

Museum Education and Interpretation
History 6303, University of West Georgia/Atlanta History Center
Spring 2019

Instructors:

Ann McCleary, History Department, University of West Georgia, amcclear@westga.edu, 678-839-6141

Office hours: Monday, 9-11 online; Tuesday, Center for Public History, 10-3;
Wednesdays 11:30-12:30 at the Atlanta History Center; and other days and times by
appointment

Kate Whitman, Vice President of Author and Family Programs, Atlanta History Center,
kwhitman@atlantahistorycenter.com, 404-814-4114

Class meetings: Wednesdays, 12:30-3 p.m. in the Education classroom, Atlanta History Center

Course Description

The goal of this class is to prepare students to plan, implement, and evaluate educational and interpretive programs at a public history organization, including museums, parks, historic sites, archives, historic preservation venues, cultural organizations, and other types of institutions. Students will gain theoretical knowledge about the field of interpretation and education as well as 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 educational programs and to engage in practicum activities. Students will learn from the educators and professional staff at the AHC and additional guest speakers around the Atlanta region.

Learning Goals

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 practice of museum education and interpretation;
3. An understanding of learning theory as it relates to museum education;
4. Knowledge about the different types of museum programs for different audiences, from traditional ones such as school tours, families, and adult groups, to emerging audiences;
5. Knowledge of interpretive techniques used in museums, including but not limited to guided tours, object-based learning, living history interpretation, museum theater, and public dialogue;
6. Practical skills in planning programs including budgets, logistics, and evaluation techniques;

7. Knowledge of the Georgia Standards of Excellence (<https://www.georgiastandards.org/Pages/default.aspx>) and the ways in which museum school programs can incorporate and reflect those standards.

UWG Program Learning Outcomes

1. Conduct historical research
 - a. Students will conduct historical research for the public programs and class project
2. Formulate and defend a historical argument in Standard English
 - a. Students will develop and defend a historical argument in the museum program critiques
 - b. Students will demonstrate skills in writing in all class assignments.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of historiography and its changes over time
 - a. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the historiography about museum education and interpretation.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the theory and practice of public history
 - a. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theory and practice of museum education and interpretation
5. Demonstrate practical knowledge of a subfield of public history
 - a. Students will demonstrate practical knowledge of how to develop public programs that meet the best practices in the field,
 - a. Students will develop two public programs and a museum theater assignment

Required Readings

- Franklin Vagnone and Deborah Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2016.
- Falk, John H. and Lynn Dierkling. *Learning from Museums*. Second edition. Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.
- Johnson, Ann, Kimberly Huber, Nancy Cutler, Melissa Bingham, and Tim Grove, *The Museum Educator's Manual: Educators Share Successful Techniques*. Second edition. Rowman and Littlefield, 2017.
- Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. University of North Carolina Press, Fourth Edition, 2008.
- Simon, Nina, *The Art of Relevance*, Museum 2.0, 2016.

Note that students can get a 30% discount off the list price of any of the Rowman and Littlefield e-textbooks. Use promo code **STUDENT30** when placing an order online at rowman.com

In addition, students will read the following blogs during the class:

- Nina Simon, Museum 2.0, available at <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/>
- Museum Hack, available at <https://museumhack.com/blog/>

Additional readings will be on placed on the Course Den class page. Some readings may also be made available as hand-outs in class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Students will have a variety of assignments, totaling 100 points.

Museum Theater or Public Dialogue Program	20 points
Museum Theater or Public Dialogue Program Presentation	5 points
Program Plan for Woman Suffrage exhibition/Swan House	15 points
Program Plan for School program the new Cyclorama exhibition	15 points
Two public program evaluation essays	10 points
Guided tour assignment, including written and oral presentations	10 points
Portfolio essay, based on readings	10 points
Class Participation and Course Den discussion	15 points

Museum Theater or Dialogue Program (20 points)

Students will work in small teams to develop a museum theater project (part of the AHC’s program “Meet the Past”) or a public dialogue program that focuses on the one of the houses (Swan House, Smith Family Farm, or Wood Family Farm) or one of the permanent exhibits.

For the museum theater production, each team will develop and conduct research on the characters, write the script, and perform the skit at the end of the semester. For the public dialogue, students will research the topic to be discussed, develop a set of questions and guidelines for engaging the audience, and present the program at the end of the semester.

For the final portfolio, each student will submit the written portion of the project and a two-page evaluation of the team project. The two-page evaluation should describe and assess what s/he completed for the team and what s/he learned.

Museum Theater or Dialogue Program presentation (5 points)

One of the essential skills of a public historian and museum professional is to present an idea or program to a group of staff peers and/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 on our final class. All students should have a role in the presentation, whether as an actor or as someone who provides background for the team’s project.

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

Each student will develop two programs to be presented at the Atlanta History Center. For each program, students will complete a program planning form (found in Course Den), including logistics and an evaluation plan, and create a budget. This is an individual assignment.

1. One program for the upcoming Women Suffrage exhibition that will open at Swan House. The program should be designed for adults, families, or an emerging audience in a museum setting. Please be creative in considering the audience and type of program.
2. A school program for the new Cyclorama exhibition.

Students will have the opportunity to revise both program plans, based on faculty comments, before submitting them in the final class portfolio. The final grade for these plans will be based on the version of the assignment submitted in the portfolio. Students must include the original copy (with our comments) along with the revised version in the portfolio to get credit for any changes that you may have made.

Two evaluation essays of educational or interpretive programs (5 points each for 10 points total)

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. It is also important to learn how to evaluate educational and interpretive program, so these assignments will provide experience in evaluation as well.

Each student will observe two *different types of programs*, excluding a guided tour, and write a three- to four-page evaluation of each program.

Please look throughout the region for programs that serve diverse and emerging audiences. These might include adult programs, museum theater productions, family programs, living history programs, toddler programs, special events, home school days, or others. We also encourage you to consider one program at a location besides a history museum, such as a science or nature center, botanical garden, art museum or children's museum. 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.

Please note: you may not utilize a program at an institution where you are currently working or have previously worked and, you may not evaluate a program you attended before this class.

Your evaluation should include:

- The time and date of the program,
- An assessment of how the program fit the mission of the museum,
- A brief description of the program,
- An evaluation of the success of the program,
- Any suggestions you could make for improving the quality of the program.

Guided tour (10 points)

Each student will create and lead a guided tour that tells a story using three to five objects in the AHC exhibit galleries. Students 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 for the tour and the actual guided tour presentation— five points for the written outline and five points for the guided tour presentation.

Portfolio Essay (10 points)

Each student will write a four- to five-page essay to demonstrate what s/he has learned from the class. Be sure to integrate what you consider important insights and useful guidance from the course readings. Footnote the readings appropriately, using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Be

sure to reference specific authors and the arguments or points that they make that were useful to you.

Class participation, including Course Den discussions (15 points)

Discussion and participation are critical to the success of the class. Students are expected to complete the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. We will have the opportunity to meet and talk with a variety of professionals in the field, and students are expected to bring questions and be prepared to engage with these speakers.

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

Part of the class participation grade will include **weekly responses to the readings on Course Den by Tuesday evenings at 9 p.m.** Each discussion post will include three key points from the readings for that week., with references to the specific author.

Class Portfolio

Students will compile a portfolio that contains *all* the class assignments and submit this portfolio on the last class 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.

Students may compile a paper or digital portfolio.

Paper portfolios should be put in a notebook, and include:

- A creative cover
- A table of contents
- Dividers to separate the portfolio components
- All assignments
- Faculty comments for program plans that have been revised
- Illustrations/photos

Digital portfolios may utilize a portfolio of your choice, though ideally it should be a format that could grow with your coursework at UWG. We will plan to offer a training on digital portfolios during the spring semester at UWG. Digital portfolios must have all the above contents, though they will be organized appropriately.

Common Language for UWG Course Syllabi

Please read and review all of the guidelines in this link:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

Academic Honesty and Professionalism

Students are expected to do their own work on all individual assignments. The History Department's statement on plagiarism is available on our website at <http://www.westga.edu/~history/statementonplagiarism.pdf>. Read this statement carefully. Any one example of plagiarism within any written assignment may result in an automatic "F" in the class.

Students are expected to contribute equally to 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 team members. While collaborations and team work can prove challenging to all of us, they are essential components of public history work. This exercise will provide an opportunity for you to practice and hone these skills.

Students are always expected to act in a professional manner while at the Atlanta History Center and 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.

During the class, the Atlanta History Center staff may provide information and insight into program development that is intended for us in the class but *not* for distribution outside of class.

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:

- This schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible for any schedule changes, which will be announced on Course Den
- This schedule contains the books and websites assigned for the class.
- ***Other materials, including essays and other materials, are available on Course Den.***
- Please check Course Den each week for additional readings.

January 9 Course Introductions and Orientation to the Atlanta History Center

Review of the syllabus, discussion of the museum education programs at the AHC, and tour of the AHC campus.

Read:

- Review the Atlanta History Center website to learn about its educational programs at <http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com>

January 16 Learning theory and styles

Read:

- Falk and Dierkling, *Learning in Museums*

- January 23 Museum audiences: who are our visitors and why do they come?**
Readings:
- Wilkening and James Chung, *Life Stages of the Museum Visitor* on Course Den.
 - *Museum Educator's Handbook*, chapter 1
- January 30 Being Relevant**
Readings:
- Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance*
 - Peruse the Museum Hack website at <https://museumhack.com/blog/>
- Due: Program evaluation #1**
- February 6 Immersive Experiences: Museum Theater and Dialogue Programs**
Defining terms: Styles and Types of Interpretation
- Guest speaker: Addae Moon**
- Readings on Course Den**
- February 13 School Programs: On-site and Outreach**
Note: On this day, all students are required to come to the AHC by 10 a.m. to observe a school tour. More details will be provided.
- Readings:**
- Read through the website <http://www.georgiastandards.org/> to learn about the Georgia Standards of Excellence;
 - Review the AHC School Programs webpage at <http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/programs/school-programs>
 - *Museum Educator's Handbook*, chapter 5
- February 20 Guided Tours part I**
Note: This class meet at the Breman Museum. For more details, visit <https://www.thebreman.org/Visit>
- Readings:**
- *Museum Educator's Handbook*, chapters 3-4.
 - Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*
- February 27 Guided Tours part II**
 Each student will conduct a guided tour (about 15 minutes) for a group of classmates using four to five objects within the AHC galleries. **Please note:** students may not use notecards!
- Readings on Course Den**

Due: Written description of guided tour

**March 6 Developing Successful Programs: Logistics, Evaluation, and Training
Tour the Cyclorama**

Readings:

- *Museum Educator's Handbook*, chapters 2, 6-13 plus appendices.

Due: Program Evaluation #2

March 13 Creating Programs in Historic House Museums

Readings:

- Frank Vagone and Deborah Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*

Due: Program plan #1

March 20 Spring break, no class

March 27 Class workday—Workshopping Program Plans

Due: Program plan #2

April 3 Interpreting Difficult History

What are the difficult issues museums face now?

How do we interpret slavery at historic sites?

Readings:

- Review “Milestones in the Research and Interpretation of Slavery at Monticello,” at <https://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/milestones-research-and-interpretation-slavery-monticello>
- Review “The Slave Dwelling Project” at <http://slavedwellingproject.org/>
- Additional readings on Course Den

**April 10 Interpretive Planning
Living History**

All readings on Course Den

April 17 Class workday for theater programs

April 24 Final class and museum theater presentations

Due:

- Presentations of museum theater and dialogue programs to Atlanta History Center staff and class

April 26: Final Museum Portfolios due by 5 p.m.