

**MID-TERM ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS:
Gender, Race and Nation in the Museum**

Grade weight: 20% of your overall grade.

Assignment length: 4-5 pages, approx. 1000-1250 words + relevant illustrations

Due date: Monday, October 17, 2016

The framing and representation of gender, race and nation in museums is significant for the way museums contribute to public discourse on historical and contemporary issues. Drawing on key concepts and readings from the course (including Robert's "Getting Intersectional in Museums"), this assignment asks you to critically analyse an exhibit at a local or virtual museum of national scope (e.g. Canadian Museum for Human Rights, www.virtualmuseum.ca). Your goal is to reflect on how formations of gender, race and nation potentially intersect in a given exhibit, and how they are discursively framed through the selective use of objects, images, narratives, text labels, sounds, interactive technologies, placement/location in the museum collection, and other such techniques of display. A general "Museum Ethnography Prompt Sheet" is included on the reverse of this assignment instruction sheet to help you know what to pay attention to when you arrive at the museum!

ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA:

1. Choose one individual exhibit at a local or virtual museum of national scope. Give a brief description of the exhibit, referring to your museum ethnography prompt sheet notes.
2. How are gender, race, and nation (or other categories of identification) represented in the exhibition? How are these representations discursively framed through the selective use of objects, images, narratives, text labels, sounds, interactive technologies, the exhibits placement/location in the museum collection, and/or other techniques of display?
3. How might intersectionality operate here? In other words, how might gender, race, and nation (etc.) be seen as inter-implicated or interwoven with one another in the exhibit?
4. How does viewing the exhibit through an intersectional lens help you notice or understand the exhibit in ways that potentially deepen common-sense or surface level interpretations of gender, race and nation?
5. You may attach to your assignment relevant illustrations (i.e. photo images, transcripts of exhibit labels, museum takeaways) that you feel help give context to or describe your object of analysis. These will not be counted in your assignment's page length but will constitute an "Appendix."

MUSEUM ETHNOGRAPHY PROMPT SHEET

These are some general “prompts” to help you navigate the museum. They are by no means exhaustive, but are meant as starting points for collecting observations toward your analysis of exhibits.

1. Museums of national scope/scale typically have multiple exhibits housed within several different gallery spaces. Familiarize yourself with the overarching themes and physical layout of the museum and its various galleries (an introductory tour, a museum map, and/or a visit to the museum’s website in advance of your in-person visit are all useful toward this).
2. Choose one exhibit to focus on. Take note of which gallery the exhibit is housed within, and the overarching theme of that particular gallery. Also notice where and how the exhibit is positioned in relation to other exhibits in the gallery.
3. What elements make up the content of the exhibit you have chosen? I.e. objects, images, narratives, text labels, sounds, digital screens, and/or other techniques of display? (tip: take notes with a pen and paper while you are visiting the exhibit. If photography is permitted, take photos with your digital camera/smartphone to use as reminders after you leave the museum).
4. What is the general “story” of the exhibit, and how are the above elements used to frame and tell the story?
5. What particular stories are being told about gender, race, and nation? Whose voice/voices are used to frame and tell these stories, and how?
6. How are visitors invited to interact with the exhibit (or one another)? From what you observed, how do visitors (including yourself) *actually* interact with the exhibit (or one another)?
7. Does this exhibit have an on-line version, or any digital applications (downloadable app’s, audio guides, etc.) that allow you to access the exhibit virtually? How do they augment or extend the experience of site-specific version? Did you notice or collect any other exhibition “takeaways,” (e.g. brochures, souvenirs)? What do they communicate?
8. What features of the exhibit did you find most/least engaging and why?
9. What did you learn that was new or noteworthy?
10. In general, do you think the exhibit was effective? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
11. What are the most significant impressions and/or feelings you are left with from the exhibit and your visit to the museum?