

Animal, Vegetable, Mineral

ENV 340

Spring 2016

Mondays 1:30-4:20

Watson 310

Dr. Amy Kohout

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Office hours: Tuesday, 9-11 am; Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 pm; Friday, 1:30-3:30 pm; and by appointment

Course description

From seventeenth-century curiosity cabinets to *A Night at the Museum*, artifacts and specimens have offered their collectors, curators, and viewers access to multiple ways of understanding the natural world. In this environmental humanities seminar, we'll explore the history of natural history, collecting, and display in a range of times and places, past and present. Using materials and approaches drawn from environmental history, science and technology studies, anthropology, and museum studies, we'll grapple with key questions about American culture: What do we collect and why? What makes something a specimen? What are natural history collections for? How is scientific knowledge produced? What do our displays reveal about who we are? What is curation? We'll consider dinosaur bones and taxidermy, field books and habitat dioramas, and objects from Davidson's collections as we examine the ways exhibits tell stories and offer arguments—and craft our own.

Learning outcomes

This course is designed to introduce you to the history of museums, natural history, collecting and display. We will explore concepts from a range of disciplines that have bearing on these themes, including science and technology studies, museum studies, environmental history, and anthropology. Your work for this course should demonstrate that you can:

- (a) identify and contextualize major themes in the history of natural history, collecting, and display
- (b) articulate the connections between the history of natural history and contemporary issues facing science museums and natural history collections
- (c) read and analyze materials drawn from a variety of disciplines and fields
- (d) write in a variety of museum-related forms, from object labels and exhibit descriptions to critical review essays
- (e) collaborate effectively with your peers to plan and create a group exhibit

Required texts (please acquire hard copies)

E. L. Konigsburg, *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967)

Philip Pauley, *Biologists and the Promise of American Life* (2000)

Douglas Sackman, *Wild Men: Ishi and Kroeber in the Wilderness of Modern America* (2009)

Lawrence Weschler, *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and Other Marvels of Jurassic Technology* (1995)

These texts are available for purchase at the Davidson College Store. They are also on reserve at the E. H. Little Library.

All other assigned readings will be made available to you on Moodle; **please print them out and bring them to class on the day we are scheduled to discuss them.**

Grading*

Participation 20%

Short critical review essays [SCREs] (Weeks 2, 4, 5, 8, 12) 20%

Mini-lecture presentation (Week 6) 10%

4-5 page critical review essay (Week 9) 15%

Mini-exhibit (individual component of final project) 20%

Group project and reflective essay 15%

***Note: You must complete all assignments in order to pass this class.**

A note on participation

It should come as no surprise that we'll be doing plenty of reading and writing, but you should also be prepared for a semester filled with conversation. Seminars are collaborative learning environments, and this course is no exception. We'll talk more about how to read like a humanist, and how to prepare for an analytical discussion—these are skills we will be practicing a lot this semester—but I want to highlight here that regular, thoughtful (and vocal) participation is necessary to do well in this course.

Group project

This semester we are going to conduct a curatorial experiment in the form of a collaborative class project. Using materials from Davidson's insect collections as our starting point, we will plan and complete a digital exhibit that situates these specimens and their accompanying notes in the broader context of the history of natural history at Davidson and beyond. The shape it will take depends on the decisions made by the members of our curatorial team over the course of the semester. This experiment will require that we grapple with a range of questions – for example, what are the limits of the materials we have to work with? What can they tell us? What can't they tell us? How might the objects we have to work with be connected? What kinds of stories—and arguments—can we unlock with different arrangements and interpretive schemes? How can we—and how might we want to—engage our visitors? What do we want visitors to know, or understand, or wonder about as a result of our curatorial experiment? After we decide on the structure of our exhibit, we will divide up the tasks and set target dates for reaching a series of project milestones. Each student will write a reflective essay about the process and outcomes of our collaborative curatorial experiment.

Mini-exhibit (individual component of final project)

The group project will include individual components from each member of the class. This is what I am calling the mini-exhibit. The exact shape and structure of these exhibits will depend on the decisions we make as a group about how to organize our exhibit, but each mini-exhibit will include a small grouping of objects, appropriate labels for those objects, and exhibit text (or other media, as appropriate) that offers a curatorial interpretation of the objects.

Guidelines for submission of written work

You will submit papers and short writing assignments via Moodle. The work you turn in for this class should be double-spaced, in 12 pt Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Put your name, the course number (ENV 340), and the date at the top of the first page. When citing ideas and/or texts that are not your own, please use a standard citation format. Also, **remember to proofread.**

Policy on absences and lateness

You are allowed one absence, no questions asked. Additional absences will impact your grade in this class: for each unexcused absence beyond the one you are allowed, your final grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter. If you do miss a class meeting, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and making up the work so that you are prepared for the next class meeting. Please be on time; lateness will also affect your grade. If you need to miss class due to illness, emergency, athletics, religious observance, etc., please talk with me as soon as you can. Please also note that it is Davidson College policy that a student who misses more than 25% of scheduled class meetings will earn a failing grade in the course.

Late work

I will accept late work; however, it is in your best interest to submit work on time, as late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for being late, and an additional 1/3 of a grade for every day that it is late after that. So, a B+ paper turned in up to 24 hours after the deadline would earn a B; a B+ paper submitted 2 days late would earn a B-, etc. If you know you are going to be late with an assignment, talk to me as soon as you can. I very rarely grant extensions on late work on or after the due date. I am far more likely to approve an extension if you talk to me ahead of time.

Davidson policies

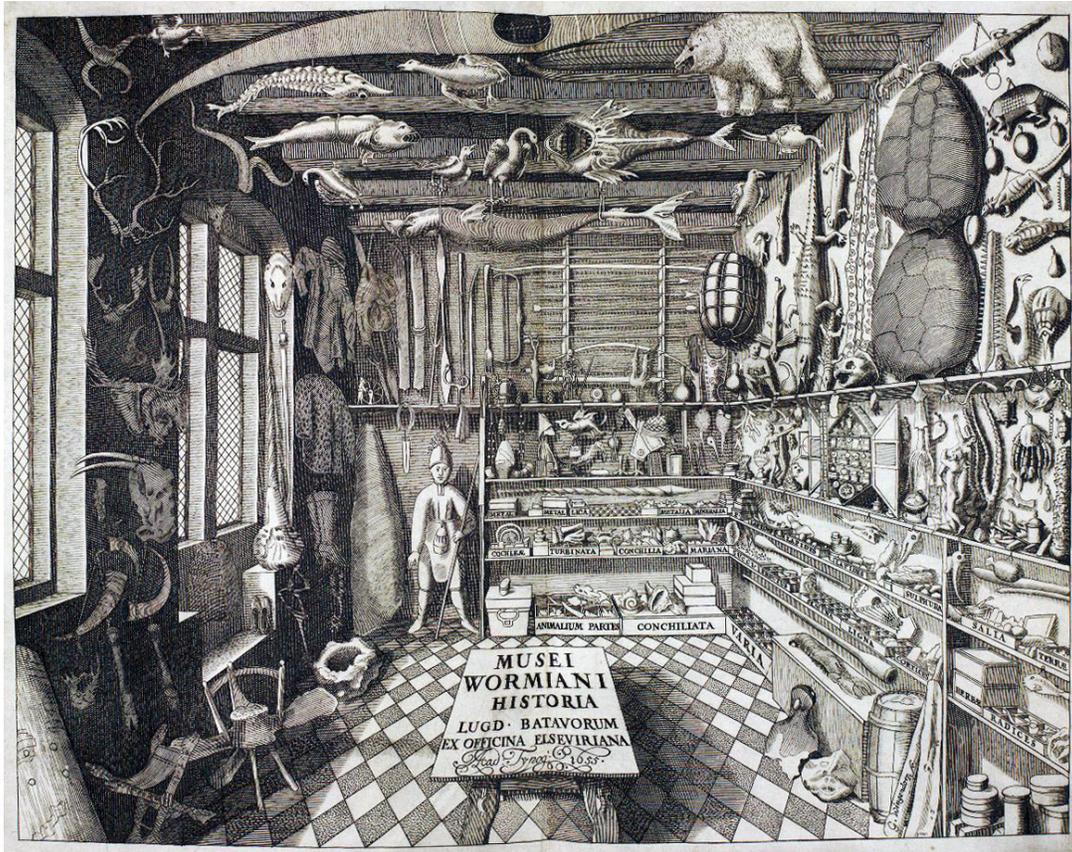
I respect and adhere to Davidson College policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays, assistance available to students with disabilities, plagiarism and academic integrity, sexual harassment, and racial or ethnic discrimination. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with these policies and encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns they may have with me. In particular, please look carefully at the syllabus during the first week of class. If any of the assignments conflict with a major religious holiday for your faith, please let me know. I will make every effort to make the necessary accommodations.

Accommodations for students with disabilities and learning differences

Full accommodations are the legal right of students with all kinds of disabilities, whether learning differences or physical disabilities. I am happy to provide these accommodations. If you are a student with a learning disability who might need accommodations, please identify yourself to me in the first two weeks of class so that I can learn from you as early as possible how best to support your learning in this course. All such discussion will be confidential unless you stipulate otherwise.

Academic honesty

It is expected that you will abide by Davidson's Honor Code. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the Honor Code, and in particular, the college's policy on plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or proper citation, please feel free to ask!



"Musei Wormiani Historia," the frontispiece from the *Museum Wormianum* (1655), Wikimedia Commons.

Course calendar (subject to change)

Please come to class ready to discuss the materials listed for that day on this calendar.

Week 1 (Jan 11): Introductions and Curatorial Activities

Schedule next week's alternate meeting time.

Week 2 (Jan 18): What Are Museums For?

NO CLASS ON JAN 18; MLK DAY, but I would like for us to meet this week.

*find time amenable to all for discussion of E.L. Konigsburg, *From the Mixed of Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*

DUE: SCRE #1 (Konigsburg) – bring to discussion.

Week 3 (Jan 25): Objects and Order

Listen to radio interview with Anthony Grafton on Cabinets of Curiosity:

<https://soundcloud.com/wprb-princeton/collections-professor>

C. W. Peale, *Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures on the Science of Nature* (1800) (M)

Samuel Alberti, "Objects and the Museum," *Isis*, Vol. 96, No. 4 (Dec. 2005), pp. 559-571 (M)

Philip Pauley, *Biologists and the Promise of American Life* pp. 3-70

*in class today choose book and field for Week 6 (Feb 15) Mini-Lecture Presentations

Week 4 (Feb 1): Tools and Practices for Collecting and Curating

Michael R. Canfield, "Introduction," *Field Notes on Science & Nature*, pp. 1-18 (M)

Read some field notes at the Smithsonian's Field Book Project and choose an entry to bring to class: <http://www.mnh.si.edu/rc/fieldbooks/> (use any database linked to on the homepage)

Jim Endersby, "Collecting" in *Imperial Nature: Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science* (2008) pp. 9-18 (M)

Sue Ann Prince, ed., *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America, 1730-1860* (2003) (M) Read introduction (pp.1-8) and one essay of your choosing.

DUE: SCRE #2 (Digital Exhibit Review) Monday (2/1) at 1:00 PM via Moodle

PROJECT PLANNING MEETING IN CLASS

Week 5 (Feb 8): Spaces and Places of Scientific Practice

Jeremy Vetter, "Cowboys, Scientists, and Fossils" *Isis*, Vol. 99 No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 273-303 (M)

Robert Kohler, "Borders and History," in *Landscapes and Labscapes: Exploring the Lab-Field Border in Biology* (2002), pp. 1-22 (M)

Ann Fabian, "News from the Feegees" in *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (2010); pp. 121-162 (M)

Mark Barrow, "The Specimen Dealer: Entrepreneurial Natural History in America's Gilded Age," *Journal of the History of Biology*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Winter, 2000), pp. 493-534 (M)

DUE: SCRE #3 (précis of book for next week) Monday (2/8) at 1:00 PM via Moodle

Week 6 (Feb 15): Student Mini-Lecture Presentations on the history of specific fields

Mini-lectures today!

DUE: any multimedia material you wish to use, Monday (2/15) by 1:00 PM via Moodle

(I'll put it on a flash drive to bring to class so we're ready to go)

Week 7 (Feb 22): From Natural History to Biology

Philip Pauley, *Biologists and the Promise of American Life*, pp. 92-244, but focus on Part II.

(Feb 29): NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK

Week 8 (Mar 7): Looking at Animals: Taxidermy and Habitat Dioramas

Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," *Social Text*, No. 11 (Winter, 1984-85), pp. 20-64 (M)

Rachel Poliquin, "Spectacle" in *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (2012), pp. 77-109 (M)

Michael Rossi, "Fabricating Authenticity: Modeling a Whale at the American Museum of Natural History, 1906-1974," *Isis*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (June 2010), pp. 338-361 (M)

DUE: SCR #4 (on this week's readings)

Week 9 (Mar 14): Looking at People: A Case Study

Douglas Sackman, *Wild Men: Ishi and Kroeber in the Wilderness of Modern America* (all)

Francie Diep, "The Passing of the Indians Behind the Glass," *The Appendix*, Vol. 2 No. 3, <http://theappendix.net/issues/2014/7/the-passing-of-the-indians-behind-glass> (M)

Joe Horse Capture, "Horse Capture: 'Native People Have a Story to Tell: Their Own,'" *Indian Country Today*, April 25, 2015, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/25/horse-capture-native-people-have-story-tell-their-own-160144> (M)

Week 10 (Mar 21): PROJECT WORK DAY

David Wallis, "Labels, Digital Included, Assume New Importance at Museums," *The New York Times*, 17 March 2015 (M)

Additional readings/prep for class TBD; based on group project

DUE: Critical Review Essay on *Wild Men* due Friday (3/25) at 5:00 PM via Moodle

Week 11 (Mar 28): NO CLASS; EASTER BREAK

DUE: outline of individual mini-exhibit Friday (4/1) at 5:00 PM via Moodle

Week 12 (April 4): Field Trip to the Schiele Museum of Natural History (tentative)

AFTERNOON FIELD TRIP; DETAILS TBA.

DUE: SCRE #5 (Schiele Review Essay) Due Friday (4/8) at 5:00 PM via Moodle

Week 13 (April 11): Science Museums and Science Education

Sally Kohlstedt, "Nature, Not Books: Scientists and the Origins of the Nature-Study Movement in the 1890s," *Isis*, Vol. 96, No. 3 pp. 324-352 (M)

*possible excerpt from Rebecca Onion, *Innocent Experiments* (forthcoming 2016) (M)

Karen Rader and Victoria Cain, "Diversifying Displays, Diverging Museums: Postwar Life Science Education, 1941-1956" in *Life on Display: Revolutionizing U.S. Museums of Science and Natural History in the Twentieth Century* (2014), pp. 136-174 (M)

Watch at least two AMNH Shelf-Life videos (they're short!) and be prepared to discuss the form and approach in class. Find the series here: <http://www.amnh.org/shelf-life>

Week 14 (April 18): Boundaries of the Real

Lawrence Weschler, *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and Other Marvels of Jurassic Technology* (all)

Helene Stapinski, "Fleshing Out the Bones: Behind the Scenes at 'Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs,'" *The New York Times*, 31 March 2014 (M)

Chris Suellentrop, "At Play in Skies of Cretaceous Era," *The New York Times*, 19 March 2014 (M)

DUE: Draft text for group project due in class

Week 15 (April 25): Do Museums Still Need Objects? (And If So, What Kind?)

Steven Conn, "Do Museums Still Need Objects?" in *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (2010), pp. 20-57 (M)

George Brown Goode, "The Museums of the Future" (1891) in Sally Kohlstedt, ed., *The Origins of Natural Science in America: The Essays of George Brown Goode* (1991), pp. 321-348 (M)

Stephen Weil, "From being about something to being for somebody: The ongoing transformation of the American museum," *Daedalus* 128(3) (2002): 229-258 (M)

Nathan K. Lujan and Larry M. Page, "Libraries of Life," *The New York Times*, 27 Feb 2015 (M)

Erik Olsen, "Museum Specimens Find New Life Online," *The New York Times*, 19 October 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/20/science/putting-museums-samples-of-life-on-the-internet.html> and look at accompanying video and guide to digitized collections.

DUE: Presentation-worthy draft of individual mini-exhibit due Friday (4/29) 5:00 PM via Moodle

Week 16 (May 2): Final Project Presentations, Debrief, and Celebration

Be prepared to present your individual component of the group project to the class today, and to offer constructive critiques of each mini-exhibit.

Monday, May 9, 5:15 PM (End of final exams for seniors): Revisions to individual mini-exhibits and group project due by the end of the senior exam period, along with final reflective essays.

(Students who are not seniors can take until the end of the normal exam period, Wednesday, May 11, at 5:15 pm, to submit final reflective essays, if they wish.)

Detailed Schedule of Assignments

Week 1: NONE

Week 2: SCRE#1 (Konigsburg)

Week 3: choose book/topic for Week 6 mini-lecture

Week 4: SCRE #2 (digital exhibit review)

Week 5: SCRE #3 (précis of your book for next week)

Week 6: present mini-lecture in class

Week 7: NONE

Week 8: SCRE #4 (on this week's readings)

Week 9: NONE

Week 10: Critical Review Essay (Sackman)

Week 11: outline of individual mini-exhibit

Week 12: SCRE #5 (Schiele visit)

Week 13: NONE

Week 14: draft text of group project

Week 15: presentation-worthy draft of individual mini-exhibit

Week 16: NONE

End of Finals: Revisions to individual mini-exhibit and group final project due by the end of the senior final exam period, along with final reflective essays. See course calendar for more details.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
1 Introductions and Curatorial Activities	Jan. 11 Introductions; schedule alternate meeting for next week	Jan. 12	Jan. 13	Jan. 14	Jan. 15
2 What are Museums For?	Jan. 18 MLK DAY; NO CLASS SCRE #1 – due at discussion; Read Konigsburg, <i>From the Mixed Up Files of Basil E. Frankweiler</i>	Jan. 19	Jan. 20	Jan. 21	Jan. 22
3 Objects and Order	Jan. 25 Grafton radio interview; Peale and Alberti articles (M); Pauley, <i>Biologists and the Promise of American Life</i> , pp. 3-70; choose book for Week 6	Jan. 26	Jan. 27	Jan. 28	Jan. 29
4 Tools and Practices for Collecting	Feb. 1 SCRE #2 due 1:00 PM via Moodle Canfield and Endersby (M), read field notes and bring an entry to class; read Prince intro and one essay (M)	Feb. 2	Feb. 3	Feb. 4	Feb. 5
5 Spaces and Places of Scientific Practice	Feb. 8 SCRE #3 due 1:00 PM via Moodle Vetter, Kohler, Fabian, and Barrow articles (M)	Feb. 9	Feb. 10	Feb. 11	Feb. 12
6 Mini-Lecture Presentations	Feb. 15 Any multimedia material for lecture due 1:00 PM via Moodle Mini-lecture presentations today!	Feb. 16	Feb. 17	Feb. 18	Feb. 19
7 From Natural History to Biology	Feb. 22 Pauley, pp. 92-244 (focus on Part II)	Feb. 23	Feb. 24	Feb. 25	Feb. 26
SPRING BREAK	Feb. 29 SPRING BREAK	Mar. 1 SPRING BREAK	Mar. 2 SPRING BREAK	Mar. 3 SPRING BREAK	Mar. 4 SPRING BREAK
8 Looking at Animals	Mar. 7 SCRE #4 due 1:00 PM via Moodle Haraway, Poliquin, and Rossi articles (M)	Mar. 8	Mar. 9	Mar. 10	Mar. 11
9 Looking at People	Mar. 14 Sackman, <i>Wild Men</i> , ALL Francie Diep and Joe Horse Capture articles (M)	Mar. 15	Mar. 16	Mar. 17	Mar. 18
10 Project Work Day	Mar. 21 Wallis article (M) and TBD	Mar. 22	Mar. 23	Mar. 24	Mar. 25 Critical Review Essay on <i>Wild Men</i> due Friday, 5 PM via Moodle
11 Easter Break	Mar. 28 EASTER BREAK; NO CLASS	Mar. 29	Mar. 30	Mar. 31	Apr. 1
12 Field Trip	Apr. 4 Field trip to the Schiele Museum of Natural History (tentative date for this)	Apr. 5	Apr. 6	Apr. 7	Apr. 8 SCRE #5 due Friday, 5 PM via Moodle
13 Science Museums & Science Education	Apr. 11 Kohlstedt, Onion, and Rader & Cain articles (M); watch two AMNH <i>Shelf-Life</i> videos	Apr. 12	Apr. 13	Apr. 14	Apr. 15
14 Boundaries of the Real	Apr. 18 Weschler, ALL Stapinski and Suellentrop articles (M) Draft text for group project due in class	Apr. 19	Apr. 20	Apr. 21	Apr. 22
15 Do Museums Still Need Objects?	Apr. 25 Conn, Goode, Weil, Lujan & Page, and Olsen articles (M)	Apr. 26	Apr. 27	Apr. 28	Apr. 29 Presentation-worthy draft of mini-exhibit due 5 PM via Moodle
16 Presentations and Celebration	May 2 Presentations, Debrief, Celebration!	May 3	May 4	May 5	May 6

END OF SENIOR FINAL EXAMS: REVISIONS TO INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS AND GROUP PROJECT DUE, ALONG WITH FINAL REFLECTIVE ESSAYS.