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Museum Exhibition Assignment

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ANTH 20000: Archaeology
Virtual or In-Person Museum Visit Reflection Paper

Virtual Option

For this assignment you are required to write an **800-word** reflection on a single exhibition that you virtually visit at the American Museum of Natural History **or** the Temple of Dendur exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Each museum features rich virtual exhibitions that can be “visited” from the comfort of home. You **must** write about an exhibition that contains archaeological materials (i.e. no dinosaurs or Renaissance paintings). While you are encouraged to thoroughly explore these museum websites, you are required to write a **critical reflection** about your experience viewing **one** hall of your choosing. You may choose *any* temporary or permanent exhibition that showcases archaeological materials at the AMNH, but you should only write about the Temple of Dendur at the Met. In your paper you should present your general thoughts on the exhibition, the way it is presented in an online format, and how it relates to something you’ve learned in class. Also address the archaeological materials on display and how their used to tell a particular story about the past. This reflection will be worth 10 points.

Your job is NOT to summarize the exhibition and explain what artifacts were present. Instead, your job is to critically think about the virtual experience of "visiting" this exhibition and how this institution is presenting stories about the past through archaeological materials. Use specifics when making a particular point, whether it's a criticism or a compliment.

Specifics:

- Papers must be at least 800 words
- Your heading should include your name along with the name of the museum and specific exhibition you virtually visited

Given that Covid-19 has pushed museums to rethink their virtual presence, here are some questions to think about for your reflection:

- How has this museum made their exhibitions more virtually accessible?
- What can or can't you do through this virtual experience?
- What was the balance of text, audio, video, or photographs?
- What were you able to learn through the virtual experience that you might not have learned if you visited in person?
- What stories about the past is this exhibition trying to tell their visitors?
- What would make this virtual experience more engaging, educational, or enjoyable? Explain why.

Note that you don't have to address ALL of these questions; they are here to serve as a guide.

To get you started, you can visit the websites for each museum:

[American Museum of Natural History](#)

[Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)

- Note that the AMNH has partnered with Google for virtual tours of its exhibitions. [You can visit them here.](#)
- You can also download the [Explorer App](#) to virtually navigate the halls of the AMNH so you can then explore them through the Google Arts and Culture feature
- The Met's virtual resources are not as expansive
- If you choose to write about the Met, you should explore the Temple of Dendur exhibition using their [360 Project](#)

These two museums are world-famous institutions in our own backyard, so I encourage you to explore them virtually and in person (when it's safe to do so). If, however, you would like to write about an exhibition from a different museum from around the world, you can certainly ask me via email.

Finally, it is up to you to decide how to "explore" these virtual spaces, but take your time!! You can use Google's virtual tour or you can click through materials available on institutional websites. Explore links thoroughly and do your best to use what we've learned in class to think about what these famous museums are doing to introduce the public to archaeological materials.

In-Person Option

Now that it is becoming safer for us to experience the outside world around us, I encourage you, if you feel safe, to visit the AMNH or the Met. You are permitted to write a reflection about ANY museum exhibition that displays archaeological materials (NO DINOSAURS!). All of the guidelines for the assignment remain the same, but thinking more carefully about the in-person experience rather than the virtual details. You might want to consider how you're guided through the space to view archaeological materials, or how the exhibition is designed to tell a particular story about the past. Here are some details about visiting these institutions in person.

The American Museum of Natural History is located at Central Park West at 79th Street. The Museum is easily accessible by subway with the B (weekdays only) and C trains stopping directly at the Museum at 81st and the 1 train stopping at Broadway and 79th. **The Metropolitan Museum of Art is located at 1000 5th Ave.** It is easily accessible by subway at the 86th St. Lexington Ave. stop of the 4, 5, or 6 trains.

You are able to obtain “pay-as-you-wish” tickets free of charge at the ticket counter with a New York ID. Please donate what you’d like or what you can, but don’t feel obligated to pay the full admission price. General Admission tickets will provide you with access to all Museum Halls and permanent exhibitions. Special exhibitions require an additional ticket.

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