ART 3309 (Spring 2022)
Exhibition Practices II: Exhibition Development and Design Lab

Course Information
Title: See above
Art A463 or the Centennial Museum
MW 9:30-12:20
Credit: 3 hours

Instructor Contact Information
Dr. Elisabeth Sommer
Office location: 219 Kelley Hall
Office hours: 4:30-5:30 M; 10:30-12:00 T; and by appointment
Phone 917-921-2642
Email: ewsommer@utep.edu

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. I am planning for us to be able to open it to the public. In the event that the pandemic prevents this, we'll produce a video tour of the installed exhibit to put on the Centennial website.

Instructor Introduction
You all know me. We can skip this.

Course Expectations and Goals
This class can only succeed with the **full participation of all students.** 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 critica**l 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 also 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 experience in:

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

Due to the nature of the exhibit focus for this year, we will also be working with community and academic consultants, as well as the curatorial staff at the Centennial.

COVID-19 Precaution Statement

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission **wear face masks when indoors** in groups of people. **The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine.** If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org.

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, you will also **write an exhibit review**, in which you assess one of the exhibits we will visit. 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	20%
Draft Label Exercise	15%
Exhibit Review	20%
Final Product and Report	45%

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. 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
- Insures accuracy of information on labels
- Takes the lead in mounting/installation of objects

Education Team

- Responsible for developing concepts for interactive components of exhibit
- Responsible for drafting labels
- Develops supporting educational programming, including supplementary exhibit material, docent training guidelines, school tour and/or in-class 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 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—the entire class will share this responsibility

- Responsible for overall design of exhibit including floorplan, case layout, interactives, and label graphics
- Produces final layouts in graphic form, including overall floorplan, label design, interactives design, and section and case layout
- Works closely with curatorial team to insure proper placement of objects within design
- Works closely with label writing team to insure harmony in design, size, and text
- Works closely with public relations/outreach team to insure coherence in design of exhibit and PR materials
- Works closely with education team on development 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.

Assignment Schedule (subject to change)

January 19: Introduction and Discussion of Exhibit Topic (not the same thing as the "big idea") View anthropological section in current permanent exhibit at the Centennial with focus on section to be re-worked by the class—conversation with curatorial staff

January 24: Exploring "Best Practices" in Exhibit Development (*Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Chapter 2 "The Purpose of Museum Exhibitions") Discuss in relationship to our exhibit topic. **Submission of Exhibit Team Assignment Requests** (first, second, and third choices)

January 26: Best Practices: Sharing Authority and Engaging Audiences (*Manual* Chapter 10, "Participatory Experiences") **Assignment of Exhibit Teams**

January 31: Putting the Interpretive Exhibit Together (*The Art of Museum Exhibitions*, Part III, Chapter 6, "Creating and Experiencing the Exhibit Medium")

February 2: The Role of Interpretive Labels (Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels* Chapters 2-4, 6-9)

February 7: Consultation with community/academic advisory group and Centennial curatorial staff

February 9: Discussion of potential front-end evaluation questions (PR team takes the lead) and exploration of potential exhibit objects (Curatorial takes the lead); **PR team prepares to launch front-end evaluation** (*Manual,* Chapter 4 "Measuring Success")

February 14: Exhibit Design—guest speaker on exhibit design process (this is your chance to hear from somebody who's been on the front lines); **Exhibit Review due by midnight**

February 16: **Report on initial object research** from curatorial team, and **report on results of front-end evaluation** from PR/outreach team; discussion of implications of results

February 21: Meeting with Centennial curatorial staff to discuss status of work and get their feedback, concerns, etc. **Label exercise due by midnight**

February 23: **Decision on "big idea," and goals** (Serrell, Chapter 1)

February 28: **Final object recommendations** from Curatorial team and decision on objects; group work, with Education team beginning work on interactives and label types, PR team brainstorming color and font schemes and identifying image selections for use in poster and postcard; **decision on title**

March 2: Group work; Education team begins drafting labels and brainstorming ideas for interactives; PR team begins developing PR plan; Curatorial team reviews object requirements consults with Education team on display approaches (Serrell, Chapters 13-14, 17-19)

March 7: Meeting with Centennial staff and possibly advisory group-PR team presents **draft of PR material**; PR and Education teams present **draft of label types**, color and font schemes; Education team presents **proposal for interactives**

March 9: Research on design elements and budget (the practical "how" of all this)

March 14-March 18: Spring Break!! (We're all excited, but you'll need to continue with your work because things are getting real now)

March 21: Group review of draft floorplan, case design etc.; **PR team produces sample materials and PR plan**; **formative evaluation of labels**

March 23: 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 28: Group work; PR team finalizes PR materials and develops summative evaluation plan; Curatorial team consults with Education team; Education team finalizes interactive elements

March 30: 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: Mock-up in Centennial; Education team presents **final version of labels and interactives**; PR team presents **final version of outreach and summative evaluation plans**

April 6: Formative Evaluation of mock-up; **Print materials distributed**

April 11: Fabrication and installation

April 13: Fabrication and installation continued

April 14 or April 21: Official opening

April 25-May 4: Tracking of evaluation data

May 4: Discussion of evaluation data

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