



Asia in Berlin: Reading Objects of Transculturality

Fall Term 2023: 4 September – 15 December 2023
(break: 23-27 October 2023)

CATEGORY

Social Sciences and Cultural Studies

COURSE STRUCTURE

3 contact hours à 45 min per week (14 weeks + gap week)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time

Day: Thursday, 12:30– 3.00 pm

Place

t.b.a.

COURSE LANGUAGE

English

Language requirements (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
English B2

TARGET GROUP

International exchange students and regular HU students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic are invited. Humboldt Perspectives Study Abroad courses are designed for undergraduate students. Master students may participate if their home university agrees. By assessing various visual and written sources, media and museums trips, I present students with examples of geographical, historical and cultural contexts in which concepts of history take place. I have been involved in archaeological field research and my first-hand museological experiences provide an insight into the practical knowledge of cultural studies. These experiences allow practical applications for the students.

CREDITS = 6 ECTS

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Berlin is a multi-cultural city with a diverse cultural life. The seminar will present this transcultural landscape connected to Asia. Starting with the fascination of collectors and travelers to Asia in the Barock period of the 18th century and the establishment of cabinets of curiosities, collections and material culture has lend contemporary relevance to ethnography, art history and anthropology. Asian collections and architecture presented in Berlin are confronted with the very colonial contexts from which substantial parts of them hail, giving contemporary relevance to the history of their origins. As issue today are questions of cultural heritage, cross-cultural methods and opening-up to non-western research, discourses, Arts and Asian communities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The objective of this Bachelor-level course is to equip students with an in-depth understanding of topic x and enable them to read, understand and critically reflect on the most recent theoretical and empirical research in the field. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Knowledge

- understand, describe and identify social and cultural phenomena from an interdisciplinary and non-ethnocentric perspective
- account for the stylized facts and direct empirical tests of the core theories of heritage studies
- provide an overview of recent theoretical and empirical developments in the field of post-colonial studies

Academic/Transferable Skills

- transmit practical knowledge of archaeology and the material culture practical knowledge of archaeology and the material culture in topic x

Competencies

- apply the value of thinking critically and beyond various academic disciplines
- present students with examples of geographical, historical and cultural contexts in which concepts of history take place

READINGS

Appadurai, A. (1986) *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge.

Godelier, M. (2004). *Das Rätsel der Gabe. Geld, Geschenke, heilige Objekte*. München.

Gosden, C./Marshall, Y. (1999) The cultural biography of objects. *World Archaeology* 31:2, 169-178.

Hahn, H. P. (2005) *Materielle Kultur. Eine Einführung*. Berlin.

Hauser-Schäublin, B./Prött, L. V. (Hg.) *Cultural property and contested ownership. The trafficking of artefacts and the quest for restitution*. NY.

Hoskins, J. (1998) *Biographical Objects. How things tell the stories of people's lives*. London/NY.

Kopytoff, I. (1986) The cultural biography of things. Commoditization as process, in: A. Appadurai A. (Hg.) *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge, 64-91.

Kravagna, C. (2017) *Transmoderne. Eine Kunstgeschichte des Kontakts*. Berlin.

Miller, D. (1997) *Material Cultures. Why some things matter*. London.
Merlan, F. (2009) Indigeneity Global and Local. *Current Anthropology* 50/3, 303-333.
Osterhammel, J. (2014) *The transformation of the world*. Princeton.
Troelenberg, E.-M. et al. (Hg.) (2021) *Reading Objects in the contact zone*. Heidelberg.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 6 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 80% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- hand in the following **assignments**:
- *a written paper of approx. 25,000 characters including spaces*
- *two smaller presentations (up to 20 min. each)*

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz is teaching on Southeast Asia's culture and history at several German universities. She has a PhD. in Art History from Technical University of Darmstadt and an M.A. in Art History, Archaeology, and Southeast Asian regional studies from Goethe Universität Frankfurt M., Germany. She was previously a research assistant and curator in Singapore and Berlin. In the Philippines he was appointed visiting professor. She participated in excavations in Syria and Indonesia. She worked as assistant of the director of the Ethnological Museum and Asian Art Museum at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin.

COURSE SCHEDULE

14 weeks + gap week

Week 1 – 7.9.2023: Introduction in transculturality and material culture

Week 2 – 14.9.2023: Excursion: Ethnologisches Museum, Humboldt Forum

Week 3 – 21.9.2023: Excursion: Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Humboldt Forum

Week 4 – 28.9.2023: Reading objects: Provenance, loot and restitution

Week 5 – 5.10.2023: Post-colonial debates on curating museums

Week 6 – 12.10.2023: Excursion: Asian theatre and archaeology, Humboldt Forum

Week 7 – 19.10.2023: t.b.a.

Gap Week: No class on 26 October

Week 8 – 2.11.2023: Excursion: Chinoiserie, Kunstgewerbemuseum Kulturforum

Week 9 – 9.11.2023: Excursion: Treasure hunting in the China Sea, Technikmuseum

Week 10 – 16.11.2023: Indigeneity global and local: Gärten der Welt

Week 11 – 23.11.2023: Diverse cultural knowledge: Understanding Buddhist Rituals: The Shaolin Temple, Das Buddhistische Haus

Week 12 – 30.11.2023: Displaying stories in the contact zone: Kulturhäuser and civic actors in Berlin

Week 13 – 7.12.2023: Excursion: Study collection of Southeast Asia, Ethnologisches Museum in Dahlem

Week 14 – 14.12.2023: Final Session: Conclusions, Evaluation

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

in case of online sessions

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions: be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions in this international classroom.

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies, especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct. Plagiarism in even a small assignment will result in failing the entire course.

Attendance policy: Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 10 March 2023