

Museum Education and Interpretation
History 6303, University of West Georgia/Atlanta History Center
Spring 2013

Instructor:

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Office hours: Tu/Th, 11-1 and 3:30-4:30 in the Center for Public History, lower level of the Ingram Library; 12-1 at the Atlanta History Center by appointment, and other hours by appointment

Atlanta History Center Lead Instructor:

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Class meetings: Wednesday, 1-3:30 in the small classroom at the Atlanta History Center, 130 Paces Ferry Road NW, Atlanta, Georgia

Course Description

The goal of this class is to prepare public history students to plan, implement, and evaluate educational and interpretive programs at a museum, park, battlefield or historic site. Students will gain theoretical knowledge about the field of interpretation and education and gain historical perspective about trends in the field. Each student will complete several hands-on assignments that provide experience in the tasks that a museum interpreter or educator would undertake. Students will produce portfolios to demonstrate class learning and to assist them in future job searches.

The Atlanta History Center will serve as a learning laboratory for the class, providing opportunities for students to observe and participate in educational programs and to engage in practicum activities. Students will also learn from the educators and professional staff at the AHC and additional guest speakers around the Atlanta region.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate:

1. Knowledge of the literature in the field of museum education and interpretation;
2. Knowledge of theory and ethics of museum education and interpretation;
3. An understanding of learning theory as it relates to museum education;
4. Knowledge of different kinds of museum programming, including traditional audiences such as school tours, families, and adult groups, as well as new emerging audiences in the museum field;
5. Knowledge of educational and interpretive techniques used in museums, including but not limited to guided tours, object-based learning, living history interpretation, and museum theater;
6. Practical skills in museum education including the development of programs, budgets, logistics, and evaluation techniques;
7. Knowledge of the Georgia Performance Standards and the ways in which school programs should incorporate and reflect those standards.

Required Readings

- Donnelly, Jessica Foy, editor. *Interpreting Historic House Museums*. AltaMira Press, 2003.
- Falk, John H., Lynn Diekling, and Susan Foutz. *In Principle, In Practice: Museums as Learning Institutions*. AltaMira Pres, 2007.
- Johnson, Ann, Kimberly Huber, Nancy Cutler, Melissa Bingham, and Tim Grove, *The Museum Educator's Manual: Educator's Share Successful Techniques*. Altamira Press, 2009.
- Pulstz, Jennifer, *Voices from the Back Stairs*. Northern Illinois Press, 2009.
- Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. University of North Carolina Press, Fourth edition, 2008.
- Simon, Nina, *The Participatory Museum*. Museum 2.0, 2009.
- Wilkening, Susie and James Chung, *Life Stages of the Museum Visitor*. American Association of Museums, 2009.

Additional readings are on electronic reserve on the UWG library website under our course name and number. The password to access these readings is “education.” Some additional readings will also be made available as hand-outs in class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Class Portfolio

Students will compile a portfolio that contains all of the class assignments and submit this portfolio on the final exam date. The portfolio should be of professional quality and include any supporting illustrative material. Consider this requirement as an opportunity to develop a portfolio that you would be proud to show a potential employer to demonstrate what you have learned about museum education and interpretation.

The portfolio must include *all* of the written assignments listed below. Students will have the opportunity to revise the two program plans, based on faculty comments, before submitting them in the portfolio. The final grade for these plans will be based on the version of that assignment submitted in the portfolio. You must include a copy of both your original draft (with our comments) and the revised version in the portfolio in order to get credit for the changes that you may have made.

Portfolio Essay (10 points)

The portfolio will include a five- to six-page essay to demonstrate what you have learned from the class. Be sure to integrate what you considered important insights and useful guidance from the course readings and footnote the readings appropriately, using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Remember that this portfolio essay is one of our key tools for evaluating what you learned from the readings, so be sure to reference specific authors and the arguments or points that they make that were useful to you. Feel free to include photographs from programs you have observed to illustrate your points.

Written assignments

Two word-processed copies of all assignments are due on the dates listed on the syllabus, one for each of the instructors. *Please do not send them by email*. Students may turn in assignments early. All late

assignments will be penalized. And remember that all of the assignments, with grades and comments, must be included in the final portfolio as well.

Museum Theater (15 points)

Students will work in small teams to develop a museum theater project that focuses on a character or characters from 1860-1965 that could be performed at the Smith Family Farm, the Swan House, or in one of the exhibit galleries as part of the “Meet the Past” program. The team will do research on the character, write the script and perform the skit at the end of the semester. Students will turn in the written script plus each team member will submit an evaluation of what he or she did for the project. Students will be evaluated on their role in the team project.

Two program plans (each plan is 15 points for total of 30 points)

Each student will develop two programs to be presented in association with an upcoming exhibit at the Atlanta History Center. For each program, students will complete an AHC program planning form, including logistics and an evaluation plan, and create a budget. This is an *individual*, not team, assignment. This semester, students will develop programs for the traveling Smithsonian exhibit “American Sabor: Latinos in American Music,” that will visit the AHC beginning in 2014. For more information on this exhibit, visit the exhibit website at <http://www.sites.si.edu/exhibitions/exhibits/americanSabor/index.html>

Each student will create two programs:

1. One program for younger audiences, up through grade 12. Programs for students in grades K-12 students must relate to and include the curriculum detailed in the Georgia Performance Standards.
2. One program for another type of audience, which may include adults, families, or other audiences, including emerging audiences which we will discuss. Please be creative in considering an audience for this exhibit!

Object-based interpretive tour (10 points)

Each student will create a theme-based guided tour using four to five objects in the AHC exhibit galleries. S/he will prepare a written outline of the theme (incorporating photos of the objects) and conduct a 15-minute tour for a group of classmates. The grade will include an evaluation of both the written outline and the tour presentations.

Evaluation of one AHC program (5 points)

Students will develop and utilize a tool to evaluate a school tour at the Atlanta History Center. Each student will sign up for a tour with Mary Wilson (mwilson@atlantahistorycenter.com) and must complete his or her tour by February 20.

Five evaluations of educational or interpretive programs (10 points)

One of the best ways to learn about what makes a good museum program is to attend programs and see what you like and what you don’t like. In addition, it is important to learn how to evaluate educational and interpretive program, so these assignments will provide experience in evaluation as well. These evaluations will be graded and then averaged for the final points in the portfolio.

Each student will observe five programs, including at least two at the AHC and the remainder at other museums, parks, or historic sites other than one where the student may work (if you are currently employed as a paid or volunteer staff member). For each program, students will write a two-page evaluation. Students will submit these program evaluations on dates listed below. All program evaluations will be evaluated on a ten-point scale, and the five evaluations will be averaged for the final grade.

Students must sample at least *five different types of programs*, which may include school programs, outreach programs, guided tours, adult programs, museum theater, family programs, living history programs, toddler programs, special events, or others. We also encourage you to visit programs at science and nature centers and botanical gardens as well as art museums and children’s museums. Use this requirement as an opportunity to go to museums, parks or historic sites you have wanted to visit and to observe programs with which you are less familiar.

Due dates for these assignments are as follows (these dates are also listed in the course schedule):

Assignment #1, January 30 any program

Assignment #2: February 20, guided tour preferred

Assignment #3: March 6, any program

Assignment #4: March 27, emerging audience preferred

Assignment #5: April 10, living history or museum theater preferred

Participation/Performance Requirements

Class participation (15 points)

Discussion and participation are critical to the success of the seminar. Students are expected to complete the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them as well as their experiences in course projects and assigned activities. We will also have the opportunity to meet and talk with a variety of professionals in the field. Students are expected to treat guest speakers with respect.

Class attendance is important. Students are allowed one excused absence. Subsequent absences may result in a reduction of the final grade.

Museum Theater presentations (5 points)

One of the essential skills of a public historian and museum professional is to present an idea to a group of staff or board members. Student teams will present their “Meet the Past” performances to a review board of their instructors and other Atlanta History Center staff as our final exam exercise on April 24th. All students should have a role in the presentation, whether as an actor or as someone who provides background for the team’s project.

Academic Honesty and Professionalism

Students are expected to do their own work on all individual assignments and to contribute equally to their team projects. Collaborations are judged not only on the final product but also on the manner in which students share the work load and participate as a team member. While collaborations and team work can prove challenging to all of us, they are essential components of public history work.

The History Department’s statement on plagiarism is available on our website at <http://www.westga.edu/~history/statementonplagiarism.pdf> . Please read this statement carefully, as we take this practice seriously. Any one example of plagiarism within any written assignment may result in an automatic “F” in the class.

Students are expected to act in a professional manner at all times while at the Atlanta History Center but also during any program observation and participation experiences. Remember that you are representing both the University of West Georgia and the Atlanta History Center in all activities both inside and outside the classroom.

In some cases, the Atlanta History Center staff will provide information and insight into program development that is intended for us in the class but not for distribution outside of class. Students will be

expected to sign a written statement that they will act professionally in regard to their experience in the UWG/AHC Museum Studies program.

Inclement Weather Policy

The Atlanta History Center is closed whenever the Atlanta Public Schools are closed. The most up-to-date closings are usually available on 11 Alive News. If the AHC is closed on a class day, our class will be cancelled.

Course Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible for any schedule changes, even if they are not present in class on the date they are made. Some additional readings may be assigned.

- January 9** *Course Introductions and Orientation to the Atlanta History Center*
Review of the syllabus and tour of the AHC campus.
Read:
- Review the Atlanta History Center website to learn at <http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com> about its educational and interpretive programs.
- January 16** *Museum audiences: who are our visitors and why do they come?*
Museum Evaluation
Read;
- Wilkening and James Chung, *Life Stages of the Museum Visitor*;
 - *Museum Educator's Handbook, chapter 1.*
- January 23** *Learning theory and styles*
Read:
- Falk, Dierkling, and Foutz, *In Principle, In Practice*, parts 1 and 4
 - Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, i-181
- January 30** *Principles of museum interpretation; Program evaluation*
Read:
- *Museum Education Standards and Principles*, on reserve;
 - Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our Heritage*;
 - *Museum Educator's Manual*, chapter 10.
- Due:
- Program evaluation #1 (any kind of program)
- February 6** *Museum Theater and Living History*
Read:
- Tessa Bridal, "What is Museum Theater?" and "The Interpretive Palette," on reserve;
 - John Fortier, "Thoughts on the Recreation and Interpretation of Historical Environments," on reserve;
 - David Peterson, "There is no Living History; There are no Time Machines," on reserve;
 - Thomas Schlereth, "It Wasn't That Simple," on reserve.

- February 13** *Workday*
Group meetings for Museum Theater project
Find an object for your Guided Tour (due February 27)
- February 20** *Guided tours I and Evaluation*
Read:
 - Museum Educator’s Handbook, chapters 2-4.
Due:
 - Program evaluation #2 (a guided tour preferred)
 - Due: Tour evaluation of AHC school tour
- February 27** *Guided tours part II—object interpretation*
Read:
 - “Peering at History Through Different Lenses,” to be provided in class
Due:
 - Each student will conduct a thematic guided tour (about 15 minutes) for a group of classmates using four to five objects within the AHC galleries.
 - Written description of guided tour
- March 6** *School Programs, Museum Outreach, and Curriculum*
Read:
 - Read through the website <http://www.georgiastandards.org/> to learn about the Georgia Performance Standards;
 - Review the AHC School Programs webpage at <http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/cms/School+Programs/14.html>;
 - *Museum Educator’s Handbook*, chapters 5 and 7
Due:
 - Program evaluation #3 (any type of program)
- March 13** *Adult programs and special events*
Read:
 - Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 269-292;
 - *Museum Educator’s Handbook*, chapters 6.
Due:
 - Program plan #1
- March 20:** **Spring Break, no class**
- March 27** *Staying Relevant: Emerging Audiences and Web-Based Initiatives Latino “New South” Initiatives*
Read:
 - “Maria Velez, “Distance Learning at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum;”
 - *Museum Educator’s Handbook*, chapter 9.
 - Pultz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 13-74
 - Nina Simon, *Participatory Museum*, 182-362
Due:
 - Program evaluation #4 (emerging audience preferred)

April 3

Program Logistics

Read:

- Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 251-268
- *Museum Educator's Handbook*, chapters 8, 11 and 13

Due:

- Program plan #2

April 10

Historic houses

Read:

- Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, chapters 1, 3-7, 9;
- Pultz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 75-end

Due:

- Program evaluation #5 (living history or museum theater preferred)

April 17

Interpretive planning

Guest speaker: Don Wollenhaupt, Chief of Interpretation and Education, Southeast Regional Office, National Park Service

Read: Donnelly, *Historic House Museums*: 43-60; 210-230

Our speaker also has asked that all students visit the web site for Interpretive Media which is at Harpers Ferry Center. This website contains a link to several Interpretive Plans. Please locate and read a copy of a Long-range Interpretive Plan and become familiar with the sections of a plan for this class meeting.

The address of Harpers Ferry Center is www.nps.gov/hfc Once on the site, go to Products and Services (second section on the main bar). Then go to Programs and Services, then link to Interpretive Planning. On the InDepth section of the page (far right side of the site), there is a link that lists several parks that have long range plans that you can copy to read for the class.

April 24

Final Class

Due:

- Class portfolios
- Theater presentation to Atlanta History Center staff