**HIST 390: Museum Exhibits**

Fall 2018, Section 1

T/TH 11:00-12:15

CCC 224

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Department of History Office: CCC 461

Office Hours: T/TH 12:30-2pm 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 planning, writing, and designing an exhibit for the general public. 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
* 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,* 2nd ed.*,* for purchase at the bookstore or online. If you decide to purchase a copy online, be sure to get the correct edition (2nd edition).

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 summaries of primary sources, 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 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 will be included in this assessment.

**Final Essay:** Students will write a 4-5 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% content summaries; 5% object labels, 5% exhibit sections and object/image list, 10% draft of script)

Portfolio: 20%

Final Essay: 10%

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: [https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf](https://www3.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf)

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 and resources, see: [https://www.uwsp.edu/datc/Pages/default.aspx](https://www3.uwsp.edu/datc/Pages/default.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. Students also perform better with their cell phones silenced and put away in their bookbags. 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 Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30-2pm (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. Given that we are working on actual community projects, our schedule may adapt based on the needs of our partners as well as the progress of our exhibition schedule.*

**Schedule**

**Week 1: Course Introduction**

September 4: Course Introduction

September 6: Museum Definitions

Readings: Dillenburg, “What, if Anything, Is a Museum?” (on D2L); Baker, “Planning Exhibits: From Concept to Opening” (on D2L)

**Week 2: Project Overview**

September 11: Art Versus History

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

September 13: Selection of Teams and Project Overview

Readings: Exhibit Proposals; Team Overview (on D2L)

**Week 3: The Big Idea**

September 18: Screening of *Dream Big Dreams*

Readings: James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns* (D2L); Obituary of Vel Phillips (D2L)

September 20: Class Discussion on Fair Housing

Readings: Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America* (D2L)

**Week 4: The Big Idea**

September 25: Fair Housing in Central Wisconsin

Readings: Franklin Papers (D2L); Pulitzer Prize Guide (D2L)

DUE: Summaries of Primary Sources

September 27: The Big Idea and Interpretive Labels

Reading: Serrell, pp. 19-46

**Week 5: Site Visits**

October 2: Visit UWSP Archives (subject to change)

October 4: Tour of Portage County Public Library (subject to change)

**Week 6: Museum Objects**

October 9: Exhibit Labels Workshop

Serrell, pp. 86-105 &117-143; Lord and Lord, *Manual of Museum Exhibitions,* pp. 398-400 (on D2L)

**Due: Object Labels (all students)**

October 11: Museum Objects

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

**Week 7: Digital Media**

October 16: Team Updates

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

October 18: Digital Interpretive Devices

Readings: Serrell, pp. 204-229

**Week 8: Exhibit Design**

October 23: Design Overview

Readings: Serrell, pp. 166-177 & 266-286; Williams, *The Non-Designer’s Design Book* (on D2L)

October 25: Design Workshop (Location TBD)

**Week 9: Exhibit Production**

October 30: Team Updates

**Due: Rough draft of script (all teams)**

November 1: Exhibit Production

Readings: Serrell, pp. 287-301; Parman et al, excerpts from *Exhibit Makeovers* (on D2L)

**Week 10: Visitor Engagement**

November 6: Visitor Engagement

Readings: Serrell, pp. 49-85

November 8: Team Updates

**Due: Script final draft and preliminary floorplan (Editorial Teams); draft of panel**

**design/layout (Design Teams); promotional flyer and press release (Administrative**

**Team)**

**Week 11: Museum Ethics**

November 13: Museums and “Edutainment”

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

November 15: Museum Ethics

Readings: McGreal, “Coming Home” (on D2L)

**Week 12:**

November 20: Team Updates

**DUE: Script for reception (Editorial Teams); Final panel design and layout**

**(Design Teams); Reception schedule and invitation list, project budget (Administrative Team)**

November 22: Fall Break (no class)

**Week 13: Evaluation**

November 27: Evaluation

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

November 29: Museum Outreach (Potential Project Workshop, if needed)

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

**Week 14: Finalizing the Project**

December 4: Exhibit Installation Workshop

December 6: Team Updates (possibly on site at library)

**DUE: Exhibit Installation (Design Teams); Evaluation form, final reception schedule, and exhibit guide (Administrative Team)**

**Week 15: Museum Controversies**

December 11: Museum Controversies

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

December 13: No Class (reception instead)

**December 14: Exhibit Reception**

**Week 16: Final Essay**

**FINAL ESSAYS DUE:** Tuesday, December 18, 2:45pm-4:45pm, CCC 224