

## ***History 572: Education and Interpretation at Museums and Historic Sites***

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 8:30-10:30, Wednesdays 8:30-11:30, and Thursdays 1:30-3:30  
and other times by appointment.

“No theory will suffice until it is grounded in practice, and no practice will sustain itself unless it can be understood and explained. The future health of museums requires the continued sharing of knowledge and bridging of these boundaries.”

--Silverman and O'Neill, “Change and Complexity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum.”  
*Museum News*. November/December 2004

This is a course about the history, theory and practice of informal learning at museums and historic sites. As we examine the major issues in the field—the social role of the museum, learning styles, community collaboration, and the role of the visitor in historical institutions—we will develop projects to test and refine our theories with practice. We will combine historical research methods with other more interdisciplinary approaches to create an effective public program.

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be conversant in the history and theory of informal education in the United States
- Have a working knowledge of museum programming for diverse user groups
- Demonstrate an understanding of interpretive techniques
- Be able to creatively combine the methods of social history and museum education to create and evaluate public programming
- Have gained practical skills in archival and material culture research, visitor evaluation, and needs assessment
- Have gained practical skills in public programming and working with community partners

### **Required Readings**

Denkler, *Sustaining Identity, Recapturing Heritage*

Diamond, *Practical Evaluation Guide: Tools for Museums and Other Informal Educational Settings*

Falk and Dierking, *Learning From Museums*

Hurt, *African American Life in the Rural South*

Johnson, et. al., *The Museum Educator's Manual*

McRaney, *Connecting Kids to History With Museum Exhibitions*

Roberts, *From Knowledge to Narrative*

Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*

In addition to these texts, there will be significant reading and background research for the projects. Please pay attention to the course schedule to make sure you've completed the required readings on time.

## **Assignments and Grades**

Your final grade (100 points) will be based on the following:

*Class Preparation and Participation (10):* The success of the class will depend on students having read and thought about the class texts. Teamwork is also very important to the success of the projects in our class, and participation is required.

*Museum Program Journal (5):* Museum educators must be aware of the scope and diversity of programming currently offered by museums and historic sites. With some exceptions, a program journal entry is due every class period.

*Research Paper (35)* No museum program can be effective without solid, creative, probing historical research. The final program of the class will be based on research papers conducted by individual students.

*Project Plan (40):* Using the Mack Munn collection, each student will plan an educational program to teach 8<sup>th</sup> graders about North Carolina history. The Lower Bladen Columbus Historical Society and your instructor will choose one plan for implementation.

*Project Implementation (10):* Students will divide the work for program implementation and implement the chosen program.

The following scale is used to determine final grades:

Percentage	Grade
96-100	A
90-95	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-

## Course Schedule

August 24: *The Museum Educator's Manual*; program journal entry; research paper assigned; introduction to Mack Munn Collection

**Saturday, August 28: Van tour of sites relevant to Mack Munn collection.** Van leaves Randall Library Parking Lot at 8am.

August 31: Falk and Dierking, *Learning From Museums*; program journal entry; plan and conduct research on your photos.

September 7: *African American Life in the Rural South*; program journal entry; local history research techniques; plan and conduct research on your photos

September 14: Visit to Senior Center in East Arcadia; prepare photo copies; plan and conduct research on your photos; program journal entry

September 21: Diamond, *Practical Evaluation Guide*; program journal entry; three front-end studies from NPS Harpers Ferry Media Evaluation and Visitor Research:

<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/evaluate.htm> or the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis: <http://www.si.edu/opanda/Reports.htm>

September 28: **Research paper due—upload before 11am**; no program journal entry this week; prepare three questions you'd like to ask of an experienced educator

October 5: No class: mid-semester break

October 12: Roberts, *From Knowledge to Narrative*; program journal entry; bring five completed community member survey forms and five completed teacher survey forms.

October 19: *Interpreting Our Heritage*; program journal entry

October 26: *Sustaining Identity*; program journal entry

November 2: *Connecting Kids to History With Museum Exhibitions*; program journal entry

November 8 (not a class meeting day): **Program proposal due—upload before 9am.** One electronic copy to me; one paper copy to my box.

November 9: Program announced. Planning begins.

Week of November 16: Program

Week of November 23: Program

Week of November 30: Program. **Program journal due—upload before 11am.**

Program needs to be completed by 5pm on the last day of exams.