Monica Patterson, and Cynthia E. Milton, 72–88. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

Week V (Oct. 1): Research meetings with instructor

Week VI (Oct. 8): Restitution and Repatriation

- Felicity Bodenstein, “Getting the Benin Bronzes Back to Nigeria: The Art Market and the Formation of National Collections and Concepts of Heritage in Benin City and Lagos.” In *Contested Holdings: Museum Collections in Political, Epistemic and Artistic Processes of Return*, edited by Felicity Bodenstein, Damiana Oțoiu, and Eva-Maria Troelenberg, 220–41. New York: Berghahn Books, 2022.
- Jisgang Nika Collison and Cara Krmpotich. “Saahlinda Naay – Saving Things House: The Haida Gwaii Museum Past, Present and Future.” In *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation*, edited by C. Timothy McKeown, Honor Keeler, and Cressida Fforde, 44–62. New York: Routledge, 2020.
- Vasiliki Kynourgiopoulou, “National Identity Interrupted: The Mutilation of the Parthenon Marbles and the Greek Claim for Repatriation.” In *Contested Cultural Heritage*, edited by Helaine Silverman, 155–70. New York: Springer, 2010.
- **Project proposal due by noon on Friday, Oct. 11**

Week VII (Oct. 15): De- and Re-Commemoration in Public Space

- Gwendolyn W. Saul et al., “Expanded Commentary: In Whose Honor? On Monuments, Public Spaces, Historical Narratives, and Memory.” *Museum Anthropology* 41, no. 2 (2018), 117–41.
- Paul Williams, “The Afterlife of Communist Statuary: Hungary’s Szoborpark and Lithuania’s Grutas Park.” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 185–98.
- Taylor Annabell, “Renaming and the Relationship between Colonizer and Colonized: The Role of Commemoration within Dual Place Names in New Zealand.” In *De-Commemoration: Removing Statues and Renaming Places*, edited by Sarah Gensburger and Jenny Wüstenberg, 95–105. New York: Berghahn Books, 2023.

Week VIII (Oct. 22): Heritage Not Hate? Backlash and Counter-Narratives

- Kevin Thornton, “The Confederate Flag and the Meaning of Southern History.” *Southern Cultures* 2, no. 2 (1996): 233–45.
- Marco Siddi and Barbara Gaweda. “The National Agents of Transnational Memory and Their Limits: The Case of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk.” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 27, no. 2 (2019): 258–71.
- Ana Carolina Balthazar, “From Houses and Grandparents to Brexit: Connections Between Memory, Objects and Right-Wing Populism.” In *Cycles of Hatred and Rage: What Right-Wing Extremists in Europe and Their Parties Tell Us About the US*, edited by Katherine C. Donahue and Patricia R. Heck, 53–71. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019.

Oct. 29 – Reading Week

Week IX (Nov. 5): Heritage at War

- Asja Mandić, “The Destruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar: A Rupture in Collective Urban Space and Life.” *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 12, no. 2 (2023): 363–90.
- Ali Mozaffari and James Barry. “Heritage and Territorial Disputes in the Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of the Carpet Museums of Baku and Shusha.” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 28 (2021): 1–23.
- Benjamin Isakhan and James Barry. “Iraqi and Syrian Responses to Heritage Destruction under the Islamic State: Genocide, Displacement, Reconstruction, and Return.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Destruction*, edited by José Antonio González Zarandona, Emma Cunliffe, and Melathi Saldin, 322–32. Abingdon: Routledge, 2024.

Week X (Nov. 12): “Dark” Tourism

- Joy Sather-Wagstaff, *Heritage That Hurts: Tourists in the Memoryscapes of September 11*. New York: Routledge, 2016, 67-88.
- Ana Lucia Araujo, “Welcome the Diaspora: Slave Trade Heritage Tourism and the Public Memory of Slavery.” *Ethnologies* 32, no. 2 (2010): 145–78.
- Colin Long and Keir Reeves, “‘Dig a Hole and Bury the Past in It’: Reconciliation and the Heritage of Genocide in Cambodia.” In *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with “Difficult Heritage,”* edited by William Stewart Logan and Keir Reeves, 68–81. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.

Week XI (Nov. 19): Optional research meetings with instructor/independent research

Week XII (Nov. 26): Project presentations

Reflective essay due by noon on December 3rd