

**ART 3309 (Spring 2024)**  
**Exhibition Practices II: Exhibition Development and Design Lab**

Course Information

Title: See above

Education 310 or the Centennial Museum

TR 9:00-11:50

Credit: 3 hours

Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Elisabeth Sommer

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Welcome to the hardest class you'll ever love (at least that's what I'm hoping). Your task is to learn the ins and outs of exhibit development, and to play an active role in designing and implementing an exhibit. We will spend a few weeks reading about and discussing issues of interpretation and the public interaction with museum exhibits and looking at examples. We'll be thinking about all of this as it relates to our own exhibition and then begin an intense focus on developing and implementing that exhibition. **Be prepared.** Some of the work for this class will need to be done outside of class meetings. I expect the work to be as close to what professionals produce as possible, given our shorter timeline and smaller (much) budget.

We'll be installing our exhibit at the Centennial. The exhibit will go into the "education room" off of the Tom Lea Gallery (gallery where the Bhutan exhibit was).

Course Expectations and Goals

This class can only succeed with the **full participation of all students**. I cannot stress enough how important it is **that you be here for class**. Because you will work as a team, and in sub-teams, everyone will be responsible for the finished product. You will be graded largely on your specific portion of the script/exhibit, but I will be paying attention to how each of you works with the others. When we have readings, I expect you to **come to class ready to discuss** the material, so you need to plan your time carefully. **Civil and respectful class conversation will be critical** to developing the exhibit. It is fine to disagree, but do not step on other's ideas; listening is a fine skill to develop.

We will view exhibits at the Centennial, and do some practical exercises, and (hopefully) learn from professionals in the field as we develop our concepts. All of this is intended to help you understand the challenges and processes involved in creating museum exhibits. Each of you should finish the class with some experience in:

- label writing
- developing an exhibit's "big idea"
- setting project goals
- creating and assessing design elements
- meeting deadlines
- working as a team

**We will also be working closely with the curatorial staff at the Centennial.**

### Taking Care of Yourself

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing flu symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. The State Legislature has also passed laws relating to accommodating pregnancy and parenting. That information can be found here: <https://www.utep.edu/titleix/pregnancy-and-parenting.html>

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Please refer to the QR code below for a listing of campus resources.



### Reading Assignments

We will spend the first couple of weeks reacquainting ourselves with "best practices" in exhibit design and interpretation. Afterwards we will use readings in conjunction with active exhibit development. I have chosen the following readings to guide our thinking:

Selections from Barry Lord and Maria Piacente, Eds. *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* and Leslie Bedford, *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences* (all posted on Blackboard)

Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (in the bookstore and on Amazon)-this one you'll need to purchase.

### Writing Assignments

In addition to the product of your contribution to the exhibit, all students will have to **write a draft label** (details TBD). Finally, each of you will **submit a report on your experience** developing the script and exhibit, which will be due on the day scheduled for the final.

### Grades

Discussion/Participation	30%
Draft Label Exercise	25%
Final Product and Report	45%

Please note that discussion will take place during the exhibit development process as well as in the preliminary stages. As we work on the exhibit, we will have “check-ins” at the beginning and end of every class.

### Exhibit Development Teams

On an actual exhibit development committee or team, each member represents an important facet of the process and product. We will represent these various facets through teams of two or three. Within these groups, each member should have particular responsibilities within the group’s aspect of the exhibit. The final product, however, needs to be cohesive, both in terms of the team’s contribution, and the exhibit as a whole. Members of teams will end up crossing over to some degree in order to facilitate getting the exhibit done on time and in a professional manner. **Cooperation and Communication** between teams and between team members is essential.

Team breakdown and responsibilities will be roughly as follows:

#### **Curatorial Team**

- Responsible for leading object research and recommendation for inclusion
- Keeps track of all objects and produces final object list
- Works closely with education and exhibit design teams to insure selection of best objects for interpretation and proper display conditions
- Ensures accuracy of information on labels
- Takes the lead in mounting/installation of objects
- Drafts labels for objects and object interpretation

#### **Education Team**

- Responsible for developing concepts for interactive components of exhibit
- Drafts labels for all interactive elements and section panels
- Develops supporting educational programming, including any supplementary exhibit material

- Works closely with curatorial team to insure best practices in audience communication and engagement
- Works closely with public relations/outreach team to insure harmony in message and approach

#### **Public Relations/Outreach Team**

- Responsible for all aspects of promotion and community connection
- Produces final model for all PR material, including postcards and posters (if relevant), press release etc.
- Develops, implements, and interprets front-end and formative evaluation surveys
- Develops proposals for any supporting community outreach activities (lectures, special events, etc.)
- Works closely with education team to insure that proposed programs are fun, engaging, and educational, and reach a variety of audiences
- Works closely with design team to insure coherence between PR materials and exhibit

#### **Design Team**

- Responsible for overall design of exhibit including floorplan, case layout, interactives, and label graphics (text and images)
- Recommends color scheme and fonts
- Produces final layouts in graphic or hand-drawn form, including overall floorplan, label/panel design, and section and case layout
- Works closely with curatorial team to insure proper placement of objects within design
- Works closely with public relations/outreach team to insure coherence in design of exhibit and PR materials
- Works closely with education team on development and placement of interactives

#### Resources

You need to utilize the resources available in the library, as well as the UTEP collections and databases. If the topic requires it, I will place a selection of books on reserve.

**The staff members of the Centennial** also serve as resources. We need to work with them as active team members. **That means checking in with them** before objects are moved, or materials, including large labels/panels, are mounted.

#### Assignment Schedule (subject to change)

January 16: Getting to Know You. It's vital that we feel comfortable with each other, so we'll spend time on this as well as going over the syllabus.

January 18: Learning from Those Who've Been There: A Chat with Former 3309 Students

January 23: Exploring "Best Practices" in Exhibit Development (*Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Chapter 2 "The Purpose of Museum Exhibitions") **Submission of Exhibit Team Assignment Requests** (first, second, and third choices)

January 25: Best Practices: Sharing Authority and Engaging Audiences (*Manual* Chapter 10, "Participatory Experiences") **Assignment of Exhibit Teams and initial team discussions**

January 30: Putting the Interpretive Exhibit Together (*The Art of Museum Exhibitions*, Part III, Chapter 6, "Creating and Experiencing the Exhibit Medium").

February 1: The Role of Interpretive Labels (Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels* Chapters 2-3, Chapter 4 pp.63-65, Chapters 6-8) Meet in the Centennial and discuss reading in context of exhibits.

February 6: Discussion of potential front-end evaluation questions (PR team takes the lead) and exploration of exhibit objects (Curatorial takes the lead)

February 8: **PR team prepares to launch front-end evaluation** (*Manual*, Chapter 4 "Measuring Success")

February 13: **Report on results of front-end evaluation** from PR/outreach team; discussion of implications of results

February 15: Meeting with Centennial curatorial staff to discuss status of work and get their feedback, concerns, etc. **Label exercise due by midnight**

February 20: **Decision on "big idea," themes and goals** (Serrell, Chapter 1)

February 22: **Object recommendations** from Curatorial team and decision on objects; group work, with Education team beginning work on interactives and label types, PR and Design teams brainstorming color and font schemes and identifying image selections for use in poster and postcard (work with Fayelee on these), Design team begins work on floorplan; **decision on title**  
**Class meets at the Centennial today and for the remainder of the semester.**

February 27: Group work; Education team begins drafting labels and developing ideas for interactives; PR team begins developing PR plan; Curatorial team reviews object requirements, consults with Education and Design teams on display approaches (use as reference Serrell, Chapters 13-14, 17-19)

February 29: Meeting with Centennial staff -PR team presents **draft of PR material**;  
Design and Education teams present **draft of label types**, color and font schemes;  
Education team presents **proposal for interactives**; Design team presents draft layout

March 5: Research on design and interactive elements and budget (the practical “how”  
of all this)

March 7: Continued work on all aspects of exhibit as needed

March 12-March 14: Spring Break!! (We’re all excited, but you’ll need to continue with  
your work because things are getting real now)

March 19: Group review of draft floorplan, case design etc.; **PR team produces sample  
materials and PR plan**

March 21: Group discussion of label text; Education team prepares to have **final form of  
labels by April**; Education team continues work on interactives and programs; **formative  
evaluation of design elements**

March 26: Group work; PR team finalizes PR materials and develops summative  
evaluation plan; Curatorial team consults with Education team; Education team finalizes  
interactive elements

March 28: Group work continued; **formative evaluation of labels**

April 2: Meet with Centennial staff for presentation of **final exhibit design** (floorplan,  
cases, label templates); PR team presents **final version of PR materials**; **All materials  
ready to be sent for printing**

April 4: PR team presents **final version of outreach and summative evaluation plans**

April 9: Education and Curatorial teams present **final version of labels and interactives**;

April 11: Mock-up in Centennial

April 16: Formative Evaluation of mock-up;

April 18: Fabrication and installation

April 23: Fabrication and installation continued

April 25: Fabrication and installation

April 30: Final touches

May 2: Opening

**Individual project reports due by 6:00 on Wednesday, May 11**