

ART 3309 (Spring 2018)
Exhibition Practices II: Interpretation and Exhibit Design Lab

Course Information

Title: See above

Art A463

TR 9:00-11:50

Credit: 3 hours

Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Elisabeth Sommer

Office location: 219 Kelley Hall

Office hours: 1:30-2:30 T; 10:30-12:30 W and by appointment

Phone 917-921-2642

Email: ewsommer@utep.edu

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 museum interpretation, 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 either Facebook or GoogleDocs as our virtual meeting space (unless I can navigate Blackboard successfully).

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 make 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 books to guide our thinking:

Leslie Bedford, *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences* (in the bookstore and on Amazon)

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 for script
- 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

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 evaluation survey
- 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. In addition to these, I will place a selection of books on reserve.

Assignment Schedule (subject to change)

January 16: Introduction and Decision on Exhibit Topic (not the same thing as the “big idea”)

January 18: Exploring “Best Practices” in Exhibit Development (*The Art of Museum Exhibitions*, Leslie Bedford; Part I, Chapter 1, “Exhibitions as Education,” skim pp. 21-30, focus on pp.30-30; Chapter 2, “Alternative Exhibition Models”) **We will not meet as a**

class. Please submit your answers to the discussion questions posted online to me via email.

January 23: The “What If” of exhibit development (Bedford, Part II, Chapter 3 “Story,” Chapter 2 “Imagination,” and Chapter 3, “John Dewey and Art as Experience”); discussion will also review reading assignment for Jan. 18. **Submission of Exhibit Team Assignment Requests**

January 25: Putting the Interpretive Exhibit Together (Bedford, Part III, Chapter 6, “Creating and Experiencing the Exhibit Medium”) **Assignment of Exhibit Teams**

January 30: The Role of Interpretive Labels—a deeper look (Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels* Chapters 2-4, 6-9)

February 1: Continued Exploration of Interpretive Labels (Serrell, Chapters 12, 14-21)

February 6: Field trip to EPMH to view *The Things We Brought*

February 8: 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); class conducts card-sorting exercise; **Label exercise due**

February 13: Exploration of Centennial lobby space and review of selected objects

February 15: 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; Exhibit Review due**

February 20: Research Day—Meet at beginning and end of class time

February 22: **Report on initial object research** from curatorial team, and **report on results of front-end evaluation** from PR/outreach team;

February 27: Research Day—ditto above

March 1: **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 6: Decision on themes; **Final object recommendations** from Curatorial team and decision on objects; group work, with Education team beginning work on school programs and interactives

March 8: 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 13-15: SPRING BREAK!!! (don't get too relaxed, the serious work starts now)

March 20: 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. 22)

March 22: Presentation and group review of **draft floorplan, case design etc.**; PR team produces sample materials and PR plan; formative evaluation of labels

March 27: Group discussion of label text; Education team prepares to have **final form of labels to the Design team** by Mar. 29; Education team continues work on interactives and school programs; formative evaluation of design elements

March 29: 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 3: 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**

April 5: Mock-up in Centennial; Education team presents **final version of school programs**; PR team presents final version of **outreach programs**

April 10: Development of evaluation plan (observation, survey, etc.)

April 12: Fabrication and installation

April 17: Fabrication and installation continued

April 19: Celebration and review of process

April 24-May 1: Tracking of evaluation data

May 3: Discussion of evaluation data

Individual project reports due by 5:30 on May 8