

Anthropology 1410 (ANTH1410)

Social Justice, Monuments, Museums, and Heritage

Tuesdays and Thursdays
10:15 am – 11:45 noon

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Brief Course Description

Monuments, museums, and heritage are all critical parts of the world that we have created and are shaped by. These institutions and sites often claim to represent our past, who we imagine ourselves to be today, and how we might define our futures. We often rely on museums and monuments to frame history and history's relationship to our current social and cultural systems. However, in recent years, social, racial, and economic justice movements have pushed us to rethink the function of monuments, museums, and heritage. In particular, these social movements have helped us understand how racism, sexism, and colonialism are responsible for the creation of monuments and museums. Here in Philadelphia, we continue to grapple with historical monuments including statues of Frank Rizzo and Christopher Columbus. In addition, there has been a call for the Penn Museum to be accountable for the return and repatriation of human remains. This course examines the echoes and continuities of colonial representations in museums and monuments. In addition, we will examine how new ways of commemorating and representing the past can result in a new vision for our future. By visiting a variety of local monuments and sites and by engaging in conversations about accountability and social justice, this course will challenge us to rethink the tangible and intangible ways that we weave the past into the present for the creation of the future.