

HST 574: Museum Exhibition

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 21st Century Museum"



Visitors and docent in the exhibition "Revolution" at the Computer History Museum

Information

Instructor	Tammy S. Gordon, Ph.D. Associate Professor of History
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Office Hours	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1-3; Wednesdays 9-11 and 1-4, and other times by appointment
Skype	UNCWPublicHistory (during office hours)
Class Web Site	http://people.uncw.edu/stonegordont/HST574.html



Florence Nightingale's lamp,
Florence Nightingale Museum,
London, UK

Course Description

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 based on the Still Standing Project, a collection of artifacts related to the history of the preservation of slave dwellings. On loan from our community partners, these artifacts will provide the base collection for our interpretive plan and exhibit.

As a History Department offering, HST574 uses the History Department's Student Learning Outcomes as its goals. Please see: <http://www.uncw.edu/hst/majors/learninggoals.html>

Required Readings (available on reserve at the Randall Library)

- *Barclay, *Mount Making for Museum Objects*
- Bogle, *Museum Exhibition Planning and Design*
- *Brophy and Wiley, *The Green Museum (2nd edition)*
- Gallas and Perry, *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites*
- Henderson and Kaeppler, *Exhibiting Dilemmas*
- *McRainey and Russick, *Connecting Kids to History with Museum Exhibitions*
- *Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*
- *Serrell, *Judging Exhibitions: A Framework for Assessing Excellence*

In addition to these texts, you will conduct background research on a more focused theme relating to the history of the preservation of slave dwellings. Please pay attention to the course schedule to make sure you've completed the required readings on time.

*Copies in the PH Lab Reading Library are available for in-lab use

Requirements and Grading

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.

Final grades will be determined on the following scale:

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-

Additional Information

Costs

In addition to the cost of books (if you choose to buy rather than borrow them), additional costs will apply to this class: one student rate entrance fee to the Cape Fear Museum (\$6) and up to \$25 in lab fees. The latter applies to exhibition supplies for your section of the exhibit.

Workload

This course is a demanding one. It is important to keep up with the class readings and with the work required for exhibition development. This means *daily work*. The exhibit takes extra effort throughout its development, and we may have to arrange for additional work sessions during fabrication.

“It’s not the load that breaks you down.
It’s the way you carry it.”
--Singer/Performer Lena Horne



Course Schedule



“Exhibitions should undoubtedly provide for a variety of visitor activities and experiences (educational and otherwise), but ultimately, visitors will create their own, often deeply personal, meanings.”

Kathleen McLean
Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions

January 13: *The Exhibition and its Development*

Read: Bogle, 1-188

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

January 20: *Exhibition Research*

Read: Gallas and Perry

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

****Attend Joseph McGill talk and panel discussion on January 22 and 23****

January 27: *Thinking About Audience*

Read: McRainey and Russick

In class: discuss reading, prepare educational goals

February 3: *Exhibition Planning*

Prepare: ideas on interpretive plan and sub-themes; visit *Land of the Longleaf Pine* at the Cape Fear Museum and do Framework worksheets

Read: Serrell, *Judging Exhibitions*; readings related to sub-theme research

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

February 10: *Curatorial Voice*

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

Prepare: draft of individual interpretive plan's big idea and two sample labels

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

February 17: Work on interpretive plan and do Illustrator and Photoshop tutorials. In class: revise big idea statement and educational goals.

February 24: *Exhibition Design*

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

Read: Bogle, 189-358

Discuss: 2D and 3D design, software.

March 3: ***ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING***

Prepare: presentation for Advisory Committee

Read: Henderson and Kaeppler

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

March 10: no class—spring break

Schedule, continued

March 17: *Development of Exhibition Resources*

Read: Brophy and Wiley

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

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

March 24: GALLERY STUDY; Meet at Fort Fisher State Historic Site

Bring notebook for sketching mounts, case designs, etc.

Read: Barclay; copy sections applicable to your objects

In class: discuss mounts, gallery and case layouts

March 31: *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 7: *Production*

April 14: *No class but instead attendance at National Council on Public History national meeting in Nashville, leaving noon on Thursday, April 16 and returning the afternoon of April 19*

April 21: **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 28: **OPENING RECEPTION 7:00-8:30pm**

Meet in gallery

Prepare: Your gallery talk



What's really going on in *In the Car* by Roy Lichtenstein



This applied learning experience is part of **ETEAL—Experiencing Transformational Education through Applied Learning**. One or more assignments/reflections in this course have been chosen for the purpose of assessing ETEAL’s impact. The assignment/reflection will be graded by your instructor as explained in your syllabus. Any separate scoring of the assignment/reflection for the purposes of ETEAL assessment **WILL NOT** affect your grade in the course, or any other course work at UNCW. Through your participation, you will help the university to identify potential ways to improve the quality of applied learning experiences and enhance student learning. **All work submitted will remain confidential** and we will remove all identifying information before your work is read and scored. Anonymous excerpts from your reflections may be used for research and documentation purposes. In the process of this experience, photos may be taken of your applied learning activities and may be used for promotions, reporting, or educational purposes. If you do not wish to appear in any photos or would not like your image used in this way, please notify your instructor.