



## Asia in Berlin: Critical Heritage Studies

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Fall Term 2024: 2 September – 13 December 2024  
(break: 21-25 October 2024)

### CATEGORY

History, Sociology, Anthropology

### COURSE STRUCTURE

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

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### Time

Day: Thursday, 12.30-15.00

#### Place

Schönhauser Allee 10, Room 1.23

Some sessions take place at the excursion locations

### COURSE LANGUAGE

English

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

### TARGET GROUP

Humboldt Perspectives Study Abroad courses are designed for undergraduate students.

By assessing various visual and written sources, media and excursions, I present students with examples of geographical, historical and cultural contexts in which concepts of heritage take place. I have been involved in archaeological field work, worked as curator and provenance researcher at museums and excavations what provides 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 and heritage. The course will present critical heritage studies connected to Asia. Starting with the fascination of collectors and travelers to Asia during the colonial period, collections and material culture has lend contemporary relevance to the arts, history and politics. During the excursions to museums and cultural institutions in Berlin we want to critically engage in the discourses on what Asian heritage is and how it should be studied and managed. This allows an integration of heritage and museum studies. The course approaches a broad spectrum from crafts, intangible heritage and memorialization to rights policies and property issues. Monuments, religious sites or street names reflect Berlin's colonial legacies and minority histories of different communities from Asia.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The objective of this Bachelor-level course is to equip students with an in-depth understanding of heritage concepts 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 the social and cultural phenomena of heritage making from an interdisciplinary and non-ethnocentric perspective
- account for the 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 theories and critical heritage studies

### Academic/Transferable Skills

- transmit practical knowledge of curating and material culture of Asia in Berlin

### Competencies

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

## **READINGS**

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

Hauser-Schäublin, B./Pratt, L. V. ed. (2016) *Cultural property and contested ownership. The trafficking of artefacts and the quest for restitution*. New York.

Lowenthal, D./Binney, M. eds. (1981) *Our Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It?* London.

Miller, D. (1997) *Material Cultures. Why some things matter*. London.

Osterhammel, J. (2014) *The transformation of the world*. Princeton.

Troelenberg, E.-M. et al. eds. (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**:
  - *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 Indonesia and Germany. 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. Currently she is provenance researcher at the Association of Museums in Thuringia.

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

3 hours à 45 min per week

### Week 1: Introduction in critical heritage studies

Focusing on the understandings and approaches to heritage within the wider frames of material cultural, the session highlights the scholarly interest in memory.

Appadurai, A. (1986) *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge.  
Lowenthal, D., and M. Binney, eds. (1981) *Our Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It?* London.

### Week 2: Excursion: Museum of Asian Arts, Humboldt Forum

The emergence of memory activism and the critique of the Humboldt Forum have played instrumental roles in propelling Germany towards a more profound engagement with its colonial past.

Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz ed. (2021) Humboldt Forum  
Ethnologisches Museum Museums für Asiatische Kunst. Berlin, vol 2.

### **Week 3: Reading objects: Provenance, loot and restitution**

The social sciences and provenance research need to be drawn on to provide theoretical insights and techniques to study "heritage" from approaches of preservation to property rights.

Hauser-Schäublin, B./Protz, L. V. (Hg.) (2016) *Cultural property and contested ownership. The trafficking of artefacts and the quest for restitution*. NY.

### **Week 4: Excursion: Asia-Oceania in the Ethnological Museum, Humboldt Forum**

The approach of the "collaborative museum" will be presented in the Naga collection, the Islamic and Oceanic section and on Asian dance in the Ethnological Museum.

Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz ed. (2021) Humboldt Forum Ethnologisches Museum Museums für Asiatische Kunst. Berlin, vol 1.

### **Week 5: Post-colonial debates on curating museums**

New roles of museums linked to activism and participatory approaches will be discussed further so that the history of heritage for the way we approach heritage today and in the future becomes more clear.

Boast, R. (2011): Neocolonial collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited. *Museum Anthropology*, Vol. 34, 1, 56–70.

### **Week 6: Excursion: Displaying stories in the contact zone: playing music at the Indonesian House of Culture**

The special highlight of the guided tour in the "Rumah Budaya" is the music class. Playing gamelan gives insights into the intangible heritage of Indonesian culture. Representatives of the German Indonesian community in Berlin are invited. This session opens up the dialogue and debate between practitioners and urban cultural communities.

Troelenberg, E.-M. et al. (ed.) (2021) *Reading Objects in the contact zone*. Heidelberg.

### **Week 7: Global and local - diasporic heritage**

This session opens up the dialogue and debate between researchers, practitioners and communities on various heritage sites of Berlin e.g. "Gärten der Welt", mosques, the Don Yuan Centre, heritage of Turkish communities. This will highlight communities and cultures that have traditionally been marginalised in formulating heritage policy.

Güney, S., Pekman, C., & Kabaş, B. (2012) Diasporic music in transition: Turkish immigrant performers on the stage of "Multikulti" Berlin. *Popular Music and Society*, 37(2), 132–151.

### **Week 8: Excursion: Sunken treasure in the China Sea, Technikmuseum**

The maritime cultural heritage of sunken ships addresses contested ownership, economic interests by salvage companies or collectors as well as preservation interests, thus quests for restitution.

M. L. Tjoa-Bonatz (2016) Struggles over Historic Shipwrecks in Indonesia. Economic versus Preservation Interests, in: B. Hauser-Schäublin, L V. Prott (ed) *Cultural Property and Contested Ownership. The Trafficking of Artefacts and the Quest for Restitution*. New York, 85-107.

### **Week 9: Learning from German colonial history**

Prussian palaces and gardens are considered beautiful but they were also the locations of a multifaceted heritage that was marked by racism, exotism, exploitation or violence. Colonial evidences are evident in the collections, architecture and heritage concepts.

Steckenbiller, C. (2019) Berlin's colonial legacies and new minority histories: The case of the Humboldt Forum and Colonial Street names in the German capital. *Monatshefte*, 111(1).

### **Week 10: Excursion: Arts and Craft: international Fashion? Chinoiserie and Fayence, Arts and Craft Museum**

Artists have been playing our senses, reminding us how easily we are deceived. The course weaves a path through the (art)history of the heritage of Chinese porcelain, Chinoiserie and fayence as well as fashion.

Osterhammel, J. (2014) *The transformation of the world*. Princeton.

### **Week 11: Town planning and urban heritage conservation**

Monuments such as the Sanchi gate, mosques, temple or street names reflect Berlin's urban legacies connected to minority histories of different communities from Asia. During the colonial period European town planning concepts shaped Asian cities, while today German development aid still supports urban development and heritage conservation.

Steckenbiller, C. (2019) Berlin's colonial legacies and new minority histories: The case of the Humboldt Forum and Colonial Street names in the German capital. *Monatshefte*, 111(1).

M. L. Tjoa-Bonatz, M. Toyka-Seid (2003) Singapur. In Helmut Böhme, Arnold Körte, Michael Toyka-Seid (ed.): *Wohnen-Planen-Bauen. Erneuerung historischer Kernstädte in Südostasien und Europa im historisch-architektonischen Vergleich*. Darmstadt, 75-102.

### **Week 12: Excursion: Study Collection of the Asian Art Museum**

Museums exhibit only very few objects in public, thus the study collection allows a glimpse into the "back stage" of museums. We will visit the study collection in Berlin/Dahlem with the curator.

### **Week 13: Casting faiths: missionary collections**

Discussions will focus on the contemporary situation of missionary collections, the entanglement of missionaries/missions and colonialism/colonial administration and the possibilities and challenges of collaborative research on missionary collections.

Tjoa-Bonatz, M. (2009) From idol to art, in: T. D. Dubois, ed. *Casting, Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia*. NY 2009, 105-128

### **Week 14: 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.

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The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 23.3.2024