Introduction
This module is designed around a simple question: how is the museum a different environment for historical and interpretative work related to science and technology, as compared with a university? It opens-up access to the Science Museum’s galleries, collections and curators, revealing the ways that the history of science and technology are preserved, researched, and displayed in a national museum. The module involves a consideration of the history of museums, curatorial work and general museological questions about how to use objects in historical work. The course discusses how different topics and kinds of objects feature in the museum’s work, from acquisition through to being placed on display. From the variety of case studies that the curators present, students will acquire a rich sense of what it means to curate science, and especially the history of science, in a public museum. Dissertations may also be written on museum topics.

Basic course information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course website:</th>
<th>Moodle Web site: <a href="https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=38691">https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=38691</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment: 1</td>
<td>One joint (groups of c.3 students) presentation (week 4) on the themes of the course (20%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>One written piece of 4,000 words combining elements of object biography and catalogue (perhaps of an imaginary exhibition) that demonstrates how museum objects and/or collections can be used to provide insights into the history of STEM (80%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timetable:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/module-information/pg-modules">http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/module-information/pg-modules</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prerequisites:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course convener:</td>
<td>Dr Tim Boon, Head of Research &amp; Public History, Science Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tim.boon@sciencemuseum.ac.uk">tim.boon@sciencemuseum.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web:</td>
<td><a href="https://sciencemuseum.academia.edu/TimBoon">https://sciencemuseum.academia.edu/TimBoon</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office location:</td>
<td>Science Museum Dana Research Centre, 165 Queens Gate London SW7 5HD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>By appointment only</td>
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1 For further information regarding assessments (including word counts, late submissions and possible penalties) please refer to the STS appropriate programme page i.e B.Sc or M.Sc
## Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UCL Week</th>
<th>Topic / location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tutors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to Museum History</td>
<td>15 Jan</td>
<td>Tim Boon and Sarah Wade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Object Stories</td>
<td>22 Jan</td>
<td>Ali Boyle and Sophie Waring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Exhibition: Top Secret</td>
<td>29 Jan</td>
<td>Liz Bruton</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Presentations by students</td>
<td>5 Feb</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Galleries: Science City</td>
<td>12 Feb</td>
<td>Alex Rose</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reading Week</td>
<td>19 Feb</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Collections: Art at the Science Museum</td>
<td>26 Feb</td>
<td>Katy Barrett and Sarah Wade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Galleries: Displaying Space</td>
<td>4 Mar</td>
<td>Doug Millard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Collections: Considering Infrastructure</td>
<td>11 Mar</td>
<td>Oliver Carpenter and David Rooney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Projects: Sound &amp; Music in Museums</td>
<td>18 Mar</td>
<td>Tim Boon and Aleks Kolkowski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Galleries: Medicine Galleries</td>
<td>25 Mar</td>
<td>Imogen Clarke, Katie Dabin, Selina Hurley and Sarah Wade</td>
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## Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Word limit</th>
<th>Deadline for Tutors to provide Feedback</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joint presentation</td>
<td>One joint (groups of c.3 students) presentation (week 4) on the themes of the course (20%)</td>
<td>5 February</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td>26 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Essay</td>
<td>One written piece that demonstrates how museum objects and/or collections can be used to provide insights into the history of STEM (80%)</td>
<td>03 April</td>
<td>4,000 words</td>
<td>8 May</td>
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**Assignments**
To be submitted as PDF or Word file to Moodle. Word length excludes appendices.

**Specific Criteria for Assessment for this Module:**
Students are expected to combine STS / HPS insights and theory with a specific focus on material culture / museum objects. Both the presentation and the essay should convey engagement with the course readings.

**Aims & objectives**

**Aims:**
- To give insights into how museum staff understand and mobilise the material culture of science, technology and medicine in theory and in practice.
- To link by subject and in theoretical approaches with the broader STS and HPS courses at UCL.

**Objectives:**
- To examine a range of material objects from across science, technology and medicine.
- To explore how authors from various traditions have written about the material culture of science etc.
- To provide insights into how science museums collect, document, research, and display across science, technology and medicine.
- To provide the opportunity and the structure for students to discuss, present and write about these topics.
- To seek connections with the STS and HPS literature.
**Reading list**

**General Introduction:**

See also papers in the Science Museum Group E-Journal: [http://journal.sciencemuseum.org.uk/](http://journal.sciencemuseum.org.uk/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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</table>
| 1. Introduction to Museum History | 15 Jan| Session overview: This session introduces students to the birth of the modern museum and the history of the Science Museum. We consider the development of museums from the early modern cabinet of curiosities to the 19th and 21st century museum and learn about the origins of the Science Museum.  
Essential reading:  
Film: *The Building and Operation of Industrial Museums* (1928) ([online](http://example.com))  
Background reading:  
| 2. Object Stories | 22 Jan | Session overview: Why do museums keep so much stuff? We use objects for memorialisation and inspiration in our displays, but can they tell us anything new? In this class we will explore different ways of studying material culture, and introduce the Science Museum’s object records.  
Essential reading:  

Background reading:

3. Exhibition: Top Secret
Jan 29
Session overview:
From the trenches of the First World War to the latest in cyber security, Science Museum exhibition Top Secret explores over a century’s worth of communications intelligence through hand-written documents, declassified files and previously unseen artefacts from the Science Museum Group’s and GCHQ’s historic collections. We will explore the creation and curation of this exhibition and consider how a Science Museum exhibition can explore complex and often emotive issues of digital privacy and national security in our current age of cyber security.

Essential reading:

4. Presentations by students
Feb 5
This session is dedicated to student group presentations.
### Session overview: Science City

This session uses the recently opened *Science City 1550–1800* gallery to explore the roles scientific instrument collections can play in studying and communicating the history of science. We will first consider the types of objects that have become classified as ‘scientific instruments’ within museum collections, and then consider some of the factors that shape the narratives that we present within the museum.

**Essential reading:**

**Background reading:**

### Session overview: Collections: Art and the Science Museum

This session introduces students to the Science Museum’s art collections as well as the history of art/science collaborations in modern and contemporary art. We consider the presentation and curation of artworks in the context of a Science Museum and discuss what art can add to conversations about science in the contemporary museum.

**Essential reading:**
- Redler, Hannah, ‘Where are we now? Art, Science and Interdisciplinary Practice’, Transcript from keynote presentation for *Animate Silent Signal* conference, February 2016

**Background reading:**
- Paul Glinkowski & Anne Bamford, *Insight & Exchange: An Evaluation of the Wellcome Trust’s Sciart Programme* (Wellcome Trust, 2009)
| 8. Galleries: Displaying Space | 4 Mar | **Session overview:**
This session considers and critiques existing modes of space exploration museum displays. It suggests a widespread norm which presupposes technical interest on the part of audiences. Further, it indicates broader, culturally inclusive narratives offer more meaningful and attractive themes to entice the sceptical museum visitor.

**Essential reading:**

| 9. Collections: Considering Infrastructure | 11 Mar | **Session overview:**
What do we mean by ‘infrastructure’ and in what ways can it be considered in the context of museum collections? How can infrastructure be ‘collected’, displayed and interpreted by museums? In this session, which will include fieldwork in the streets outside the Science Museum and in its galleries, we will consider a range of approaches to address these issues.

**Essential reading:**
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<th>10. Projects: Sound &amp; Music in Museums</th>
<th>18 Mar</th>
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**Session overview:** In this class, we think about the themes of the course via the sense of hearing, rather than vision. We think about what musical instruments have in common with scientific ones, and imagine what an exhibition about science and music might contain. During the class we will record our voices on a vintage Edison phonograph cylinder.

**Essential reading:**

**Background reading**
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session overview:</strong></td>
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<td>This session takes place in the new medicine galleries. Students will reflect on the challenges relating to displaying health and medicine and includes discussions on the presentation of objects relating to mental health and disability in the gallery.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Essential reading:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Background reading:</strong></td>
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**Course expectations**
Students on this course will be expected to attend and participate in all classes (at the Science Museum); to take part in a joint assessed presentation, to read at least the essential reading, and in their area of special interest leading to their assessment, undertake the background reading too.

**Additional information**
The course is taught at the Science Museum, all starting at 165 Queens Gate, London SW7 5HD. [https://goo.gl/maps/serrBNWN6K72](https://goo.gl/maps/serrBNWN6K72)

**Important policy information**
Details of college and departmental policies relating to modules and assessments can be found in the STS Student Handbook [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/STS/study/STS-student-handbook/STS-student-handbook](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/STS/study/STS-student-handbook/STS-student-handbook)

All students taking modules in the STS department are expected to read these policies.