INF 386E: Planning and Understanding Exhibits
Fall 2021
Unique Number: 28875

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Canvas:

Course Meeting Times
Thursdays, 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Course Description
Exhibits are a powerful way for libraries, archives, museums, and cultural institutions to engage the public with their collections. This course offers students the opportunity to plan and install an exhibit, focusing on objectives such as: crafting a narrative around physical objects; drafting exhibit text; accommodating media preservation issues; building basic display supports; and publicizing the exhibit. Students will learn about the historical origins of modern-day exhibit practices, and will visit and evaluate current exhibits on campus and in the Austin area.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Conceptualize and revise narrative flow around available objects.
- Draft exhibit text that is audience-appropriate, informative, and entertaining.
- Understand materials risks and craft appropriate responses, including building supports.
- Conduct outreach and publicity through physical and/or online formats
- Assess local exhibits
- Historically contextualize modern exhibit practices.

Course Requirements
There are no prerequisites for this class. Students are expected to attend all classes and complete all reading assignments before each class meeting. There will be at least one off-site class meeting.

Assessments

Please submit all assignments via Canvas unless otherwise instructed. All assignments are due by the beginning of class on the due date. If you have a legitimate reason for an assignment to be late, please discuss with me as early as possible.

In your assignments, please strive for accurate, concise, and well-organized writing that showcases your understanding of the topics at hand. My primary goal is to assess your mastery of these topics, rather than your writing. However, if your writing hinders the successful communication of your understanding, I will then grade writing by necessity. For writing assistance, please see the University Writing Center.

A few writing tips specific to this class:

- Strive for clear topic sentences and closing statements.
- Ensure that your sentences and paragraphs build sequentially upon one another.
- Use fewer words whenever possible.
- Italicize exhibit titles.
- Avoid using scare quotes whenever possible.
- Use single quotes in only one instance: a quote inside a quote.
- Use ellipses only to indicate words or ideas omitted for brevity.
- Use APA Guidelines for citations.
- Use double spacing.
- Include your last name and assignment name in your file title.
- Be precise with the word “they.” Regarding pronouns, APA Guidelines tell us the following:
  - “He/him/his” and “she/her/hers” are singular and gendered.
  - “They/their” is plural.
  - “They/their” may also be singular in several special cases:
    - When a singular person identifies with more than one gender. Ex: Casey is a gender-fluid person. They are from Texas and enjoy tacos.
    - When gender is unknown. Ex: The cup of coffee is theirs. (His? Hers? We don’t know.)
    - When it’s bulky and awkward to say “he or she,” “him or her,” or “his or hers.” Ex: Each child played with their (instead of “his or her”) parent. Please note, this usage is the least formal, and there’s often a way to write around it.

Participation (20 pts)

Students will be responsible for leading class discussion of assigned readings on one class day. Discussion should include brief synopses of readings, relevance within the class’ exhibit design
process, and several questions to spur engagement among classmates. About 1/2 of your participation grade will stem from your discussion leadership; about 1/2 will come from your active participation in the class.

Exhibit Assessment (20 pts)
Students will visit a current, local exhibit and submit a 3-5 page written evaluation. The report should evaluate successes and challenges of the exhibit experience. Use our class readings as references in your work. Possible topics for evaluation include item selection, narrative flow, audience engagement, clarity and accessibility of text, attention to preservation climates and supports, or other topics as relevant.

Special Teams (20 pts)
Students will join one of the teams described below to complete specialized exhibit tasks. Your work will be graded on timeliness, thoroughness, professionalism, and integration with exhibit goals. Please document your individual responsibilities to ensure fair workload.

Each team’s specialty is represented during a week in class. You will benefit from looking ahead to that week’s readings to begin your team’s planning ASAP. You may also wish to choose that week for your presentation of readings, as your team will be our in-house specialists on the topic.

- **Text & Labels Team:** This team writes and edits text for exhibit panels and labels. Use a consistent, audience-appropriate voice, and adhere to text limits as discussed in class references. This team is also responsible for design and layout of panels and labels, including printing at the iSchool IT Lab. Use consistent colors, typefaces, and layout for a professional appearance.

- **Web Team:** This team creates an online version of our exhibit. You have significant latitude in focus and presentation; your work can be a literal translation of the physical exhibit, or it can be something different. You may use the platform of your choice: Wix, Omeka, and others are good options.

- **Promotions Team:** This team publicizes our exhibit and builds our audience. You have creative latitude in promotional approaches, such as: sending press releases to local media outlets; raising awareness within UT and the iSchool; creating social media content; seeking local business promotions; speaking with Austin-area organizations and interest groups, and others.

- **Museum Education Team:** This team creates educational exhibit elements that go beyond displayed items and text. Possibilities may include: enhanced displays, employing models, touch, sound, or environment; interactive elements, including games, coloring, mobile web, or touchpad; programming, including guest speakers, opening parties, or events; and possibly visitor studies, including evaluation of engagement.

Exhibit Supports (2 or more) (20 pts)
Students will design and build supports as appropriate for selected exhibit items. All students will submit one mat for flat paper and one cradle for a book. Depending on exhibit needs, some of these supports will be custom-fitted for materials in our class exhibit; others will be designed for items from lab and personal collections. Students are encouraged to create one or more mats and cradles for informal evaluation before submitting the final assignment.
Final Report (20 pts)
Students will write a final report evaluating successes and challenges within our class exhibit. The report will include an assessment of workflow and of the student’s personal contributions within the team.

Evaluation
I will use the following schedule as the basis for calculating grades: A=95-100, A-=90-<95, B+=85-<90, B=80-<85, B-=75-<80, C+=70-<75, C=65-<70, C-=60-<65, F=<60. Grades will be reduced by 2 points for every day they are late unless prior arrangements have been made.

Required Text

We will use this text heavily during the first part of our course. It’s available for purchase at the University Co-op and at the publisher’s website: https://www.routledge.com/The-Art-of-Museum-Exhibitions-How-Story-and-Imagination-Create-Aesthetic/Bedford/p/book/9781611323115

It’s also available as an e-book through UT Libraries. Not all students can access the UT e-book at one time, so it’s recommended to download chapters or the full book. https://search.lib.utexas.edu/discovery/fulldisplay?context=L&vid=01UTAU_INST:SEARCH&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&tab=Everything&docid=alma991058046565106011

Announcements
University of Texas Honor Code
Every student is expected to abide by The University of Texas Honor Code, which should be read and understood before taking any class. It can be found here: http://www.engr.utexas.edu/undergraduate/forms/462-university-of-texas-honor-code

Policy on Academic Integrity
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. You may fail the course, and/or be dismissed from the School of Information and/or the University if you are found plagiarizing. UT has a tutorial describing plagiarism here: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/

Documented Disability Statement
A student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 512-232-2937 (video phone) or http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/ Please let me know about anything that will help you succeed whether or not it is related to any disability.

Use of email for official correspondence
Email is recognized as an official mode of University correspondence. You are expected to maintain ongoing, current familiarity with class communications via email, and to contact me for any needed clarification.

Land Acknowledgement
We acknowledge that the iSchool sits on indigenous land. The Tonkawa lived in central Texas and the Comanche and Apache moved through this area. Today, various indigenous peoples from all over the globe visit Austin and/or call it home. We are grateful to be able to study and learn here. Since some of our classes are online, you may be contributing from other tribal lands. Here is a map that may help you in identifying the indigenous peoples of the land on which you study: https://native-land.ca/

Religious Holy Days
You must notify me at least 14 days in advance of any absence or accommodation for a religious holy day. We will determine an appropriate substitute on a case by case basis.

Title IX Reporting
Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

Class Recordings
Online class sessions will be recorded if hosted in Zoom. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of members of this class (students and the instructor) and only for educational purposes. Recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited
No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

COVID-19 and Our Class
Pending University policy statement.
Safety and Class Participation/Masks
Pending University policy statement.

COVID Reporting
Pending University policy statement.

Course Schedule  https://registrar.utexas.edu/calendars/21-22

Week 1: 8/26 (Please note: each week’s readings must be completed before class for discussion during class.)

Introduction
- Introduce class and syllabus
- Become acquainted with lab access and safety
- Select students to lead discussion on each week’s readings
- Select a class registrar
- Students choose their Special Teams
- Prepare for item selection next week
- Discuss readings

Readings


Photo album preservation resource

Photo album curatorial resource

Week 2: 9/2

Theme and Objectives; Item Selection; Exhibit Design and Materiality
- Discuss readings - student
- View collection and begin selecting items for our exhibit.
- Brainstorm exhibit theme and objectives.

Readings


**Week 3: 9/9**

**Exhibit Narrative; Item Arrangement**
- Discuss readings - student
- Revise exhibit theme and objectives as needed
- Continue item selection; begin staging display space
- Photo-document layout, with room for labels
- Create item IDs and exhibit log as needed

**Readings**


**Week 4: 9/16**

**Exhibit Text**
- Discuss readings - student
- Discuss subjects and placement for exhibit panels and labels; consult with Text Team
- Discuss audience, writing style, and design; consult with Text Team
- Brainstorm exhibit title
- Assign Exhibit Assessment

**Readings**


**Week 5: 9/23**

**Doing More: Online Exhibits, Museum Education, and Digital Humanities Approaches**

- Discuss readings - student
- Brainstorm online components for our exhibit; consult with Web Team
- Brainstorm museum education components for our exhibit; consult with Museum Education Team
- Please feel free to share your favorite digital humanities exhibits. There are many!

**Readings**


4-VA.  ReSounding the Archives.  Accessed June 2020 at: https://resoundingthearchives.org/


Week 6: 9/30
Guest Speaker: Ray Williams, Director of Education and Academic Affairs
Class will meet at the Blanton Museum of Art, 200 E. MLK, 78712, 1 PM

Week 7: 10/7
Assignment Due: Exhibit Assessment
Promotion, Marketing, and Outreach
Guest Speaker: David Wyatt, Senior Vice President, Elizabeth Christian Public Relations: 12:30 PM
-Discuss readings - student
-Brainstorm promotions and marketing for our exhibit; consult with Promotions Team
-Guest speaker

Readings


Week 8: 10/14

Supports
- Discuss readings - student
- Determine and assign custom supports for our exhibit
- Demonstration: making a mat
- Demonstration: making a cradle
- Assign Exhibit Supports, due 11/3.

Readings


Familiarize yourself with the variety of manufactured options for exhibit supports: https://www.gaylord.com/c/Book-Cradles-and-Mounts

Week 9: 10/21

Guest Speaker: Tony Beldock, Head of Exhibition Production
Class will meet at the Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 Congress Ave., 78701

Week 10: 10/28

Assignment Due: Exhibit Supports (mat, cradle)

Materials Risks; Lighting Setup
- Discuss readings - student
- Measure light levels; make facilities adjustments; calculate exposure over duration of exhibit
- Measure temperature and relative humidity; consider facilities adjustments; evaluate larger data set

Readings
(Either)

(or)

(Either)

(or)


Week 11: 11/4
Installation
Assignment Due: Special Teams Work (don’t forget to submit documentation of individual responsibilities)
- Install and launch our class exhibit!
- Discuss readings as desired; these are light readings simply to introduce the exhibit installation experience. - student

Readings


Week 12: 11/11

Histories of Exhibition and Collecting
-Discuss Imperialism in Collecting resources (Berger, Duthie, Goodwyn, Menil) - one student
-Discuss Exhibition in America readings (Hart & Ward, Springhall, Rydell) - one student

Readings


Week 13: 11/18

Deinstallation; Visitor Studies and Evaluating Success
-Discuss readings - student
-Take down our class exhibit
-Store items safely and maintain intellectual control; consult class registrar

Readings
Chapter 10: Measuring the Learning Impact of Museums.


**Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 14: 12/2**

**Loans, Loan Agreements, and Travelling Exhibits**
- Discuss readings - student
- In-class exercise: draft loan guidelines for our exhibit.
- Assign Final Report.

**Readings**


Smithsonian National Museum of American History Behring Center. *Loan Program.* Accessed June 2020 at: [https://americanhistory.si.edu/loan-program](https://americanhistory.si.edu/loan-program) Be sure to view the links to the supporting documentation and projected loan costs.


**12/6: Last Class Day**
Assignment Due: Final Report