INF 386E: Planning and Understanding Exhibits

Fall 2021

Unique Number: 28875

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Canvas: https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1313567

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.

**Required Text**


We will use this text heavily during the first part of our course. The text has been made available to you automatically on Canvas through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program. Access is free through the 12th class day. At that time, your UT student account will automatically be billed $30.56 for a 365-day rental.

If you prefer to purchase the book elsewhere, perhaps to seek a lower price, to get a physical copy, or to keep the book for your personal library, you can opt out of the LTA program on Canvas by the 12th class day.


All other course readings are available in the Files section of our Canvas page or online.

**Assignments**

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.

*Participation (15 pts)*

Assigned Week 1; concluded at end of semester.

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 (15 pts)*

Assigned Week 4; due Week 7.

Students will visit a current, local exhibit and submit a written evaluation, about five pages in length. 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 (25 pts)**
Assigned Week 1; due Week 11.
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 researches, 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 (for smaller sizes) or UT Libraries (for **oversize printing**). Use consistent colors, typefaces, and layout for a professional appearance. Previously we have budgeted around $100 from lab funds; please keep me apprised of estimated costs.
- **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) (20 pts)**
Assigned Week 8; due Week 10.
Students will design and build supports as appropriate for selected exhibit items. All students will submit one mat (10 pts) for flat paper and one cradle (10 pts) 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 personal collections. Students are encouraged to practice measurements and cuts with scratch materials, and to build practice models as desired. In your final submission, I will be looking for:

- clean, straight, square cuts
- flush alignment among boards
- supportive fit for the object - neither too tight nor too loose, with no undue stress
- tidy workmanship - no excess grime or graphite
Final Report (25 pts)
Assigned Week 12; due Week 14.
Students will write a final report (approximately 10 pages) evaluating successes and challenges within our class exhibit. As in the Exhibit Assessment, use references to assess topics such as: item selection, narrative flow, audience engagement, clarity and accessibility of text, attention to preservation climates and supports, or other topics as relevant. The report will include an assessment of exhibit development workflow and of the student’s personal contributions within the class.

Evaluation and Writing Guidelines
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.

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:
- Include your last name and assignment name in your file title.
- Use double spacing.
- Use APA Guidelines for citations.
- 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.
- Be precise with pronouns, especially the word “they.” APA Guidelines tell us:
  - “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.

UT Notices and 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.

Official Class Correspondence
E-mail is recognized as an official mode of University correspondence. Please maintain ongoing, current familiarity with class communications via email, and contact me for any needed clarification.

Additionally, our class uses Canvas to host readings, post announcements, submit assignments, and return grades. You are welcome to message me directly through this platform.

Land Acknowledgement
We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous land. Moreover, (I) We would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Carrizo & Comerudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, Tigua Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas, here on Turtle Island.

Personal Pronoun Preference
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name, unless they have added a “preferred name” with the Gender and Sexuality Center, which you can do so here: http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns.

Religious Holy Days
By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence as far in advance as possible to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a
work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Title IX Reporting**
Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university’s relevant policies.

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered “Responsible Employees” or “Mandatory Reporters,” which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX-related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu For more information about reporting options and resources, visit the Title IX Office or email titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

**Class Recordings**
Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

**Online Class Components**
All students must use a UT Zoom account in order to participate in classes, office hours, and any UT affiliated events.

**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 without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. The University is well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found on such sites that are associated with a specific student, 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 of the course.

**Classroom Safety and COVID**
To help preserve our in-person learning environment, the university recommends the following.

- Adhere to university mask guidance. Masks are strongly recommended inside university buildings for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, except when alone in a private office or single-occupant cubicle.
- Vaccinations are widely available, free and not billed to health insurance. The vaccine will help protect against the transmission of the virus to others and reduce serious symptoms in those who are vaccinated.
- Proactive Community Testing remains an important part of the university’s efforts to protect our community. Tests are fast and free.
- The university has determined that all students coming to campus for the fall semester must receive a viral COVID-19 test in their local community within 72 hours prior to arrival in Austin for move in. If they already reside in Austin, they must test within 72 hours of moving into the residence where they will reside for the academic semester. Finally, individuals who are already living in the residence in Austin where they will reside this academic semester should test within 72 hours (3 days) prior to the start of class on Aug. 25.
- We encourage the use of the Protect Texas App each day prior to coming to campus.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms or feel sick, stay home and contact the University Health Services’ Nurse Advice Line at 512-475-6877. If you need to be absent from class, contact Student Emergency Services and they will notify your professors. In addition, to help understand what to do if you have been had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, see this University Health Services link.
- Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line (BCCAL) remains available as the primary tool to address questions or concerns from the university community about COVID-19.
- Students who test positive should contact BCCAL or self-report (if tested off campus) to University Health Services.
- Visit Protect Texas Together for more information.

Course Schedule [https://registrar.utexas.edu/calendars/21-22](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**


Mifflin, Jeffrey. ““Metaphors for Life Itself”: Historical Photograph Albums, Archives, and the Shape of Experience and Memory.” *The American Archivist* 75.1 (2012): 225–240. This review essay introduces some curatorial themes we may wish to explore in our exhibit.

**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.


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


**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!


4-VA. *ReSounding the Archives.* Accessed June 2020 at: [https://resoundingthearchives.org/](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
- Establish lab hours for assignment

Readings


Familiarize yourself with the variety of manufactured options for exhibit supports:  

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 & Backdrop Setup  
-Discuss readings – student  
-Install display backdrops and lighting; measure and adjust lighting according to materials-based recommendations; calculate exposure over duration of exhibit  
-Measure temperature and relative humidity; evaluate known data sets according to materials-based recommendations

Readings  


Wagner, Sarah, Connie McCabe, and Barbara Lemmen.  (2007).  Guidelines for Exhibition Light Levels for Photographic Materials. PDF file retrieved from  

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, if desired

Readings


Week 12: 11/11
Histories of Exhibition and Collecting
While our exhibit remains on display this week, we’ll briefly examine some historical legacies that continue to influence exhibits and collections.
- Discuss resources on imperialism in collecting (Berger, Duthie, Goodwyn, Menil) - one student
- Discuss readings on exhibition in America (Hart & Ward, Springhall, Rydell) - one student
- Assign Final Report

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


Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: 12/2
Assignment Due: Final Report
Loans, Loan Agreements, and Travelling Exhibits
- Discuss readings - student
-In-class exercise: draft loan guidelines for our exhibit.

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


