

Spring 2016

HIST 585-005: Special Topics in History:
(cross-listed with ANT 585-000/ARTHIST 592-001)

Topic: Heritage and Power

Instructor	Day(s)	Time(s)	Maximum Enrollment
Chio	TH	4:00 – 7:00 pm	12

Semester Description:

In the wake of recent clashes between China and Japan over the inclusion of documents about the Nanjing Massacre into UNESCO’s “International Memory of the World” register and of news from Syria on the destruction of monuments in Palmyra by ISIS militants, there is a renewed urgency to reconceptualize heritage, its politics, and its power. After all, UNESCO World Heritage designation and similar domestic categories remain vital for global tourism industries, local entrepreneurs, and nationalist sentiments. This seminar will approach heritage and the intersecting vectors of power and authority that renders heritage so desirable and dangerous by addressing three categories: land, things, and bodies. Land and landscapes constitute one of the most fundamental sites of political authority based on notions of cultural belonging and historical presence. Things, from materials to monuments, are often the most recognizable objects of cultural heritage, and thus the first to be destroyed, removed, stolen, and sold. Bodies, in both the sense of the embodiment of cultural knowledge and the physiological, frequently racialized body, play a central role in the formation and politicization of collective memory and the denial of minority and marginalized experiences. The aim of this seminar is to build a critical language and theoretical framework for understanding the power of heritage in contemporary global politics and the history of the idea of heritage itself, with a particular focus how discourses of racialized, ethnic, and sociocultural differences elide with what is nowadays referred to as “heritage.” Readings will explore the politics of recognition, discourses of multiculturalism, war and heritage sites, the materiality of memory and historical trauma, as well as Indigenous biopolitics.

Required Textbooks, Articles, and Resources:

1. TBA.