

Museum Education and Interpretation
History 6303
University of West Georgia/Atlanta History Center
Spring 2009

Instructors:

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Class meetings: 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wednesdays 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 public programs in 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. Familiarity with 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 school tours, adult groups, as well as family and community programs;
5. A knowledge of educational and interpretive techniques used in museums, including but not limited to guided tours, object-based learning, and living history interpretation;
6. Practical skills in museum education including the development of interpretive plans and budgets, educational materials for museum programs, demonstration of how objects can be used for history education, and program evaluation;
7. Knowledge of the Georgia Performance Standards and the ways in which school programs should incorporate and reflect those standards.

Required Readings

Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*. University of North Carolina Press.

John Falk and Lynn Dierking, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. AltaMira Press.

Barbara Abramoff Levy, Sandra Lloyd, and Susan Schreiber, *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for History Sites*. AltaMira Press.

Jessica Foy Donnelly, editor, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*. AltaMira Press.

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*.”

Course Requirements and Assignments

Class Portfolio (80% of course grade)

Students will compile a portfolio that contains all of the class assignments and submit this portfolio on the final exam date.

The portfolio will include all of the course assignments. Students will submit these assignments earlier in the semester, but will have an opportunity to revise them, based on faculty comments, before including them in the portfolio. The final grade for each assignment will be based on the final 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. This requirement allows each student the opportunity to revise his or her work drawing upon comments from the instructors as well as additional class discussions and readings. If you choose not to revise an assignment, that is your option and we will utilize the original assignment grade.

Two word-processed copies of all assignments are due on the date 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 reduced by 10 points for each day late.

Interpretive Plan (15% of final course grade)

Students will work in teams to develop an interpretive plan for an assigned project at the Atlanta History Center. The interpretive plan will serve as a resource to the AHC staff in reinterpreting existing exhibits and resources. This exercise will emphasize both skills and knowledge of interpretive planning as well as teamwork. This semester, our class will focus on a cabin at the Tullie Smith farm. More details will follow.

Two program plans (each plan worth 15% of the final grade)

Each student will develop two programs to be presented in association with an upcoming exhibit at the Atlanta History Center. One program will be for students in grade K-12, for which students will need to choose the grade level based on the Georgia Performance Standards. The second program can be for any other type of audience for which students think the topic appropriate. Student will complete an AHC program planning form and create a budget for each program. This is an individual, not team, assignment. Details on the exhibit for the programs will be forthcoming.

Object-based interpretive tour (10% of final grade)

Each student will create an on object-based interpretive tour for a K-12 audience. Students will select a theme, choose four to five objects that illustrate and develop that theme, prepare a written outline of the theme (with photos), and conduct a brief, 15-minute tour for a group of classmates. Students will be evaluated both on the written outline and the tour presentation.

Documentation of participation in and evaluation for six educational programs (10% of final grade)

One of the best ways to learn about what makes a good museum program is to attend and participate in programs. Each student is expected to observe or participate in at least six education or interpretive programs, including at least three programs 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 of the program.

Please use this opportunity to observe programs other than those you with which you may be most familiar as well as those that interest you. Students must sample at least *six different types of programs* from the following list. Due dates for these assignments are listed in the course schedule and marked with a triple asterisk (***)

School programs	adult programs	family programs
Outreach program	fine arts tour	living history program
Garden tour	science tour	special event
Children's museum tour	museum theater	
guided house tour (at Tullie Smith Farm or Swan House)		

Program evaluation of one AHC program (5% of final grade)

Students will utilize prepare an evaluation tool and conduct an evaluation of an AHC program. Students will collect feedback, collate data, and provide an analysis. This event will be scheduled outside of the class time, so please plan accordingly. We are planning to evaluate the "Southern Music: Shaken and Stirred" series at the AHC, scheduled for April 2 and 3, so be prepared to attend one of these two events.

Portfolio development (10 points)

Each portfolio will also be evaluated in two areas: its narrative and its quality.

In addition to the assignments, the portfolio must include a *narrative* to demonstrate the connection between the assignments and the field of museum education and interpretation. Remember, too, that the portfolio narrative is an opportunity for us to learn more about what you learned from the course readings, so integrating insights and references to the reading will enhance this narrative.

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.

Class participation (15% of final grade)

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. Students are expected to treat guest speakers with respect and attention.

Attendance is critical. Students are allowed one excused absence. Subsequent absences may result in a reduction of the final grade.

Class presentations (5%)

One of the essential skills required 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 proposed interpretive plans to a review board of their instructors and other Atlanta History Center staff peer reviewers as our final exam exercise.

Academic Honesty and Professionalism

Students are expected to do their own work on all individual assignments and as contributions 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.

Students will be given an intern badge to access the Atlanta History Center classrooms and office space. Please wear these badges at all time while at the AHC. All students must return these badges at the end of the semester in order to receive a final grade for the class.

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. The six program evaluation due dates are marked with an asterick (***)).

January 7 ***Course Introductions and Orientation to the Atlanta History Center***
Read: Review the Atlanta History Center website to learn about its educational and interpretive programs

January 14 ***Principles of museum interpretation***
Read: *Museum Education Standards and Principles*, on reserve;
Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our Heritage*

January 21 ***Learning theory and styles***
Read: Falk and Dierkling, *Learning from Museums*, vii-89;
Hein and Alexander, *Museums: Places of Learning*, ix-40, on reserve;
Bruno Bettelheim, “Children, Curiosity, and Museums,” on reserve.

January 28 ***Guided tours I***
Read: Levy et al, *Great Tours!*, including the preface and pages 3-125. Pay special attention to chapter 5 on material culture.
Time will be allowed for students to select objects for their thematic object tour
Due: one program evaluation of a guided tour *** (evaluation #1)

February 4 ***Interpretive planning***
Guest speaker: Don Wollenhaupt, Chief of Interpretation and Education, Southeast Region National Park Service
Read: Donnelly, *Historic House Museums*; 43-60; 210-230
Falk and Dierkling, *Learning from Museums*, 113-148;

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 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.

- February 11 ***Guided tours part II—object interpretation***
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.
Due: written object interpretation exercise and tour
- February 18 ***Social studies curriculum and the Georgia Performance Standards***
Guest speaker: Dr. William Cranshaw, Georgia Department of Education
Read: read through the website <http://www.georgiastandards.org/> to learn about the Georgia Performance Standards
Due: two additional program evaluations *** (evaluations #2 and #3)
- February 25 ***School Programs***
Read: Falk and Dierking, *Learning from Museums*, 149-218;
Hein and Alexander, *Museums: Places of Learning*, 40-46, on reserve;
Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 292-309
During this class, all students will have an opportunity to follow a school tour At the AHC (but this may not count towards your six programs)
- March 4 ***Adult programs and special events***
Read: Falk and Dierking, *Learning from Museums*, 205-219
Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 269-292
Due: one program evaluation of an adult program or special event *** (evaluation #4)
- March 11 ***Logistics: planning programs, marketing events, curriculum materials, and training staff, docents, and volunteers***
Read: Levy et al, *Great Tours!*, 127-148
Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 251-268
Due: School program plan
- March 18 ***Spring Break, no class***
- March 25 ***Program evaluation***
Read: Falk and Dierking, *Learning from Museums*, 149-204
Due: Second program plan (for non-school audience)
- April 1 ***Historic houses***
Read: Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, chapters 1, 3-7, 9;
Warren Leon, “Historic Houses,” on reserve
- April 8 ***Living history and museum theater***
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;

Thomas A. Woods, "Living Historical Farming: A Critical Method for Historical Research and Teaching about Rural Life;"

Tom Kelleher, "Old Sturbridge Village: From Recreated Historic Village to History Learning Center."

Due: program evaluation, preferably living history or museum theater (program evaluation #5)***

April 15 ***The guest experience; museum collaborations***
Readings to be announced.
Due: Draft interpretive plan (team project)

April 22 ***Reaching out: school outreach programs and web-based education***
Read: "Maria Velez, "Distance Learning at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum;"
Falk and Dirking, *Learning from Museums*, 219-235.
Also research and find an on-line education program on a museum website and be prepared to discuss what you liked about this website in class.
Due: remaining program evaluation (#6)***

April 29 ***Roundtable on art, science, and children's museums***
Readings to be announced.
Due: your evaluation of the April 2/3 music event, based on the survey

May 6 ***Final exam date***
Due: portfolios and class presentations of interpretive plans