

MSTUD 1001: Introduction to Museum Studies
Fall 2008

Friday 9:20-10:35AM

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Course Description: This class introduces students to the history of museums and their role in the 21st century. We will cover the types and definitions of museums, from traditional art museums, to interactive science and children's museums, history museums and historic sites. In the second half of the course, we will explore the range of professions within the museum, including management, fundraising, public relations, security, collections management and conservation, education, membership support, research, development and design of exhibitions. The class features *mandatory* field trips to, and guest speakers from, local and NYC museums.

Course Learning Objectives: At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- Demonstrate and apply basic knowledge of the history and organization of museums.
- Discuss in written and verbal form current issues in the philosophy of museums, cultural patrimony, interpretation of objects, and the role of museums in society.
- Create and deliver an effective, short oral presentation.
- Analyze a museum exhibition.

In addition, this course is offered in partial fulfillment of the Critical and Analytical Reasoning Competency of Manhattanville College's General Education curriculum. Students completing this course will demonstrate improvement in their ability to articulate clear, well-organized thought, which has the following characteristics:

- Describes the purpose of the argument/reasoning, or its role in solving a problem or responding to a question.
- Distinguishes among facts, opinions, assumptions, interpretations and conclusions.
- Identifies the inherent assumptions and acknowledges the thinker's point of view.
- Is based upon evidence.
- Employs rational arguments to draw conclusions.
- Evinces an understanding of the strategies by which we learn about and attempt to understand the past.
- Work collaboratively with others in team based learning and problem solving

Class Policies:

1. **Behavior:** You are adults. Behave accordingly. Your education requires your full, and even enthusiastic, participation.
2. **Attendance:** More than two unexcused absences during the semester will be considered a failure to participate fully. Use the two permitted absences for real emergencies.

3. **Preparation:** Complete your reading and discussion leading assignments before each class. A good rule of thumb for this course is that you will need to spend two-three hours of reading, note taking and research for each hour that you spend in class.
4. **Participation:** This course is not a lecture class, in the strictest sense. Your participation is essential for your benefit and that of your classmates. **Exams:** When an exam is scheduled, absence can be excused only for reasons of illness or emergency, and only if accompanied by a letter from the Office of Academic Advising. If the absence is excused, no grade will be recorded. If absence is unexcused, a grade of 0 will be recorded. *No make-ups will be given in either case.*
5. **Accommodations:** If you require special accommodations for exam taking (such as extended time), it is your responsibility to submit the proper paperwork with the College's Office of Disabilities Services. It is also your responsibility to inform the professor of your needs, and to make the necessary arrangements with ARC and/or the HELP center. Requests for special accommodations not made through official channels cannot be granted.
6. **Integrity:** I have a *zero tolerance* policy regarding plagiarism and cheating. You are expected to be aware of, and to conduct yourselves in accordance with the rules regarding academic integrity found in the Manhattanville College Code of Conduct. All cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported immediately to the Director of Academic Writing and the Board on Academic Standards. Confirmed instances of academic dishonesty in this course *will* result in a failing grade for the course.

Course Grading: A student's final grade will be determined according to the following scale.

- 15% Assignment One: Group Presentation
- 15% Assignment One: Individual Paper
- 10% Assignment Two: Museum Professions
- 10% Assignment Three: Interpretation of objects
- 20%
- 20% Attendance (class/lectures/field trips), Class Participation (see attached Rubric) and Preparation (see attached Rubric)

Course Texts: Two books have been ordered and should be in stock in the Bookstore:

Museum Basics, Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine

Museums in Motion, Edward Alexander

Additional readings can be found by consulting the course's Blackboard site.

Schedule of Lectures and Assignments

	Topic	Assignment
T, 8/ 26	Introduction: What is a museum?	Alexander, Ch. 2 Basics, Unit 3
F, 8/ 29	Intro to Part I: The First Museums: Antiquity and Europe	
T, 9/ 2	The First Museums: America	
F, 9/ 5	Museums and Society: Then and Now	
T, 9/ 9	The Art Museum	Alexander, Ch. 2
W, 9/ 10	Field Trip: Bush Holley	
F, 9/ 12	Natural History Museums	Alexander, Ch.3
T, 9/ 16	History Museums	Alexander, Ch.5
F, 9/ 19	Science/Technology	Alexander, Ch.4
T, 9/ 23	Botanical Gardens/Zoos	Alexander, Ch.6
F, 9/ 26	Children's Museums	Alexander, Ch.7
T, 9/ 30	NO CLASS: Lecture in PM Gary Aronsen/Native American Repatriation **Extra Credit Opportunity: Ask Dr. Aronsen an excellent question.	On Reserve: "Who Owns the Past"
F, 10/ 3	Follow up discussion: Aronsen Lecture	
T, 10/ 7	Assignment One: Group Presentations	<i>Assignment One: Paper Due</i>
W, 10/ 8	Field Trip/Metropolitan Museum	
F, 10/ 10	INTRO: MUSEUM FUNCTIONS AND PROFESSIONS	http://museumstudies.si.edu/ICOM-ICTOP/index.htm
T, 10/ 14	NO TUESDAY CLASSES	
F, 10/ 17	Class Cancelled	<i>Assignment Two: Questions Due</i>
T, 10/ 21	Objects: Collecting /Ethics	Alexander, Ch. 8, Basics, Units 34-37, 42
F, 10/ 24	Objects: Conserving/Research	Alexander, Ch. 9 Basics, Units 44-56
T, 10/ 28	Class Cancelled	
F, 10/ 31	Assignment Two: Group Presentations	

T, 11/ 4	Interpreting: Can objects speak for themselves?	Alexander, Ch. 10-11 Basics, 17-21 Motel of the Mysteries (ERES)
F, 11/ 7	Interpretation: Exhibit Process “The big idea”	Assignment 3 due
T, 11/ 11	Interpretation: Exhibits Process Development/Functional	SERRELL (Eres)
W 11/12	Third Field Trip/Children's Museum of Manhattan	SERRELL (Eres)
F, 11/ 14	Exhibit Text and other Interpretive Strategies	SERRELL (Eres)
T, 11/ 18	Interpretation: Museum Education	Basics, 10-11
F, 11/ 21	Museum Governance: Who is in Charge?	Assignment 4 Due Basics, 67-68
T, 11/ 25	Money and Museums: Fundraising/Introduction to Final Essay	Basics:, 71-72
F, 11/ 28	NO CLASS /Thanksgiving	
T, 12/ 2	Class Cancelled/Wednesday Meetings	
F, 12/ 5	Last Day of Classes	Final Essay Due

Assignment I: Museums

This project is based on a museum in our area that your visit at least once in the course of the semester. You will work as part of a group, and each group will select a museum from an assigned category. The grade for this project will include both an individual assignment and a group presentation.

Each member of your five member team will tackle one the areas outlined below, and will function as a specialist on your team.

1. Foundation and Mission of the museum
 - a) How, when and why was this museum founded?
 - b) What was its original mission?
 - c) Has its mission changed over time?
2. Collections
 - a) Does this museum have a collection?
 - b) What was its original collection?
 - c) What is the current collections policy?
3. Research
 - a) What type of research takes place in this museum?
 - b) Who conducts this research?
 - c) Are the results of the research made evident to visitors? How?
4. Education
 - a) What types of in-museum educational programs are offered by this museum?
 - b) What types of outreach programs are offered by this museum?
5. Audience
 - a) Based on your observations, who is the audience for this exhibition?
 - b) In your opinion, do the exhibits and programs appear to meet the audience's needs?
 - c) Does the architecture and planning of the space in the museum meet the audience's needs?

Individual Assignment: Each individual will hand in a three-five page paper covering their particular area, and *then relating it to the museum as a whole*. The research for this project *must* include a visit to the museum. You can explore any (preferably free) literature that is available at the museum, the museum's web site, as well as course readings. Library research is not required for this project.

Group Assignment: Your team will work collaboratively to produce and deliver a 15 minute oral presentation in which you share your research on the museum. The presentation must reflect the contributions of ALL members of the team. Everyone must speak!

Assignment 2: Exploring Museum Professions

Once again, you will work as part of a group, but this time your group will have a maximum of three members. Each group will develop a set of five questions they will use when they conduct an interview of one or more museum professionals. The questions must be submitted to the professor by October 17.

After they conduct their interview, each group will prepare and present a 10 minute oral presentation in which they share with the class their results. These presentations will take place on October 31st in class.

Assignment Three: Brief paper: Helping objects speak for themselves. Choose a single object in your possession, anything that actually belongs to you, and analyze it from the perspective a museum curator. In a short paper (3 pages, plus the condition report and catalog entry) I would like you to develop an interpretive strategy specifically for your selected object.

Your paper should include the following elements:

- 1) A [condition report](#):
- 2) A brief catalogue entry.
- 3) Your interpretive strategy for this object. This part of your paper should address some of the following issues:
 - a) How would you display this object? What special issues would you need to consider?
 - b) How would you help the audience understand the object?
 - c) What type of research might be interesting?
 - d) What do you think is important for the visitor to know?
 - e) What are some of the questions you think a visitor might ask?
 - f) How would you communicate with the visitor (text, video, audio, interactive)?

Assignment Four: Exhibit analysis paper

This assignment is based on a museum in our area that your visit at least once in the course of the semester. Choose one exhibit, either a permanent or short term exhibit, and write a 3 page paper analyzing and evaluating it from the perspective of the visitor. Use criteria that we have discussed in class, in your readings, and refer to [this document](#) published by the *National Association for Museum Exhibition*.

Assignment Five: Final Paper on the Elgin Marbles This assignment will be distributed in class during the semester.