

### ***History 574: Museum Exhibition***

Spring 2011, Morton 214

Wednesdays, 3:30-6:15

Professor: Tammy S. Gordon

Office Hours (Morton 264): Tuesdays 8:30-10:30, Wednesdays 12:00-3:00, Thursdays 8:30-10:30. Other times by appointment.

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“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 course is about the theory and practice of historical exhibition. As we examine the major theoretical issues in contemporary historical interpretation via the exhibition medium—such as the relationship between preservation and communication, the role of visitor studies, the ethics of collection and display, and the politics of exhibition development—we will also develop, design, and install a historical exhibition in the Public History Graduate Student Gallery in the Randall Library. At the end of this course you will have a working vocabulary of exhibition, an understanding of contemporary historical exhibition theory, and basic skills in exhibition development, design, production, installation, and evaluation.

The exhibition is an important component of this class. It is an opportunity to gain experience in professional exhibition and provide an educational resource for and with our community. The topic of this year's exhibition will be the Mack Munn Collection, a collection of photographs taken in the East Arcadia region in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. On loan from the Lower Bladen Columbus Historical Society, these photos will provide the base collection for our interpretive plan and exhibit.

### **Required Readings**

Readings:

Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South*

Lord and Lord, *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*

McRainey and Russick, *Connecting Kids to History with Museum Exhibitions*

Rhea, *Race Pride and the American Identity*

Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*

Serrell, *Judging Exhibitions: A Framework for Assessing Excellence*

Simon, *The Participatory Museum*

Tolnay, *The Bottom Rung: African American Family Life on Southern Farms*

Readings on reserve:

Barclay, *Mount Making for Museum Objects*

Recommended Background Reading:

Hurt, *African American Life in the Rural South*

Houtgraaf and Vitali, *Mastering a Museum Plan: Strategies for Exhibit Development*

Parman and Flowers, *Exhibit Makeovers: A Do-It-Yourself Workbook for Small Museums*

In addition to these texts, you will conduct background research on a more focused theme relating to the Mack Munn Collection. 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) will be based on the following:

*Class Preparation (15):* The success of the class and ultimately the exhibition will depend on timely progress. Exhibition development is a process, and work that is not completed on time slows the entire exhibit team.

*Research-Based Interpretive Plan (40):* Curators must be equally skilled in both research and communication. The interpretive plan reflects these skills and is the most important document in the exhibit development process. It is the plan the team follows to create an exhibition with a clear and cohesive theme. Although the final version is team-authored, individual elements are the responsibilities of individual curators.

*The Exhibition (45):* We are responsible for producing a high quality exhibit that is relevant to the needs of the communities we serve. We are more than a class; we are a project team with goals, responsibilities, and a budget.

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

January 12: *The Exhibition and its Development*

Read: Lord and Lord, 1-66; Tolnay

In class: course introduction, exhibition development processes and project plan, object study and exhibit topic

***Saturday, January 15: Tour of East Arcadia/Sandyfield:*** Meet at Randall Library

Parking lot at 8:30am. Will return by 3:00pm.

January 19: *Exhibition Research*

Read: Jones

In class: discuss reading, object interpretation lab; visitor surveys

January 26: *Audience Research*

Prepare: Ten interviews with library patrons

Read: McRainey and Russick

In class: discuss reading, prepare educational goals

February 2: *Exhibition Planning*

Prepare: ideas on interpretive plan and sub-themes

Read: Lord and Lord 262-404; readings related to sub-theme research

In class: discuss interpretive plan assignment; draft big idea statement

February 9: *Exhibition Development*

**Arrange meeting with professor to discuss interpretive plan in progress**

Read: Rhea; scholarship in area of sub-theme

Prepare: research for individual interpretive plan

February 16: *Curatorial Voice*

Read: Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*; scholarship in area of sub-theme

Prepare: draft of individual interpretive plan

In class: revise big idea statement; workshop exhibit text, discuss Serrell; computer lab/  
Adobe Illustrator

February 23: *Exhibition Design*

Prepare: ***Your part of the interpretive plan is due; upload an electronic version by 3:00pm***

Read: Lord and Lord 405-432; scholarship in area of sub-theme

Discuss: 2D and 3D design, software.

March 2: ***ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING***

Prepare: presentation for Advisory Committee

Read: Simon, scholarship in area of sub-theme

In class: present interpretive plan to advisory committee; make FINAL revisions to interpretive plan and exhibition text

March 9: *Development of Exhibition Resources*

Prepare: design ideas; bring digital copies of your finalized interpretive plan

Read: Lord and Lord, 69-257

In class: discuss design, create 2D style, identify graphics needs, discuss main graphic; graphics workshop

March 16: No class: spring break

March 23: GALLERY STUDY; Meet at Cape Fear Museum

Bring notebook for sketching mounts, case designs, etc.

Read: Barclay (on reserve); copy sections applicable to your objects; Serrell, *Judging Exhibitions*

In class: discuss mounts, gallery and case layouts

March 30: *Finalizing Design*

Prepare: case layouts and mount drawings; present plans to exhibition team

In class: present plans to exhibition team; finalize main graphic; design and production; divide production duties

April 6: *Production*

April 13: *Production*

April 20: **INSTALLATION DAY**

Prepare: before class, pack your objects for transfer; finish all mounts and graphics

In class: install exhibit elements in gallery; bring case layout plans

April 27: **OPENING RECEPTION 7:00-8:30pm**

*Meet in gallery*

Prepare: Your gallery talk