

1595
HIST 395: Museum Exhibits
Fall 2015, Section 1
MW 9:35-10:50
CCC 224

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Office Hours: WF 2-3:30pm and by appointment

Course Summary

This course provides an introduction to the history and theory of museum exhibits. Over the course of the semester, students will experience first-hand the process of exhibition development by curating, designing, and installing an exhibit at the Scarrabachio Art Museum in downtown Stevens Point. In addition, students will analyze both the theoretical and practical challenges historians face in producing exhibitions for a general audience.

Learning Outcomes

Students taking “Museum Exhibits” develop skills for analyzing and interpreting history to a general audience. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate how interpretations of the past are conveyed in museum settings
- Complete an experiential learning project by overseeing the development of a museum exhibition for the community from start to completion
- Reflect on the experiential project by recognizing both theoretical and practical challenges in creating museum exhibits
- Collaborate by working in teams to curate an exhibition for the general public
- Locate and synthesize source materials, including written texts, audio/visual material, and/or objects in a final project suitable for a public audience

Required Texts

Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (for purchase at the bookstore)

Other assigned readings will be posted on D2L.

Assignments

Participation: Class participation consists of more than just regular attendance. It also involves coming to class prepared and engaged, bringing assigned readings, listening to fellow classmates and guest speakers, and actively contributing to class discussions. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Students may miss three classes before their final grade begins to drop 2% for each additional absence. It is not wise to use all of your absences early in the term in case you have legitimate reasons for missing class later. Arriving late or leaving early from class will be counted as one-half an absence. Students facing extenuating circumstances affecting their attendance (such as serious health issues, UWSP athletics, the birth of a child, military service, etc.) are encouraged to talk to me.

In-Class Responses: There will be a series of in-class writing responses to questions about the readings. I will grade in-class responses on a plus-check-minus system. A check-plus indicates exceptional work, a check represents basic competency, and a check-minus signals incomplete, inaccurate, or substandard work. Students who are absent will receive a zero for their participation grade that day and will not have an opportunity to make up the missing work. Students can drop their lowest response score.

Exhibit Script: The exhibit script is built upon several incremental assignments, including writing sample object labels, developing exhibit sections, producing an object and image list, and creating a complete draft of all panels and object labels as well as a proposed layout and annotated bibliography. Check the schedule for a full list of deadlines.

Portfolio: The portfolio represents the body of work that your team compiled over the course of the semester based on the individual team assignments and deadlines. All materials created by your team should be included. In addition, each student will write a 3-5 page essay detailing their individual contributions to the project as well as how this project has influenced their understanding of the role of museums in society.

Peer Evaluations: Collaboration is a major component of this course. At the end of the semester, your peers will write evaluations regarding your contributions to the project.

Assessment Breakdown*

Participation: 15%

In-Class Responses: 20% (divided evenly among responses)

Exhibit Script: 25% (5% object labels, 5% exhibit sections and object/image list, 15% rough draft of script)

Portfolio: 30% (20% team portfolio, 10% individual essay)

Peer Evaluations: 10%

*For students taking this course as a 500-level seminar, additional readings and projects may be assigned. Please see me for more details.

Grading Scale

A: 93-100

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 60-66

F: 59 and below

Classroom Policies

Students are expected to arrive on time and to be attentive and engaged during class. This means you are not sleeping, reading/working on other materials, using electronic devices, talking to your neighbor, or disrupting class in any way. Students will raise their hands for questions and be respectful of fellow students and the professor. You may disagree with another person's comment or position, but do so with courtesy and respect. For more information on classroom expectations, see: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Academic-Misconduct.aspx>

All forms of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fraud, and unauthorized access to tests and assignments are strictly prohibited. Any words or ideas borrowed from another person or source, whether through a direct quotation or through paraphrasing, must be cited properly to avoid plagiarism. Please familiarize yourself with what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. Violations of the university's code of conduct are subject to sanctions ranging from a failing grade for an assignment to disciplinary hearings or potential failure of the course. For more information on academic dishonesty, see:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>

If you have a learning or physical challenge that requires accommodation, please contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center as early as possible. They will then notify me privately of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Their office is located on the 6th floor the LRC, Voice: 715-346-3365, TTY: 715-346-3362.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, see:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/ADA.aspx>

Computers and other electronic devices are not allowed in class without getting permission from me in advance. Studies have shown that students learn more and perform better by writing down the main ideas of lecture versus typing them. For more information, see the article in *Scientific American* entitled "A Learning Secret: Don't Take Notes with a Laptop" (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>).

I hold regular office hours on Wednesdays and Fridays from 2-3:30pm (461 CCC). During this time, my priority is to talk to students about any questions or concerns they may have. I truly enjoy meeting with you to hear about how things are going. If you are struggling, stop by and let's chat. If you are unable to meet during office hours, email me and we will set up an alternative time.

Please note that the syllabus is subject to change and assignments may be added.

Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction

September 2: Course Introduction

Week 2: Selection of Roles

September 7: NO CLASS

September 9: Selection of Teams and Project Overview

Reading: Exhibit Proposal; Team Overview; Team Deadlines; Baker, "Planning Exhibits: From Concept to Opening" (on D2L)

Week 3: Art Versus History

September 14: Art Versus History

Reading: Excerpts from Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*; excerpts from Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work* (on D2L)

September 16: Tour of Scarrabachio Art Museum

Week 4: The Big Idea

September 21: The Big Idea and Interpretive Labels

Reading: Serrell, pp. 1-36

September 23: Museum Archival Research in Teams

Week 5: Exhibit Labels

September 28: Exhibit Labels Workshop

Reading: Serrell, pp. 105-110 and 125-130; Lord and Lord, *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, pp. 398-400 (on D2L)

Due: Object labels (all students)

September 30: Visitor Engagement

Reading: Serrell, pp. 83-94 and 233-236

Week 6: Digital Media

October 5: Team Updates

Due: Exhibit themes/sections and object/image list (all teams)

October 7: Electronic Labels and Hypermedia

Reading: Serrell, pp. 177-187

Week 7: Exhibit Design

October 12: Making Words and Images Work Together

Reading, Serrell, pp. 147-164

October 14: Typographic Design

Reading: Serrell, pp. 189-206; Williams, excerpts from *The Non-Designer's Design Book*; other readings TBD (on D2L)

Week 8: Museum Ethics

October 19: Team Updates

Due: Rough draft of script (all teams); starting draft of digital interactive (team 1)

October 21: Museum Ethics

Reading: McGreal, "Coming Home" (on D2L)

Week 9: Exhibit Production

October 26: Production/Fabrication

Reading: Serrell, 207-218; Parman et al, excerpts from *Exhibit Makeovers* (on D2L)

October 28: Museums as Spectacles

Reading: Lawrence Godkin, excerpt from *Museum Origins*, pp. 33-38 (on D2L)

Week 10: Museum Objects

November 2: Team Updates

Due: Script final draft and preliminary floorplan (team 1); draft of panel design/layout (team 2); promotional flyer and press release (team 3)

November 4: Museum Objects

Reading: Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* pp. 20-29 (on D2L)

Week 11: Exhibit Evaluation

November 9: Ethnographic Museums

Reading: Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography" (on D2L)

November 11: Evaluation

Reading: Serrell, pp. 219-231; Diamond, *Practical Evaluation Guide*, pp. 96-113

Week 12: Museum Outreach

November 16: Museum Outreach

Tongorra Matelic, "New Roles for Small Museums;" excerpts from Anderson, ed. *Reinventing the Museum* (on D2L)

DUE: Final plan for digital interactive (team 1); Final panel design and layout (team 2); Reception schedule and invitation list, project budget (team 3)

November 18: Museums and "Edutainment"

Reading: Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, pp. 159-174 (on D2L)

Week 13: Museums as Forums

November 23: Class Visit to Museum for Exhibit Installation

November 25: Museums as Community Forums

Reading: Archibald, *The New Town Square*, pp. 1-14 (on D2L)

Week 14: Museums and Memory

November 30: Team Updates (potentially on site at museum)

DUE: Exhibit Installation (Team 2); Evaluation form and final reception schedule (team 3)

December 2: Discussion: Museums and Memory

Reading: Linenthal, excerpts from *Preserving Memory*; Lowenthal, excerpts from *The Past is a Foreign Country* (on D2L)

Week 15: Museum Controversies

December 7: Museum Controversies

Reading: Dubin, *Displays of Power*, pp. 246-275 (on D2L)

December 9: Museum Definitions

Reading: Dillenburg, "What, if Anything, Is a Museum?" (on D2L)

December 11: Exhibit Reception

Week 16: Exhibit Reception

December 14: No Class (reception instead)

FINAL EXAM: Team portfolios and personal essays due. In-class peer reviews of fellow team members.