

# HIST 390-02: Museum Exhibits

Fall 2023 | TTh 12:30-1:45pm | CCC 305

**Instructor:** Dr. Cory Haala

**Office:** CCC 461

**Office Hours:** MW 1-3pm, post-5pm by appointment

**Email:** [chaala@uwsp.edu](mailto:chaala@uwsp.edu) – please read Laura Portwood-Stacer, “[How to Email Your Professor \(without being annoying AF\)](#)” for tips on sending effective emails that make the most of your time and mine!

## Course Overview and Outcomes

This course is an introduction to the history, theory, and practice of museum exhibits. During the semester, students will study and experience the process of exhibit development by viewing local and digital museum exhibits, then planning, writing, and designing an exhibit for the campus community and general public. To augment this, students will analyze the theoretical and actual challenges historians face in producing exhibits for a general audience, including controversies and case studies in the field.

As a result of “Museum Exhibits”, students will develop skills geared at analyzing and interpreting history for a general audience, including...

- Evaluating how the past is interpreted and communicated in museum settings,
- Assessing effective copy, display, accessibility, and other qualities in an exhibit,
- Completing an experiential learning project of a museum exhibit for the general public, from start to finish,
- Locating—including, if applicable, collecting—and synthesizing source materials from written texts to audiovisual materials for use in an exhibit,
- Collaborating in teams to develop and curate and exhibit, and
- Reflecting on the project by recognizing both the theoretical and actual challenges of museum exhibition, synthesizing course readings and hands-on experience.

## Course Materials and Notes

### Required Materials:

- Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, second edition (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). **MAKE SURE YOU GET THE SECOND EDITION.**
- Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010). Available for free online: <https://participatorymuseum.org/read/>.
- Justus F. Paul, *The World Is Ours: A History of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, 1894-1994* (Stevens Point: UWSP Foundation Press, 1994). Accessed online at <https://www3.uwsp.edu/Alumni/Documents/Traditions/theworldisours.pdf>.
- All other required readings will be listed in the schedule below and linked or attached as a PDF on [LMS]. Note that all articles linked to JSTOR will require you to log in (1) on a UWSP computer or wireless network, or (2) by logging into JSTOR with your UWSP credentials – click “Log In,” “Find My Institution,” and type in “Stevens Point”. Then, use your UWSP login.
- ***You should have a working laptop or high-functioning tablet to participate in this course, and you should plan to bring it to class every day. If this causes an undue hardship, please contact me immediately so we can work out alternate arrangements.***

**Additional Resources:**

- [Museum Associations](#): This list, compiled by the National Preservation Institute, includes a number of thematically, geographically, and methodologically arranged museum associations.
- [The Inclusive Historian’s Handbook](#): Created by the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) and National Council on Public History (NCPH), this text focuses on inclusivity, accessibility, and equity in public history.
- [The National Council on Public History](#): The NCPH, per its “Who We Are,” is “a membership association dedicated to making the past useful in the present and to encouraging collaboration between historians and their publics.” Their website includes a peer-reviewed journal, *The Public Historian*, and a blog, *History@Work*, both of which we will use in this course.
- [The American Association of State and Local History](#): The AASLH “provides crucial resources, guidance, professional development, advocacy, new publications, field-wide research, and a sense of connectedness to over 5,500 institutional and individual members, as well as leadership for history and history organizations nationally,” and is “the only comprehensive national organization dedicated to state and local history.” We will use their publications and, in particular, their job boards, as a means of exploring relevant careers in museums.
- [Wisconsin Federation of Museums](#): An organization formed “to promote the general welfare of museums in Wisconsin,” the WFM disseminates knowledge related to the profession, encourages cooperation among museums, disburses funds to member organizations, and holds property for the purposes of the organization. We will assess the exhibits and missions of their member institutions, as these are the kinds of “peer” museums you may go work for!

**Grading and Assignments**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Grading Scale (%)</u>	
Field Note #1 – Big Idea reflection	9/19	25	A	925-100
Field Note #2 – Object Labels	10/10	25	A-	900-924
All: Exhibit themes, object/image list	10/17	25	B+	875-899
All: Rough Draft of Script	10/31	50	B	825-874
Field Note #3 – Job Market Analysis	11/2	25	B-	800-824
Group Work – ROUGH DRAFTS	11/7	50	C+	775-799
Peer Reviews of Rough Drafts	11/9	25	C	725-774
Group Work – Final Steps	11/21	100	C-	700-724
Field Note #4 – Controversy	11/30	50	D	600-699
Field Note #5 – WEBSITE REVIEW	12/14	25	F	<600
Exhibit Presentation	TBD	250		
Interview Questions	TBD	25 each		
Attendance/Participation	Every day!	200		
Reflection	12/22	100		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1000</b>		

- **Field Notes:** These will be short (200-300 word) reactions and applications of various in-class activities and public history topics. Prompts will be posted on Canvas, and responses should show

engagement with both course readings and in-class activities. Points written above, graded on check-plus (100%), check (90%), check-minus (80%), unsatisfactory (0-70%).

- **Group Work/Museum Exhibit:** The exhibition, from design to script to display, is part of an incremental process—summaries of primary sources, object labels, developing exhibit sections, producing an object and image list, creating a complete draft of panels and object labels, proposing a layout, compiling a bibliography, and displaying the exhibition. Groups will be determined in Week 3 and will handle more in-depth parts of the Museum Exhibit. Check the schedule for a full list of deadlines and point values. Teams include:
  - Design
  - Editorial
  - Educational
  - Administrative
- **Reflection:** Following the exhibition of your museum exhibit, you will write a 3-4 page reflection on the research, group work, writing, and display process from this exhibit. Best responses will incorporate readings from the course with experiences from the exhibit and in-class activities. Full guidelines and a rubric will be posted to Canvas. 100 points.
- **Interviews:** At various points throughout the semester, we will interview or meet with other public historians and museum professionals here in Portage County and beyond either in-person or via Zoom. A week prior to those meetings, you will be assigned a short reading and be required to submit—by 12am the day of class—at least three questions for the interview. 25 points each.
- **Attendance and Participation:** This class is a mixture of discussion, in-class activities, active learning, and independent exploration of topics related to museums and exhibits. As such, you should come to every class having completed the readings, looked up words on concepts with which you are unfamiliar, and be prepared to answer “How does this reading alter my understanding of museum exhibits?”. Discussion is not optional – if a documented condition causes a problem, it is incumbent upon you to record those accommodations with University services and contact me immediately. Students may miss three (3) classes before their final grade is negatively affected—unexcused absences from group work dates will be looked upon particularly unfavorably. If you are facing any extenuating circumstances affecting your attendance—health issues, military service, the birth of a child or family emergency, UWSP athletics, etc—please talk to me ASAP. 200 points, graded each day after class.

### **Academic Dishonesty and Artificial Intelligence**

At UW-Stevens Point and in all courses, we place great emphasis on academic integrity and honesty. Plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, helping others commit these acts, and any form of dishonesty compromise the educational process and devalue the achievements of all students. All work you submit must be original and completed individually unless collaboration is explicitly allowed. Always acknowledge your sources, cite appropriately, and give credit where it's due. If instances of alleged academic dishonesty are identified, appropriate actions will be taken in accordance with the institution's policies (UWSP Chapter 14). These actions could include revising the assignment, receiving a lower grade or no credit for the assignment, receiving a lower grade for the entire course, or facing greater academic consequences.

If you are unsure if something might be considered academic misconduct, you are struggling to understand the content or an assignment, or you have fallen behind for whatever reason, please contact

your instructor as soon as possible. By nurturing a community of support, honesty, and respect, we ensure that academic pursuits and your experiences at UW-Stevens Point are both meaningful and genuine.

All forms of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fraud, and unauthorized access to tests and assignments are strictly prohibited. Any words or ideas borrowed from another person or source, whether through a direct quotation or through paraphrasing, must be cited properly to avoid plagiarism. Please familiarize yourself with plagiarism and how to avoid it:

- <https://www3.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>
- <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>.

Failure to abide by the rules set forth in those policies will lead to appropriate grade action, up to and including failing the course and reporting of any such incidents to the relevant University offices. **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, and online assignment help tools, such as Chegg, are examples of online learning support platforms: they can not be used for course assignments. The following actions are prohibited in this course:

- Submitting all or any part of an assignment statement to an online learning support platform;
- Incorporating any part of an AI generated response in an assignment;
- Using AI to brainstorm, formulate arguments, or template ideas for assignments;
- Using AI to summarize or contextualize source materials;
- Submitting your own work for this class to an online learning support platform for iteration or improvement. That includes Grammarly and other writing-refining softwares.

Any assignment content composed by any resource—human or digital—other than you must be attributed to the source through proper citation. Unattributed use of online learning support platforms and unauthorized sharing of instructional property are forms of academic dishonesty and will be treated as such.

### **Accessibility and Other Needs**

If you have a learning or physical challenge that requires accommodation, please contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center as early as possible. They will then notify me privately of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Their office is located on the 6th floor of the LRC. Voice: 715-346-3365, TTY: 715-346-3362.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies and resources, see: <https://www.uwsp.edu/datc/Pages/default.aspx>

### **Syllabus Changes**

Please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through email and Canvas as available.

## Schedule of Classes and Readings

### Week 1: Introductions

9/5: Introductions, Syllabus, Overview, Walking Tour?

9/7: What is a Museum?

- W. Caleb McDaniel, "[How to Read for History.](#)" August 1, 2008.
- Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, pp. 1-3
- Thomas A. Woods, "Museums and the Public: Doing History Together," *Journal of American History* vol. 82, no. 3 (December 1995): 1111-1115. [[JSTOR](#)]

### Week 2: Project Overview

9/12: Campus Walking Tour and Discussion – WEATHER PENDING, meet at [Schmeekle Visitor Center Amphitheater](#) at 12:45 (dress appropriate, bring assigned materials, note-taking supplies)

Assigned: Field Note #1 – Big Idea reflection

- Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, pp. 4-18

9/14: "The Big Idea": Project Overview

- "The Nature of Exhibits" and "The Big Idea," in *Creating Exhibits that Engage: A Manual for Museums and Historical Organizations* [PDF on Canvas]
- "Celebrating 50 Years of...Albertson Hall," UWSP Libraries  
<https://www3.uwsp.edu/library/ALB50/Pages/default.aspx>
- Albertson Building Central, UWSP.  
<https://www3.uwsp.edu/albertson-building-central/Pages/default.aspx>

### Week 3: History of Museums

9/19: Museums and Exhibits in American History

DUE: Field Note #1 – Big Idea reflection

- James B. Gardner, "Contested Terrain: History, Museums, and the Public," *Public Historian* 26, no. 4 (November 2004): 11-21. [[JSTOR](#)]
- "Engaging Audiences: Case Studies from the Field," *Introduction to Public History*, pp. 141-159 [[Canvas](#)]

9/21: How do we interact?

**TEAM SELECTION TODAY**

- Three different looks at museum roles – compare their responsibilities and assignments!
  - Charles L. Baker, "Planning Exhibits: From Concept to Opening." *History News* 36, no. 4 (1981): 21–28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42656252>.
  - Paul Bowers, "Exhibition development – culture and roles," *Museum Musings*, March 19, 2020 [[Medium](#)]
  - Smithsonian Exhibits, "[A Guide to Exhibit Development](#)"
- Milwaukee Museum, "Museum Inside Out: What Does a Registrar Do?," June 2020 [[YouTube](#)]
- RAMMuseumExeter, "Inside the Museum: The Team Behind the Displays", July 2021 [[YouTube](#)]

### Week 4: THE BIG IDEA

9/26: UWSP History – meet at Nelson Hall, 1st floor by the fireplace

ASSIGNED: Field Note #2 – Object Labels

- [“Celebrating 50 Years of...Albertson Hall”](#)
- [“Albertson Building Central”](#)
- Justus F. Paul, *The World Is Ours* – Chs. 1-5 [[UWSP](#)]

9/28: UWSP History and Albertson Discussion

- Paul, *The World Is Ours* – Chs. 6-Epilogue [[UWSP](#)]
- “The Brief and Request for Proposals,” “Interpretive Planning,” from *Creating Exhibits That Engage* [PDF on Canvas]

### Week 5: Object Labels and Levels

10/3: Labels

ASSIGNED: Exhibit themes and object/image list (ALL)

- B. Erin Cole, [“I Have to Write the Labels.”](#) *Medium* (blog), December 2, 2018
- Serrell, pp. 19-46
- Paul Bowers, “They’re not ‘labels’ and they’re not ‘didactics’”, November 23, 2017 [[Medium](#)]

10/5: Levels

- Serrell, pp. 86-105, 117-143
- Larry Borowsky, [“Telling a Story in 100 Words: Effective Label Copy.”](#) American Association for State and Local History, in *History News* vol. 62, no. 4 (Autumn 2007)

### Week 6: Exhibit Design and Planning

10/10: UWSP Archives Day – MEET AT UWSP ARCHIVES (TNR 110)

DUE: Field Note #2 – Object Labels

10/12: Design Workshop (½ as a class, ½ in teams)

- “Interpretive Planning”, in *Creating Exhibits That Engage* [PDF on Canvas]
- Serrell, pp. 166-177, 266-286

### Week 7: Let’s Do This

10/17: Team Updates and Text/Design

- Serrell, 233-243
- “Text” and “Design”, in *Creating Exhibits That Engage* [PDF on Canvas]

10/19: Work Day – Archives or elsewhere as assigned

DUE: Exhibit themes and object/image list (ALL)

- Read: [“The Way We Worked” exhibit script](#), Smithsonian Institution

10/20-10/21: Homecoming [we’ll talk about availability – stay tuned!]

### Week 8: Local History

10/24: Text/Design Teamwork

- Carol Kammen, “On Doing Local History: The Local Historian as Public Intellectual.” *History News* 71, no. 1 (2016): 3–4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44605912>

10/26: INTERVIEW – TBD OR Field Trip with Portage County Historical Society

ASSIGNED: Field Note #3 – Job Market Analysis and Inventory

- Use [AAM](#), [NCPH](#), or [AASLH](#) job website to locate a job you would be interested in
  - What filters did you use to find it?
  - Why do those filters (pay, location, type of work) matter?
  - What do you need from this class (training, certification, hands-on experience, portfolio, etc.) to accomplish that?
  - What can this class *not* provide and what else would you need to do?

### Week 9: Engagement

10/31: Visitor Engagement

DUE: Rough Draft of Script (all teams)

- *Exhibit Labels*, 49-68, skim 69-85.

11/2: Work Day – Meet at Team-designated locations (communicated to Prof. Haala)

DUE: Field Note #3 – Job Market Analysis and Inventory

### Week 10: Production

11/7: Team Updates

DUE: Teams work – DRAFTS

- Panel design and layout (Design)
- Script draft and floorplan (Editorial)
- Programming plans (Educational)
- Promotional materials (Administrative)

11/9: Peer Reviews and Edit Plans

DUE: PEER REVIEWS

- Heidi Olson, “[10 Ways to Help Students Give Constructive Feedback.](#)” University of Alaska-Fairbanks, February 3, 2015.
- Serrell, pp. 244-265.

### Week 11: Controversy and Neutrality

11/14: Controversy

Assigned: Field Note #4 – Reaction to Controversy

- Start here: Jennifer Wright, “Exhibiting the Enola Gay,” *Smithsonian Institution Archives* online, June 25, 2020. [[Smithsonian](#)]
- Military: John T. Correll, “The Smithsonian and the Enola Gay,” *Air Force Magazine*, March 15, 1994. [[Wayback Machine](#)]

- Academic: Richard H. Kohn, “History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution’s Enola Gay Exhibition.” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (1995): 1036–63. [[JSTOR](#)]
- Public: Elizabeth Yakel, “Museums, Management, Media, and Memory: Lessons from the Enola Gay Exhibition.” *Libraries & Culture* 35, no. 2 (2000): 278–310. [[JSTOR](#)]

11/16: History and Neutrality

- Elizabeth Merritt, “Leading Forward: Engaging with Complex and Controversial Topics,” Associate Alliance of Museums, March 15, 2018. [[AAM](#)]
- “Museums Have Never Been Neutral, But They Should Be,” [Brenham Heritage Museum](#).
- “Intern Weekly Response: Museums and Neutrality 2019,” The Jewish Museum of Maryland. June 13, 2019. [[JMM](#)]
  - OPTIONAL: @waitmanb, “Let’s have a conversation about what museums are and how they work,” Twitter, July 9, 2023 [[Twitter](#)]

### Week 12: Project Work Week

11/21: Team Updates – MEET AT UWSP ARCHIVES

- Serrell, pp. 219-231

**DUE:** Teams work – Final Steps

- Final panel design and layout (Design)
- Reception planning (Editorial)
- Reception script (Educational)
- Project budget (Administrative)

11/23: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)

### Week 13: Controversy, Revisited

11/28: Mining and Museums in the Northwoods

- Selection (Ch. 5) from Jeffrey T. Manuel, *Taconite Dreams: The Struggle to Sustain Mining on Minnesota’s Iron Range, 1915-2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015): 194-247. [[Google Drive](#)]

11/30: Community Reckoning – EXTENDED DISCUSSION TODAY

**DUE:** Field Note #4 – Reaction to Controversy

- Explore: “[Sifting and Reckoning: UW-Madison’s History of Exclusion and Resistance](#)”
- [MASS Action Toolkit](#), pp. 11-32

### Week 14: Finalizing

12/5: Exhibit Installation and the New Museum

- Christina Carr, “Board Age Diversity and the Future of Museum Leadership,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* vol. 64, no. 2 (April 2021): 237-252.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12416>.

12/7: On-Site Team Updates (TBD)

Assigned: Field Note #5 – [WEBSITE REVIEW](#)

### Week 15: Digital Museums and Exhibits

12/12: Digital Archives

- Serrell, 204-229
- “Interpreting the Past: Case Study: The Baltimore ‘68 Project,” *Introduction to Public History*, pp. 33-68 + [Website](#)
- Select site from list on Canvas for Digital Review (due Thursday)

12/14: Digital Case Studies + The Future

DUE: Field Note #5 – [WEBSITE REVIEW](#)

### Finals Week: Exhibit Presentation

- **Content:** due on Exam Day (date/time determined by University)
- **Exhibition:** event TBD
- **Reflection:** due on Friday, December 22, 11:59pm CT (determined by me)