In recent years, art historians, intellectual historians, and historians of science have all turned their attention to collections: museums, private collections, botanical gardens, and the ways that bringing objects together shape our sense of their organization.

This course will be rooted in the singular collections of the city of London: the Museum of Science, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, National Gallery, Kew Gardens, the Chelsea Physic Garden, as well as smaller collections such as the Wallace Collection and Sir John Soane’s Museum. Each student will be asked to do one large research paper on a single collection: its origin, the persons who started and shaped it, the principles by which it was organized and displayed, the ways display may have shaped perceptions of relations.