

ART 3309 (Spring 2020)
Exhibition Practices II: Exhibition Development and Design Lab

Course Information

Title: See above

Art A463

MW 9:30-12:20

Credit: 3 hours

Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Elisabeth Sommer

Office location: 219 Kelley Hall

Office hours: 4:30-5:30 M; 10:30-12:00 T; and by appointment

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Welcome to the hardest class you'll ever love (at least that's what I'm hoping). Your task is to learn the ins and outs of exhibit development, and to play an active role in designing and implementing an exhibit. We will spend a few weeks reading about and discussing issues of interpretation and the public interaction with museum exhibits and looking at examples. **Be prepared.** Some of the work for this class will need to be done outside of class meetings. We will utilize Basecamp as our virtual meeting space and be implementing our exhibit in the Tom Lea Gallery at the Centennial (not to be confused with the Tom Lea Gallery at EPMA).

Instructor Introduction

You all know me. We can skip this.

Course Expectations and Goals

This class can only succeed with the **full participation of all students**. Because you will work as a team, and in sub-teams, everyone will be responsible for the finished product. You will be graded largely on your specific portion of the script/exhibit, but I will be paying attention to how each of you works with the others. When we have readings, I expect you to **come to class ready to discuss** the material, so you need to plan your time carefully. **Civil and respectful class conversation will be critical** to developing the exhibit. It is fine to disagree, but do not step on other's ideas; listening is a fine skill to develop.

We will also take a field trip, and do some practical exercises, and (hopefully) learn from professionals in the field as we develop our concepts. All of this is intended to help you understand the challenges and processes involved in creating museum exhibits. Each of you should finish the class with experience in label writing, developing an exhibit's "big idea," setting project goals, assessing design elements, meeting deadlines, and working as a team.

Reading Assignments

We will spend the first couple of weeks reacquainting ourselves with “best practices” in exhibit design and interpretation. I have chosen the following readings to guide our thinking:

Selections from Barry Lord and Maria Piacente, Eds. *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* and Leslie Bedford, *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences* (all posted on Blackboard)

Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (in the bookstore and on Amazon)

Writing Assignments

In addition to the product of your contribution to the script and exhibit, you will also write an exhibit review, in which you assess the exhibit we will see on our field trip. All students will have to write a draft label (details TBD). Finally, each of you will submit a report on your experience developing the script and exhibit, which will be due on the day scheduled for the final.

Grades

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Discussion/Participation | 20% |
| Draft Label Exercise | 15% |
| Exhibit Review | 20% |
| Final Product and Report | 45% |

Exhibit Development Teams

On an actual exhibit development committee or team, each member represents an important facet of the process and product. We will represent these various facets through teams of two. Within these groups, each member should have particular responsibilities within the group’s aspect of the exhibit. The final product, however, needs to be cohesive, both in terms of the team’s contribution, and the exhibit as a whole.

Team breakdown and responsibilities will be as follows:

Curatorial Team

- Responsible for object research and recommendation for inclusion
- Keeps track of all objects and produces final object list
- Works closely with education and exhibit design teams to insure selection of best objects for interpretation and proper display conditions
- Insures accuracy of information on labels
- Takes the lead in mounting/installation of objects

Education Team

- Responsible for developing concepts for interactive components of exhibit
- Responsible for label-writing
- Develops supporting educational programming, including supplementary exhibit material, docent training guidelines, school tour and/or in-class material
- Works closely with curatorial and design teams to insure best practices in audience communication and engagement
- Works closely with public relations/outreach team to insure harmony in message and approach

Design Team

- Responsible for overall design of exhibit including floorplan, case layout, interactives, and label graphics
- Produces final layouts in graphic form, including overall floorplan, label design, interactives design, and section and case layout
- Works closely with curatorial team to insure proper placement of objects within design
- Works closely with label writing team to insure harmony in design, size, and text
- Works closely with public relations/outreach team to insure coherence in design of exhibit and PR materials
- Works closely with education team on development of interactives

Public Relations/Outreach Team

- Responsible for all aspects of promotion and community connection
- Produces final model for all PR material, including postcards and posters (if relevant), press release etc.
- Develops, implements, and interprets front-end and formative evaluation surveys
- Develops proposals for supporting community outreach activities (lectures, special events, etc.)
- Works closely with education team to insure that proposed programs are fun, engaging, and educational, and reach a variety of audiences
- Works closely with design team to insure coherence between PR materials and exhibit

Resources

You need to utilize the resources available in the library, as well as the UTEP collections and databases. If the topic requires it, I will place a selection of books on reserve.

Assignment Schedule (subject to change)

January 22: Introduction and Discussion of Potential Exhibit Topic (not the same thing as the “big idea”)

January 27: Exploring “Best Practices” in Exhibit Development (*Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Chapter 2 “The Purpose of Museum Exhibitions” and Chapter 4 “Measuring Success”) Exploration of Centennial Museum temporary exhibits—**class meets at the Centennial**

January 29: Best Practices: Modes of Exhibit Interpretation (*Manual* Chapter 10, “Participatory Experiences, Chapter 16 “Interpretive Planning,” and Chapter 19 “Multimedia”) **Submission of Exhibit Team Assignment Requests**

February 3: Putting the Interpretive Exhibit Together (*The Art of Museum Exhibitions*, Part III, Chapter 6, “Creating and Experiencing the Exhibit Medium”) **Assignment of Exhibit Teams**

February 5: The Role of Interpretive Labels—a deeper look (Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels* Chapters 2-4, 6-9)

February 10: Continued Exploration of Interpretive Labels (Serrell, Chapters 12, 14-21)

February 12: Discussion of potential front-end evaluation questions (PR team takes the lead) and exploration of potential exhibit objects (Curatorial takes the lead); **PR team prepares to launch front-end evaluation**

February 17: Developing the Exhibit Concept—guest speaker on exhibit design process (this is your chance to hear from somebody who’s been on the front lines); **Exhibit Review due**

February 19: Research Day—Meet at beginning and end of class time

February 24: **Report on initial object research** from curatorial team, and **report on results of front-end evaluation** from PR/outreach team;

February 26: Class conducts card sorting exercise to identify themes; **Label exercise due**

March 2: **Decision on “big idea,” and goals** (general, educational, and experiential); Education team takes lead on educational goals, Design team takes lead on experiential goals, but input and final decision by all teams (i.e. the entire exhibit “committee”)

March 4: **Final object recommendations** from Curatorial team and decision on objects; group work, with Education team beginning work on programs and interactives, Design team working on color and font schemes, PR team identifying image selections for use in poster and postcard

March 9: Group work; Design team begins process of drafting floorplan etc.; Education team begins drafting labels and brainstorming ideas for interactives (consults with

Design and PR teams on color and font schemes); PR team begins developing PR plan; Curatorial team reviews object requirements consults with Design team on display approaches

March 11: Group work; PR team presents **draft of PR material**; Design and Education teams present **draft of label types**, color and font schemes; Education team presents **proposal for interactives** (may include “interactive” approach to certain labels); preparation of draft labels to be posted by next meeting (Mar. 25)

March 16-March 20: Spring Break!! (We’re all excited, but you’ll need to continue with your work because things are getting real now)

March 23: Presentation and group review of **draft floorplan, case design etc.**; PR team produces sample materials and PR plan; formative evaluation of labels

March 25: Group discussion of label text; Education team prepares to have **final form of labels to the Design team** by April 1 (no fooling); Education team continues work on interactives and programs; formative evaluation of design elements

March 30: Group work; PR team finalizes PR materials and works on outreach programs; Curatorial team consults with Education team and Design team; Design team works on final draft of elements; Education team finalizes interactive elements and consults with Design team

April 1: Design team presentation of **final exhibit design** (floorplan, cases, labels); Design team and PR team present **final version of PR materials; All materials ready to be sent for printing** (no, this is not an April Fool’s joke)

April 3: Mock-up in Centennial; Education team presents **final version of programs**; PR team presents final version of **outreach plan**

April 8: Formative Evaluation of mock-up; Print materials distributed

April 13: Fabrication and installation

April 15: Fabrication and installation continued

April 16 or April 23: Official opening

April 23-May 6: Tracking of evaluation data

May 6: Discussion of evaluation data

Individual project reports due by 5:30 on Wednesday, May 15