

Syllabus
HIST 408
Museum Studies
Fall, 2001

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Kalamazoo, MI 49008
616-387-4639
Office Hours: Wednesday, 4:00 to 5:00 PM

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 to 9:30 AM

Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 AM to 10:45 AM
Class Location: Dunbar 4205

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION: "History, philosophy, organization, and administration of general history, science, technology, and art museums. Discussion of collecting theory, conservation and security, display and interpretation, and the role of museums in culture and education."

COURSE OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this course is to help students understand the role and function of museums in American society. It will examine museology and museography. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), museology is defined as museum science, the study of "the history and background of museums, their role in society, specific systems for research, conservation, education, and organization, relationship with the physical environment, and the classification of different kinds of museums. Museology is "the branch of knowledge concerned with the study and purposes and organization of museums."

Museography is defined by ICOM as the "body of techniques related to Museology covers methods and practices in the operation of museums, in all their various aspects."

In addition, this course will present students with an opportunity to develop skills which are essential for beginning a museum career including: 1) knowledge of professional ethics and standards approved by the American Association of Museums and other professional organizations and their application; 2) the ability to research and conceptualize Museum Studies issues and questions; 3) the ability to effectively communicate with diverse audiences in written and oral form; 4) the ability to work collaboratively with a variety of individuals and institutions concerned about cultural resources; and 5) the ability to complete projects in a timely fashion, working both independently and as part of a team.

COURSE READINGS

1. Alexander, Museums in Motion- An Introduction to the History and Function of Museums
2. Burcaw, Introduction to Museum Work
3. Falk and Dierking, Learning from Museums
4. Leon and Rosenzweig, History Museums in the United States
5. America's Museums [Daedalu vol. 128, no. 3]

6. Alderson and Low, Interpretation of Historic Sites

COURSE SCHEDULE

Key Issues and Questions:

1. What is a museum? Who established the first museums and why? What was their role or function? How did the purpose of museums change over time? What are the different types of museums? What are the similarities and differences between the different types of museums? What were the differences and similarities between the earliest museums founded in the U.S. and those in Europe and other parts of the world?

8/30: Alexander, 1- 116

9/4: Alexander, 117-191

9/6: Alexander, 192 to end

9/11: field trip to Kalamazoo Valley Museum

9/13: Burcaw, 1-62

9/18: Burcaw, 63-end

9/20: Pitman, 1-31

9/25: field trip to the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

2. Who established the first history museums in the U.S.? What were their goals and purposes? Where were most of the nation's first history museums and historic sites located? What were their areas of focus? How have the functions of history museums in the U.S. changed over time? What economic, political, social, and cultural factors have affected the growth and development of the America's history museums and the way they are viewed by the public? What is the role of the museum in furthering public understanding of history and its role in every day life?

9/27: Leon and Rosenweig, 3-114

10/2: Leon and Rosenweig, 115-180,

10/4: field trip to Kellogg's Cereal City USA

3. Who goes to museums and why? How have patterns of museum attendance changed over time? Who determines what museum visitors, see, hear, and do? What process is used to determine the messages the museum will communicate to its audiences and how they will be conveyed? What are the most effective ways to determine whether interpretive messages are

being successfully communicated to museum visitors? What opportunities and challenges does each type of museum offer in establishing a rapport with diverse museum audiences?

10/6: Falk and Dierking, 1- 112

10/11: Falk and Dierking, I 13-end

10/ 16: guest speaker

10/18: Alderson and Low, 3-92

10/23: Alderson and Low, 93-198

10/25: Leon and Rosenzweig, 183-236

10/30: Leon and Rosenweig, pp. 237-320

11/6: field trip to Kalamazoo Aviation History Museum

4. What opportunities and problems face museums today? Should museums foster or attempt to arrest social, economic, political, or cultural change? What role should technology play in museums? Will museums remain committed to the traditional functions of research, collection, conservation, exhibition, and education or will their functions change as a result of technology, increased leisure time, or audience or market demand?

11/8: Harris, 33-56; Noriega, 57-82; McLean, 83-108

11/13: Skramstand, 109-128; Anderson, 129-162; Gurian, 163-184

11/15: Boyd, 185-228; Weil, 229-258; Falk, 259-276

11/20: Koster, 277-296; Sirefinan, 297-320; Newhouse, 321-326; Correa, 327-332; Tschurmi, 333-337

5. What are the demands made upon museum professionals? What are the benefits of volunteer, part-time or seasonal employment? What type of education and skills are demanded of museum professionals? What are the opportunities for further educational and training in museums and nonprofit management?

11/27: in-class assignment

11/29: concluding discussion and remarks

ASSIGNMENTS: Your grade for this course will be determined by the quality of your contributions to the class and the following assignments. Please note that the writing assignments require advance planning and research. This is particularly the case if you do not have experience in doing research in Public History and more specifically, Museum Studies. During the past few years, many newly published works in the field of Museum Studies have been purchased for Waldo Library or the non-circulating Archives Library. For periodical listings, be sure to check the Art index, America: History and Li and other web-based indices for scholarship and writings in the field. Waldo Library has subscriptions to most of the periodicals used in Museum Studies research, including Museum News, History New Curator, and The Public Historian. There are, however, a number of periodicals regularly used by museum professionals such as the British journal, Museum Studies, which are not in Waldo Library. You will need to request articles and many new books on Inter-Library Loan, so plan accordingly.

All students are expected to uphold the ethics of a museum professional as well as the WMU code of academic honesty. Please see pp. 271-272 of the WMU Undergraduate Catalog for information regarding your responsibility for academic honesty and integrity.

Assignment I

Due: 9/27

Select a museum from the list below. Write a paper that analyzes the history and development of the institution. What is the museum's mission? Has the museum's mission or focus changed over time? Why? Who are the museum's policy makers? Who is the target audience? What resources does the museum have at its disposal to help bring about the realization of its mission? What are the museum's plans for the future?

Colonial Williamsburg
Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village
Getty Museum
Winterthur Museum and Gardens
Museum of African American History
Museum of Modern Art
Mystic Seaport
South Street Seaport
Metropolitan Museum of Art
San Diego Zoo
Japanese American National Museum
Exploratorium
Museum of Science and Industry

Assignment 2

Due date: 10/6

During the September 11 field trip to the KVM, please pay careful attention to the exhibit in the foyer, located beyond the Mercantile, which includes the panels, "Museums are About Questions," "Interview an Artifact" "Interview Justice," and "Questions Make Connections." Please look at the loose-leaf binder on the stairs that discusses the artifacts on the

wall. Visit the "On the Trail of History" gallery. Write a paper that offers specific suggestions on how the Museum's staff could strengthen the relationship between the "Museums are About Questions" and "Interview and Artifact" (which present historical method) and "On the Trail of History" gallery. Your analysis should assess how effectively the exhibits convey the concept that history is a problem solving discipline and that museums can help answer questions about the past. You may wish to consult articles about museum exhibits and reviews of museums and museum exhibits in the Journal of American History The Public Historian, and other journals.

Assignment 3

Due date: 11/8

Select a museum from the list below. What is the history and background of the museum? How visible is it in the community? Who does the museum serve? Has its audience changed over time? Is the museum visitor-friendly? What messages does it communicate? Does it effectively communicate its messages? Your report should include discussion of some specific recommendations for improvement and their perceived benefit.

Celery Flats Historic Center
Kalamazoo Aviation History Museum
Gilmore Classic Car Club Museum
Kalamazoo Nature Center
Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum and Homestead
Studebaker Museum

Assignment 4

Due Date: 11/29

Select a job or internship announcement from AVISO, Dispatch, or other source appropriate for an internship or entry-level museum professional. Prepare a resume and write a letter of application for the position job. Please provide FIVE copies; they will be distributed and discussed in class on 11/29.

Final Exam

December 6, 10:15 AM to 12:15 PM

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus as necessary.