

**Northern Virginia Community College**  
**History 183 – Survey of Museum Practice Syllabus**  
**Fall Semester 2016**

Class Schedule: Th 7:00pm – 9:45pm (HIS 183-001L(33717))  
Location: L-Waddell / LW-0103  
Instructor: Dr. Marc Dluger  
Office: LR-136  
Office Hours: See Blackboard  
Email: mdluger@nvcc.edu

**Course Description & Purpose:**

Examines the theory and practice of museums. Explores the role of the museum in society and traces the foundations upon which these public, cultural, and educational institutions are built. Particular focus will include museum management, administration, interpretation, and collection policy, as well as how museums pertain to historic preservation and public history exhibitions.

**Course Prerequisites:**

General college entrance competencies.

**Course Objectives:**

- A) Explain the development of current museum standards, policies, and practices.
- B) Describe museum norms in the areas of context, scholarship, and accessibility in the presentation of collections and exhibits.
- C) Identify options for museums in terms of organization, function, and practice.
- D) Identify ethical issues in the interpretation of the past by museums.
- E) Demonstrate how to mount museum exhibitions and undertake public programming.

**Major Topics to be Covered Include:**

- A) Museum organization, management, and administration
- B) Collections management
- C) Exhibition planning, design, interpretation, and critique
- D) Museum audiences and communities
- E) Digitalization and technology
- F) Ethical responsibility

**Course Materials:**

The following textbooks can be purchased at the bookstore:

*Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, edited by Gail Anderson (ISBN 978-0-7591-1695-9)

*The Manual of Museum Learning, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, edited by Brad King & Barry Lord  
(ISBN 978-1-4422-5847-1)

*Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*,  
Edward T. Linenthal (ISBN 978-0-231-12407-2)

The following textbook is available FREE online:

*Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook*, edited by Patrick J. Boylan (ISBN  
92-9012-157-2)

<http://icom.museum/resources/publications-database/publication/running-a-museum-a-practical-handbook/>

Additionally, numerous articles and other readings are located on Blackboard, under the Course Documents menu. They are organized by week on Blackboard and on the schedule, located at the end of the syllabus. You are required to bring in copies of those articles each week, either digitally or by printing them out.

### **Course Evaluation:**

15%	Museum Exhibition Critique
20%	Museum Site Critique
20%	Case Study Review – Holocaust Museum
25%	MyMuseum Project
20%	Discussion & Attendance

*Museum Exhibition Critique* – Exhibitions are an essential element in how museums communicate their core message with the general public, providing an opportunity for visitors to learn, understand, observe, and/or interact with the museum's collection and interpretative vision. Your goal for this project is to visit a history museum of your choice and critique one of their exhibitions (either a permanent or temporary exhibit is acceptable). Your paper should be three to five pages long, focusing your critique on the exhibition's message, how the subject matter was presented (such as their use of objects, label copy, and space design), how the exhibit fits within the scope/mission of the museum, and how does it relate to the audience.

You will be required to present your exhibition critique to the rest of the class, highlighting important features and analysis.

Due Date – November 3<sup>rd</sup>

*Museum Site Critique* – The goal of this assignment is for you to critique a local museum, researching, analyzing, and summarizing various aspects: the museum's organization and governance (mission statement, public/private, etc.), historical background of the museum, collection management policies and/or practices, exhibitions and interpretations, intended audiences, educational programs, and community outreach/interactions (including digital outreach). An onsite visit to the museum is required, as well as researching the museum's website and online presence. Your paper should be approximately 5 to 7 pages in length, including images of the museum and a bibliography. The museum you selected must be different than the museum you selected for the exhibition critique.

You will present your museum site critique to the rest of the class on the due date. It will be an informal presentation and you are not required to create a PowerPoint presentation; however, if you want to include visual aids and documentation, you can.

Due Date – December 1<sup>st</sup>

Case Study Review – Holocaust Museum – One of the main readings for this course revolves around the creation and implementation of America's Holocaust Museum. Now situated just south of the Mall on Independence and 14<sup>th</sup> Street SW here in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum took years to be built and had to negotiate the contested terrain of memory, remembrance, ownership, and design. Edward T. Linenthal's *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* goes into great detail on how all of that unfolded; however, his revised edition ends at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For this assignment, you need to read the book, visit the museum (please consult their website for times and special events), and then write a five page paper summarizing your thoughts on the entire experience. You have the rare opportunity to actually visit this case study in person and understand the nuances behind the creation of the museum. Some questions to consider: are the experiences in the book adequately reflected in the museum today? What do you think were the most important themes found in the book? Are those themes found in the museum? Has the museum expanded, changed, and/or revised itself since the book was originally published?

We will spend a class session discussing the book, the museum, and the ethical responsibilities of museums and museum professionals.

Due Date – December 8<sup>th</sup>

MyMuseum Project – You get to create your own museum (or at least the governing structure of a potential museum)! Your museum can focus on any topic, from Star Wars and Harry Potter to a small, local community focused historical society in rural West Virginia; however, it needs to be grounded in reality with all of the proper organizational structure. Elements that need to be included in your assessment:

- Mission Statement
- Organizational Structure
- Facilities (Site & Location)
- Collections Management and Scope
- Potential Exhibitions and Interpretations
- Educational Programming
- Community Outreach

There is no page requirement for this project, but you must provide enough adequate information using the knowledge you have gained from this course to construct a strong framework for your MyMuseum Project. Use your creativity to craft what your idealized museum would be like; however, you must work within budgetary reason and that you must justify/explain your monetary funding. If you desire, you can work in teams of two to complete this project. A visual presentation of your potential museum project is required on the due date, highlighting the important features of your museum and making a convincing argument that your museum could be considered feasible.

Due Date – December 15<sup>th</sup>

*Discussion & Attendance* – Class participation is a fundamental component in this course. Failing to actively participate in the classroom will severely hamper your ability to achieve a good grade in this course. Class participation turns history into an active and exciting subject, helping to facilitate your understanding of the topics at hand. Each week we will have a series of readings from the textbooks and relevant articles, accessible through Blackboard. Students must sign up to present information and analysis from those readings and share their interpretation with the rest of the class in an informal presentation. Areas and topics that you should consider include, but are not limited to: summarizing the article/chapter; providing the thesis argument; is there a relationship between the themes presented in this particular article/chapter and the others from that week; is there a relationship found among the other articles/chapters already discussed this semester; and, does the it making a compelling and convincing argument.

You will have multiple opportunities to lead the class in discussion throughout the semester. As the discussion lead for that reading assignment, it is required that you generate at least three questions per source to help spur on the discussion and involve your fellow classmates to actively engage the subject material.

Due Date – Multiple dates throughout the semester, based on student choice

Graded materials will be returned to the students as soon as possible during the course of the semester, hopefully within a week.

#### **Grade Scale:**

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Below 60%	F

#### **Grading Standards for all Assignments in this Class:**

These characteristics describe common traits of the grade given.

##### **Grade ="A"**

- This assignment specifically and fully answers all parts of the question or questions asked.
- Conclusions, opinions stated, or evaluations called for in the question are supported by appropriate analysis and a good range of specific facts.
- This assignment is clearly written in full sentences without major grammatical errors.
- An introduction, body, and conclusion are clearly evident.

##### **Grade ="B"**

- This assignment specifically answers all parts of the question or questions asked.
- Conclusions, opinions stated, or evaluations called for in the question are supported by adequate understanding of the text and common sense.
- May demonstrate general knowledge but often lacks a full range of specific facts.
- This assignment is clearly written without major grammatical errors.

- An introduction, body, and conclusion are clearly evident.

**Grade ="C"**

- This assignment may only answer part of the question or questions asked.
- Conclusions, opinions stated, or evaluations called for in the question are supported by some understanding of the text.
- This assignment may include factual errors, or not demonstrate adequate understanding of the historical period.
- The assignment may be poorly written, and contain serious grammatical errors.
- Or this assignment may simply list or describe historical facts without specifically relating them to the question or questions asked.
- An introduction, body, and conclusion are not clearly evident.

**Grade ="D"**

- Opinions stated, or evaluations given are not called for in the question or are not supported by an understanding of the period.
- This assignment may be poorly written, and contain many spelling and grammatical errors.
- The essay is one long paragraph.

**Grade ="F"**

- The assignment ignores the question or questions.
- This assignment contains many serious factual errors or no accurate facts.
- The assignment may be difficult or impossible to understand because of grammatical or usage errors.
- This essay is mostly sentences copied directly or very closely out of the text.
- The essay is one short paragraph.

**Class Policies:**

*Conduct* – You are expected to be respectful of everyone in the classroom. Disrespectful actions, through verbal, written, or any other ways, will not be tolerated and will be subject to discipline as documented in the Northern Virginia Community College student handbook.

*Cell Phones and Electronic Devices* – All cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and put away. Laptops and tablet devices can be used for note taking and reviewing the readings only. Cell phones and electronic devices cannot be used to record lectures/discussions (either through audio, video, or still photography) in any way. Any cell phone left on the desk does not meet the above requirements.

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance is required. If you know you will be absent because of a legitimate reason, please inform the instructor through email as soon as possible. Excused absences will be tolerated on an extremely limited basis. More than three unexcused absences will count against your grade by one full letter. It is your responsibility to get the information discussed during any class missed.

Repeated tardiness will also reflect poorly on your participation grade. Being tardy to the presentations may impact your grades on those assignments.

**Makeup Policy:**

Late work will not be accepted. All work must be submitted through Blackboard before the start of class. If you fail to attend class on the day of your presentations you will receive a zero for that part of assignment. All assignment due dates are listed in the Schedule Section at the end of this Syllabus. It is your responsibility to know these dates and mediate any potential conflicts.

**Late Withdrawal Policy:**

The last possible day to withdraw from the class is November 1<sup>st</sup> without a grade penalty. Financial compensation (or partial refund for the class) from the college will only happen if you withdraw before September 8<sup>th</sup> (census date). Please consult the Northern Virginia Community College website for exact refund options.

If you are concerned about your grade, please schedule a time to visit with me.

**Incomplete Policy:**

Incompletes are rare occurrences and can only occur when a student can document an extenuating circumstance. Two-thirds of the assignments and the class must be completed with a grade of at least a “C” for such a condition to be even initially considered. Special arrangements must be made before an incomplete can be granted.

**Plagiarism and Dishonest Conduct:**

This class follows the rules as outlined in the Northern Virginia Community College Student Handbook.

Academic dishonesty includes: dishonest use of course materials, such as student papers, examinations, and reports; knowingly assisting others in the dishonest use of course papers, examinations, and reports; and knowingly presenting course materials such as papers, lab data, reports, and/or electronic files and sources used by another students as that student’s own work.

Plagiarism occurs when a student uses language or ideas from materials without acknowledgement and/or when the work is copied from other sources and is submitted as the student’s own. Examples include: copying a phrase, sentence, or longer passage from a source and submitting it as one’s own; summarizing or paraphrasing someone else’s ideas without acknowledging the source; and, submitting group assignments individually as one’s own independent work. When in doubt, **footnote** the source in written reports! If you have any questions or concerns, consult with the instructor beforehand or seek advice from the Writing Center. The Library’s website has information as well if students have any further questions.

Any student who submits an assignment and is found guilty of academic dishonesty or plagiarism, will fail that assignment, the course, and face academic probation.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

The college is committed to the goal of providing each qualified student an equal opportunity to pursue a college education regardless of disability. Disability services are available to the student upon the provision of clear and specific evidence that documents a formal diagnosis of a disability from a qualified professional. Students should contact the Loudoun campus Student Services Center, 703-450-2501, for further information. Students who wish to obtain their services must contact them at the start of the semester. A Memorandum of Accommodation, if required, must be presented to the instructor at the beginning of the term.

## Tentative Schedule

- Week 1      August 25      Class Introduction**  
 Reinventing the Museum, "A Framework: Reinventing the Museum"  
 Running a Museum Handbook, Introduction  
 The Manual of Museum Learning, Chapter 1  
 Start to read Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (finish reading by December 8)
- Week 2      September 1      What Is a Museum? – Historical Context**  
 Reinventing the Museum, Chapters 1, 2, 3  
 Running a Museum Handbook, pp. 1-16  
 A.H. Saxon, "P.T. Barnum and the American Museum," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 130-139.
- Week 3      September 8      What Is a Museum? – Legal and Organizational Structure**  
 Reinventing the Museum, Chapters 4, 15, 39  
 Running a Museum Handbook, pp. 133-160  
 The Manual of Museum Learning, Chapters 2, 8
- Week 4      September 15      Objects and Collecting**  
 James B. Gardner and Sarah M. Henry, "September 11 and the Mourning After: Reflections on Collecting and Interpreting the History of Tragedy," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 2002), pp. 37-52.  
 Elaine Heumann Gurian, "What is the Object of this Exercise? A Meandering Exploration of the Many Meanings of Objects in Museums," *Daedalus*, Vol. 128, No. 3 (Summer, 1999), pp. 163-183.  
 Reiko Hillyer, "Relics of Reconstruction: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (November 2011), pp. 35-62.
- Week 5      September 22      Collections Management**  
 Reinventing the Museum, Chapter 19, 34, 35  
 Running a Museum Handbook, pp. 17-50  
 AASLH Committee on Professional Standards and Ethics, "When A History Museum Closes: Ethics Position Paper," *History News* (Summer, 2007), pp. 24-28.
- Week 6      September 29      Collection Care and Conservation**  
 Running a Museum Handbook, pp. 51-90  
 Carole Milner, "Who Cares? Conservation in a Contemporary Context," *Museum International*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1999), pp. 22-27.

Richard Weizel, "Mohegans Seeking Return of Objects Sacred to Tribe," *The New York Times*, February 8, 1998.

**Week 7      October 6                      Exhibitions and Interpretations**

Reinventing the Museum, Part III, Chapters 23, 24, 25

Running a Museum Handbook, pp. 91-104

Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: Second Edition*, pp. 1-46.

**Week 8      October 13                      Exhibition Planning and Design**

Reinventing the Museum, Chapter 32

Michael J. Hogan, "The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation," *Hiroshima in History & Memory*, pp. 200-232.

Peter Liebhold, "Experiences from the Front Line: Presenting a Controversial Exhibition during the Culture Wars," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Summer, 2000), pp. 67-84.

Beverly Serrell, "The Label's Voice: Who Is Talking to Me?," *Exhibit Labels: Second Edition*, pp. 135-143.

**Week 9      October 20                      Museum Audiences**

Reinventing the Museum, Chapters 26, 27, 28

Running a Museum Handbook, pp. 105-132

The Manual of Museum Learning, Chapter 9

Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: Second Edition*, pp. 49-85.

**Week 10      October 27                      Museums and Communities**

Reinventing the Museum, Chapters 12, 21, 41

The Manual of Museum Learning, Chapters 6, 10

Ruth J. Abram, "Kitchen Conversations: Democracy in Action at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 2007), pp. 59-76.

**Week 11      November 3                      Exhibition Critique Presentations**

**Week 12      November 10                      Digital Museums and Virtual Exhibitions**

Reinventing the Museum, Chapter 42

Suhas Deshpande, Kati Gerber, and Corey Timpson, "Engaged Dialogism in Virtual Space: An Exploration of Research Strategies for Virtual Museums," Cameron, ed. *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*, pp. 261-279

Ross Parry and Nadia Arbach, "Localized, Personalized, and Constructivist: A Space for Online Museum Learning," Cameron, ed. *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*, pp. 281-298.

Beverly Serrell, "Digital Interpretive Devices," *Exhibit Labels: Second Edition*, pp. 204-229.

Helena Zinkham & Michelle Springer, "Taking Photographs to the People: The Flickr Commons Project and the Library of Congress," Theimer, ed. *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections Between Archives and Our Users*, pp. 102-115.

**Week 13      November 17      Museum Marketing and Financing**

Reinventing the Museum, Chapters 31, 33

Running a Museum Handbook, pp. 161-176

"Special Review Section: Corporate Presentations of History," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (February 2011), pp. 73-95.

**Week 14      November 24      No Class – Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 15      December 1      Museum Critique Presentations**

**Week 16      December 8      Code of Ethics for Museums and Professionals  
Case Study Review – Holocaust Museum**

Reinventing the Museum, Chapters 40

AAM Code of Ethics for Museums

(<http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/code-of-ethics>)

AASLH Statement of Professional Standards and Ethics

(<http://resource.aaslh.org/view/aaslh-statement-of-professional-standards-and-ethics/>)

**Week 17      December 15      Final Project Presentations**

*The syllabus and schedule may change at any time and will be clearly articulated to everyone in class & Blackboard if that occurs. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of any changes.*