

**HIST 541: Museum Exhibit Design and Development**  
Spring 2018: M 5:00 pm – 7:50 pm  
Instructors: Jacqueline Beatty, PhD and Chad H. Parker, PhD

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### **Course Description and Objectives:**

In this course, we will conceptualize, develop, and create an exhibit for the History Department's "Museum on the Move" program. Throughout the semester, students will gain hands-on experience in exhibit design by researching and writing content, preparing artifacts for display, conceptualizing a layout for the program, and creating digital content to pair with the physical exhibit. Students will work collectively on a semester-long project which will challenge their creativity and skills as Public Historians as we work through the problem-solving process inherent in devising a small mobile exhibit. Additionally, students will read and discuss works on the theory, best practices, and implementation of museum work and exhibit design.

### **Required Texts:**

- Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (1996).
- Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (2013).
- Barry Lord and Maria Piacente, *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Second Edition (2014).
- Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museums* (2010). Available for Free Online: <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read/>

Many other readings are available on the web, through our library, or as a PDF on the course Moodle page.

### **Weekly Blogs and Social Media Work:**

Students will create a Twitter account and a blog site through which they will discuss each week's readings along with their challenges and successes with the semester-long project in order to help each other through the process of designing and developing a museum exhibit. These posts should **not** be summaries; rather, they should thoughtfully engage with the reading and demonstrate that the student has thought critically about them. Students must post their brief, 250-500 word reactions to each week's readings and assignments **24 hours in advance** of our class meeting time. Students must also respond to at least two of their peers' posts through commenting on their reactions before our class meeting. Students should tweet their blog posts,

updates/progress on the exhibit throughout the semester, and use the space to continue the conversation outside the classroom. On the first day of class, we will come up with a hashtag that you will use when tweeting about class/your assignments.

**Grade Distribution:**

- Participation 20%
- Final Project 20%
- Actions/Assignments 40%
- Weekly Blogs 20%

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Mardi Gras, Introduction**

**Date: January 18**

**Setting: HLG 501**

Readings: Mardi Gras

1. Lipsitz, "Mardi Gras Indian: Carnival and Counter-Narrative in Black New Orleans" *Cultural Critique*
2. Lindahl, "The Presence of the past in the Cajun Country Mardi Gras" *Journal of Folklore Research*
3. Sexton, "Cajun Mardi Gras: Cultural Objectification and the Symbolic Appropriation in a French Tradition" *Ethnology*
4. Gotham, "Marketing Mardi Gras: Commodification, Spectacle, and the Political Economy of Tourism in New Orleans," *Urban Studies*
5. Mitchell, "Carnival and Katrina," *Journal of American History*
6. Atkins, "'Using the Bow and the Smile': Old-Lie Krewe Court Femininity in New Orleans Mardi Gras Balls, 1870-1920," in *Louisiana History*
7. Ancelet, "Singing Outlaws and Beggars with Whips," unpublished conference presentation
8. DeWolf, "From Moors to Indians: The Mardi Gras Indians and the Three Transformations of St. James," *Louisiana History* (2015): 6-41

Assignments:

- Write one page summary/analysis for class on blog
- Report to Class

In Class:

- Discussion and planning for semester

**Week 2: Archive Day and Collections Management**

**Date: January 22**

**Setting: Library**

Readings: Collections Management

- TBA

In Class:

- Visit Archives and Museum on the Move
- Sign up for times to teardown, catalog, and clean
- Begin teardown of previous exhibit in trailer

**Week 3: Community Engagement and History Harvests**

**Date: January 29**

**Setting: Classroom**

- Readings: Oral History
- Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, Chapters 1, 2, and 3; Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," *JAH* (2002);

## Readings: Web Presence

- Ludden, "An Introduction to Digital Strategies for Museums," *Museums and the Web 2014*
- Dupuy, et. al., "Towards Open Museums: The Interconnection of Digital and Physical Spaces in Open Environments," *Museums and the Web 2015*
- Post/Interview: "From Twitter to Spotify: The Digital Presence of the Museum of Romanticism in Madrid"
- "Sustaining Places: Guidelines on Digital Presence"

## In Class:

- Online/social media/media plan
- Plan History Harvests

**Week 4: Big Idea and Exhibit Creation****Date: February 5****Setting: Classroom**

## Readings: Exhibit Creation

- *Creating Exhibitions*: Introduction, and Chapters 1, 2, and 7
- *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*: Chapters, 1, 2, 3, 14, Chapter 15

## In Class:

- Break into Teams. What are the teams? Who leads which teams? What are the assignments/goals/duties of each team?
- Exhibition Briefs

**Week 5: Mardi Gras Break****Date: February 9 – 14****Setting: Mardi Gras**

## Assignment:

- History Harvests

**Week 6: Narrative and Audience****Date: February 19****Setting: Classroom**

## Readings:

- *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*: Chapters 4 and 10
- *Creating Exhibitions*: Chapters 4 and 5
- Simon, *Participatory Museum*
- Bedford, "Storytelling: The Real Work of Museums," *Curator: The Museum Journal* (2001)
- Sam H. Ham, "Interpretations and Communication"

## Assignment:

- Target Audience Plan Due

**Week 7: Objects, Artifacts, and Ethics****Date: February 26****Setting: Library/Classroom**

## Readings:

- *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*: Chapters 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12
- Conn, "Do Museums Still Need Objects"
- "History and the Public: What Can We Handle? A Roundtable about History after the *Enola Gay* Controversy," *Journal of American History* 82 (Dec. 1995)
- American Alliance of Museums, "Code of Ethics for Museums"
- AASLH Statement of Professional Standards and Ethics
- NCPH Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Assignment:

- Draft Ethics Guidelines for Museum on the Move

### **Week 8: Organization, Content Sections, and Component Plans**

**Date: March 5**

**Setting: Classroom**

Readings:

- Lubar, "The Making of 'America on the Move' at the National Museum of American History," *Curator: The Museum Journal* (2004)
- *Creating Exhibitions*: Chapters 8 and 9
- *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*: Chapters 16 and 17

Assignment:

- Begin outlining museum content

### **Week 9: Label Writing**

**Date: March 12**

**Setting: Classroom**

Readings

- Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*
- Stephen Bitgood, "The Role of Attention in Designing Effective Interpretive Labels," *Journal of Interpretation Research* 5 (2000): 31-45
- Larry Borowsky, "Telling a Story in 100 Words: Effective Label Copy," *AASLH Technical Leaflet* 240 (updated)
- David Wallis, "Labels, Digital Included, Assume New Importance at Museums," *New York Times*, March 17, 2015
- Watch: Judy Rand, "Adventures in Label Land" <https://vimeo.com/21080364>

Assignment:

- Draft Labels of Labels Due and Peer Review

### **Week 10: Design**

**Date: March 19**

**Setting: Classroom**

Readings:

- *Creating Exhibitions*: Chapter 6
- *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*: Chapter 18

Assignments:

- Peer Review of Labels Due
- Draft of Design

In Class:

- Discussion: Layout (Floorplanner.com, Adobe Spark, Sketchup)

### **Week 11: Text and Design Finalized**

**Date: March 26**

**Setting: Classroom**

Assignments:

- Final Versions of Exhibit Labels and Due
- Present Labels in Class for Finalization
- Final Versions of Design Due
- Present Design to Class for Finalization

**Week 12: Spring Break**

**Date: March 30 – April 8**

Assignments:

- Submit for Printing

**Week 13: Practicum: Installation, Website, Promotion**

**Date: April 9**

**Setting: Various**

**Week 14: Practicum: Installation, Website, Promotion**

**Date: April 16**

**Setting: Various**

**NCPH: April 19 – 22**

**Week 15: Practicum: Installation, Website, Promotion**

**Date: April 23**

**Setting: Various**

**Finals: Opening**

**Date: May 2**

**Setting: TBD**