

**Museum Education and Interpretation**  
History 6303, University of West Georgia/Atlanta History Center  
Spring 2017

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**Instructor:**

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Office hours: Monday, 12-3; Tuesday 1-4, and Thursday 11-1 at the Center for Public History,  
Ingram Library lower level; plus Wednesdays 11:30-12:30 at the Atlanta History Center by  
appointment

**Atlanta History Center Lead Instructor:**

Kate Whitman, Vice President of Public Programs, Atlanta History Center,  
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**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 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 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 of different kinds of museum programs, from traditional audiences such as school tours, families, and adult groups, to 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, museum theater, and public dialogue;
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.

**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, including developing 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.
- Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.
- Falk, John H., Lynn Dierkling, and Susan Foutz. *In Principle, In Practice: Museums as Learning Institutions*. AltaMira Press, 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.
- Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. University of North Carolina Press, Fourth Edition, 2008.
- Simon, Nina, *The Art of Relevance*, Museum 2.0, 2016.

In addition, students will read the following blogs weekly (see Class Participation):

- Twisted Preservation, the blog of Franklin Vagnone of the Anarchist Guide to Historic Houses, available at <http://twistedpreservation.com/>
- Museum-Ed blog available at <http://www.museum-ed.org/category/museum-ed-blog/>
- Nina Simon, Museum, available at <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/>

*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 exhibition, for any audience type	15 points
Program Plan for Margaret Mitchell House, for adults	15 points
Two public program evaluations	10 points
Object-based guided tour assignment	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 either a museum theater project (part of the AHC's program "Meet the Past") or a dialogue program that focuses on the one of the houses (Swan House, Smith Family Farm, Wood Family Farm, or Margaret Mitchell House) exhibit.

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 an AHC program planning form, including logistics and an evaluation plan, and create a budget. This is an individual assignment.

Each student will create two programs:

1. One program for the upcoming *NUEVolution! Latinos and the New South* exhibition. For more information on the exhibition, visit <http://www.museumofthenewsouth.org/exhibits/nuevolution-latinos-and-the-new-south>
2. One program for Margaret Mitchell House for adults, families, or emerging audiences which we will discuss. Please be creative in considering an audience and type of program. We will go to the Margaret Mitchell House for one class, but you are also welcome to visit the museum again as needed.

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 evaluations 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. Also, 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.

### **Object-based guided tour (10 points)**

Each student will create a theme-based guided tour using three 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 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*. 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.

### **Class participation, including Course Den discussions (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 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. This discussion will include:**

1. Three key points from the readings from that week
2. At least one key point from the assigned blogs from that week

### **Class Portfolio**

Students will compile a portfolio that contains *all* of 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.

Please be sure to include:

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

### **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](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 give you an opportunity for you to practice and hone these skills.

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 may 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 11**     **Course Introductions and Orientation to the Atlanta History Center**  
Review of the syllabus, discussion of the museum education program 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 18**     **Learning theory and styles**  
*Read:*
- Falk, Dierkling, and Foutz, *In Principle, In Practice*
- January 25**     **Museum audiences: who are our visitors and why do they come?**  
**Museum interpretation**  
*Read:*
- Wilkening and James Chung, *Life Stages of the Museum Visitor*, select chapters on Course Den.
  - Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*
  - *Museum Educator's Handbook*, chapter 1
- February 1**     **Being relevant**  
*Read:*
- *Museum Education Standards and Principles*, on reserve;
  - Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance*
  - “Beyond Neutrality,” at <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.com/2016/08/beyond-neutrality.html>
  - Review <http://www.museweb.us/be-here-main-street-resources/>
- February 8**     **Guided tours (Day I) and Evaluation: Meet at the Margaret Mitchell House**  
*Note:* Parking is limited on-site, but additional parking will be available in the 990 building for a charge. You might want to consider carpooling on this day! We will participate in the 2 p.m. tour.  
*Read:*
- *Museum Educator's Handbook*, chapters 3-4.
  - “Peering at History Through Different Lenses,” on Course Den
- Due: Program evaluation #1*
- February 15**     **Museum Theater, Living History, and Dialogue Programs**  
*Guest speaker: Addae Moon*  
*Read:*
- Tessa Bridal, “What is Museum Theater?” and “The Interpretive Palette,” on reserve;
  - Billy Yalowitz, “The Black Bottom: Making Community-Based Performance in West Philadelphia,” on Course Den

- John Luo Wei Tchen and Liz Sevcenko, “The ‘Dialogic’ Museum Revisited: A Collaborative Reflection,” on Course Den
- “Facilitated Dialogue,” at <http://www.museweb.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/11-FacilitatedDialogue-StorytellingHandbook-v1.pdf>
- Additional readings to be assigned.

**February 22** *Guided tours part II—object interpretation*

Each student will develop and conduct a guided tour (about 15 minutes) for a group of classmates using four to five objects within the AHC galleries.

**Read:**

- “Protecting the Objects and Serving the Public,” *Journal of Museum Education*, Volume 36, No. 3, Summer 2011. (Available on Course Den)

**Due:** *Written description of guided tour*

**March 1** *School Programs, Museum Outreach, and Curriculum*

**Note:** On this day, all students are required to come to the AHC in the morning to observe a school tour. Details/times will be provided.

**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/programs/school-programs>
- *Museum Educator’s Handbook*, chapter 5

**March 8** *Program Logistics, Evaluation, Volunteers, Training*

**Read:**

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

**Due:** *Program Evaluation #2*

**March 15** *Historic houses*

**Read:**

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

**Due:** *Program plan #1*

**March 22** *Spring Break, no class*

**March 29** *Interpreting Difficult History*

**Read:**

- Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*.
- “At New York immigration museum, guides cope with hostile remarks,” at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-museum-idUSKBN13G2BI>
- Review blog on the East Side Tenement Museum at <https://www.tenement.org/blog/>

**April 5** *Public Program Workshop*

**Due:** *Program plan #2*

**April 12** *Class project workday*

**April 19** *No class—work on assignments and final portfolio*

**April 26**

***Final Class***

***Due:***

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