

Misericordia University
Department of History and Government

HIS 440: Public History Practicum

Course Information

Course Credits: 3
Semester: Fall 2020
Prerequisites: None

Class Meeting Times: TBD
Compressed Schedule: TBD

Faculty Information:

Dr. Jennifer M. Black, History Dept.
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Office: MER 339 / Phone: 674-1491

Office Hours: TR 9:30-11a, & 3:30-4:00pm
And by appointment
Not sure what office hours are? [Check out this video.](#)

Course Description

This course aims to immerse students in the practice of public history and to develop related professional skills by enabling them to contribute to a finished piece of public history scholarship, such as an exhibit or other public presentation. Through guided professional training, students will hone their research and critical thinking skills in written assignments, research projects, and / or presentations.

Introduction

This course aims to develop students' understanding of the practice of public history through an immersive professional experience, working towards a dedicated presentation of history to the public. Students will interact with local curators and collections managers, and will develop an appreciation for the purpose of local history. Through an interdisciplinary approach, students will study the methodological models for interpreting a range of historical sources and will develop their own skills through a dedicated research project. By the end of the term, students will have had training in some of the skills relevant to public history practice, such as cataloging, object interpretation, collection management, and / or exhibition preparation.

Course Goals & Objectives

This course addresses the following programmatic and university goals / objectives:

Course Objectives:	Program Learning Outcome	University Learning Outcome
1. Identify various components of public history practice, such as cataloguing, object interpretation, and / or exhibit preparation	Goal 1: Develop historical knowledge	UG #s 5, 6, 8
2. Articulate the challenges of exhibit preparation, and identify different exhibit presentation styles	Goal: 3. Recognize the provisional nature of historical knowledge	UG #s 3, 4, 7, 8
3. Articulate the challenges of interpreting objects and prepare relevant analyses on local sources	Goal 2: Evaluate and employ historical methods	UG#3, 4, 8
4. Synthesize primary and secondary sources	Goal 4. Create historical arguments and narratives.	UG# 3, 4, 7, 8
5. Identify and practice basic modes of conveying information to and educating the public	Goal 5: Use historical perspective to inform active citizenship	UG #s 1, 2, 5; Core goal #6

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Course Objectives:	In completing this course, students will:	Assessment Methods
1. Identify various components of public history practice, such as cataloguing, object interpretation, and / or exhibit preparation	1.A: Recognize and explain historical processes, continuity, and change. 1.B: Develop a body of historical knowledge with breadth of time and place—as well as depth of detail—in order to discern context.	Final project
2. Articulate the challenges of exhibit preparation, and identify different exhibit presentation styles	3.A: Describe past events from multiple perspectives. 3.B: Identify, summarize, appraise, and synthesize other scholars' historical arguments. 3.c: Evaluate historical arguments, explaining how they were constructed and might be improved.	Class discussion; written work
3. Articulate the challenges of interpreting objects and prepare relevant analyses on local sources	2.A: Recognize history as an interpretive account of the human past—one that historians create in the present from surviving evidence. 2.B: Collect, question, organize, synthesize, and interpret a variety of historical sources. 2.C: Practice ethical historical inquiry through proper acknowledgement of sources.	Class discussions; Final project
4. Synthesize primary and secondary sources	4.a: Generate substantive, open-ended questions about the past and employ research strategies to answer them. 4.b: Craft well-supported historical narratives, arguments, and reports of research findings 4.c: Synthesize research with existing narratives, making an original argument.	Annotated Bib; Final project
5. Identify and practice basic modes of conveying information to and educating the public	5.a: Historicize contemporary issues by correlating them to the past 5.b: Practice civil discourse and respect for diverse perspectives 5.c: Effectively communicate historical research and narratives to a broad public audience	Class discussions; Final project

Required Texts

Storey, William. *Writing History* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2015). ISBN: 978-0-19-023894-0

Kyvig, David, & Myron Marty. *Nearby History* (NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010). ISBN: 978-0-7591-1300-8

*Additional articles available on Blackboard.

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Course Delivery

Evaluation Methods & Student Assignments

Students will be assessed through a major research project and incremental assignments designed to guide you through the research process. The final course grade will be comprised of the following:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Annotated Bibliography & Lit Review	20%
Object Analyses (3)	30%
Exhibit Plan	10%
Final Project	35%
Reflection	5%
TOTAL	100%

The main focus of this course is the final project—an original public history exhibit or similar presentation on a dedicated topic. To that end, the professor will assign relevant secondary sources to orient the student to the topic, and the student will research and compile a relevant annotated bibliography and literature review on the topic in preparation for primary source research. Incremental assignments, classroom discussion, and meetings with the professor will shepherd the student through the process of planning and implementing the exhibit. Detailed guidelines for all of these incremental assignments will follow.

Assignment Policies:

Formatting: All written work you submit should be typed, on plain white paper, with all the margins set to one-inch. You should double space the body of the paper only (not the headings and title). Please use Times New-Roman 12-point font size. You will be graded on both the style and content of your papers; thus, please be sure to proofread for correct grammar and spelling. Make sure your paper is clearly organized with an introduction, argument (thesis statement), topic sentences, evidence, and conclusion. Papers must meet the minimum word-count requirement to receive full credit; however no penalty will be given for papers exceeding the suggested limit. You are required to submit a hard copy in class AND upload a copy to the Blackboard (assignments listed under “Content”) by the due date and time.

Late Policy: Papers are due at the beginning of class on the date due. Late penalties begin at the end of class, and papers will incur a grade deduction of five points for each day late with a maximum penalty of 25 points (i.e. if the original grade is 85/100 and the paper was submitted one day late, it drops to an 80/100).

Grading Scale for Course Grades

<u>Superior:</u>	<u>Very Good:</u>	<u>Satisfactory:</u>	<u>Poor:</u>
A = 93-100%	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D = 65-69%
A- = 90-92%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-76%	F = 64% & below
	B- = 80-82%	C- = 70-72%	

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Course & Academic Policies

Any archival or digital materials we handle through the course of this project remain the property of the original repository. Such materials are on loan solely for the purposes of this project and may not be copied and / or distributed without prior authorization from Dr. Black. Students are responsible for handling said materials in a professional and respectful manner. Misuse of these will not be tolerated.

Final course projects, if created online, will be shared with the wider community through an online, digital medium subject to a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](#). **By remaining in this course, you hereby agree to produce and share your final project under the terms of this license.** If you have any questions or concerns, it is your responsibility to address these to the instructors before the end of the drop / add period.

If you have specific questions or concerns about the assignments or your performance in the class, please come to see me as soon as possible. Addressing these issues early in the semester is key to your success in this class and, more generally, as a student. I am happy to meet with students either in office hours or by appointment to discuss course assignments, paper drafts (within a reasonable time-frame), questions, concerns, writing mechanics, general history, or anything else you'd like to discuss.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to complete the readings on time, attend class regularly, and take notes. It is your responsibility to make sure you sign-in at each class. You will be allowed two absences without penalty. Additional absences will only be excused, at my discretion, for medical or other emergencies. Students may choose to withdraw from the course before 75% of the course has passed, without academic penalty (a "W" will appear on your transcript). The Withdrawal deadline is Friday, November 6th, 2020. Students who stop attending class before this deadline but who do not officially withdraw will receive an "F" for the course. Students whose unexcused absences total more than 35% of the course meetings will receive an "F" for the course.

Classroom Etiquette

In this course we will often discuss potentially controversial issues having to do with race, gender, sexuality, class, and politics. Our investigation of primary sources and images in this course may lead to such controversy. We each need to strive to maintain a tolerant and respectful environment in class. Open disrespect of another classmate will not be tolerated. Likewise, disruptions (coming in late, engaging in side conversation, use of cell phones, web surfing, texting, etc.) are detrimental to the class as a whole and will not be tolerated. Please make an effort to arrive to class on time—students who consistently arrive late will lose participation points. I reserve the right to ask any student who is disruptive or disrespectful to leave the classroom.

Electronics Policy

Laptops are not required for this course, but will be permitted as long as they do not become a distraction. While there will be no assignments or examinations for which the laptop will be used; your use of a laptop is generally permitted as long as usage remains within the bounds of Code of Student Conduct and it conforms to the provisions of this course as laid out in this

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syllabus. There may be periods where laptop usage is forbidden and if that occurs, failure to comply with this direction will be viewed as a violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

Cell phones should be turned off and put away during class. I reserve the right to ask students to leave the course should use of electronics become a distraction to me or the other students.

**Please Note that notes or recordings made by students in this class based on my lectures and / or classroom discussions may only be made for the purposes of individual or group study. You must seek my formal permission BEFORE making any such recordings. Notes and / or recordings may not be exchanged or distributed for any commercial purpose or compensation. As the instructor of this course, I retain intellectual property rights in the lecture material pursuant to US copyright law and University Policy, as outlined here: misericordia.edu/IntellectualProperty. Misuse of course notes or recordings may subject you to legal proceedings.*

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism (i.e. submitting work for credit that is not your own) will not be tolerated. Students who violate the University's Academic Integrity policy will receive an "F" for the assignment and may be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs. Multiple violations will result in your failing the course. It is your responsibility to read and understand the University's Academic Integrity policy and its consequences during your time at Misericordia. If you have questions about this policy or what constitutes plagiarism, contact me immediately. [The University's Academic Integrity policy can be found online in the University Catalog.](#)

Email / Blackboard

You are expected to regularly check your MU email account for course updates and communications from me. I check my email regularly during the week and at least once a day on weekends, and generally will reply within 24hrs. However, emails sent after 7pm will not receive a response until the following morning. Additionally, I will not discuss grades via email—you need to meet with me personally in my office to address any concerns regarding your grade. As per the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA), all email correspondence between the instructor and students must be addressed to the student's institutional email address (@misericordia.edu) in order to maintain the student's privacy.

Additionally, please familiarize yourself with the Blackboard page for our course. I will use Blackboard to post supplementary materials, assignment information, announcements, and study guides. You can access Blackboard from the first page of the Misericordia portal.

Emergencies / MU Alerts

Should an alert be posted by the MU alert system, I will keep my cell phone on to receive such alerts. All student cell phones should be turned off or put away during class.

Other Academic Policies

All Misericordia University courses follow standard academic policies, described [here](#), or on the portal under the students tab. Policies include: Credit Hour Statement, Disability Statement, Tutorial Assistance, Laptop Policies, Equipment requirements and support. Credit hour statements are specific to course format.

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**NOTE: It is your responsibility to understand the guidelines for this course. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me as soon as possible. Failure to address such issues connotes your implicit acceptance and agreement with these guidelines. I reserve the right to adjust the syllabus, if necessary.*

Weekly Schedule

Wk	Date	Topics / Assignments (complete tasks BEFORE class, unless otherwise noted) *readings in Bb
1	8/20	Meet with Prof. Black to discuss the Project terms
2	8/26	<p>Intro to Museums <u>Read:</u> *Bennett, “Exhibitionary Complex” (1988); Shoenberger, “What does it mean to decolonize a museum?” <i>Museumnext</i> (2020) Review Storey, chapter 1</p> <p><u>Consider:</u> How did museums develop? What ethical issues surrounded this development? How should historians grapple with this past today?</p> <p><u>Research:</u> Identify topic & begin researching secondary literature</p>
3	9/2	<p>Intro to Exhibitions <u>Read:</u> Cauvin, ch 6; *AAM Standards on Exhibition Excellence (2012)</p> <p><u>Consider:</u> What are exhibits? What is their purpose? What are the marks of effective exhibits? How are exhibits different from historical monographs?</p>
4	9/9	Research: Preliminary bibliography due
5	9/16	Annotated Bibliography & Lit review Due
6	9/23	<p>Exhibit Planning Review exhibit planning resources on Bb (from 341) Discuss object “wish-list”</p>
7	9/30	Preliminary object list due
8	10/7	Exhibit plan due
9	10/14	<p>Writing week <u>Read:</u> Storey, chapter 6</p>
10	10/21	<p><u>Object analyses due (3)</u> Consider possible formats for the final exhibit</p>
11	10/28	Draft Introduction due

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Wk	Date	Topics / Assignments (complete tasks BEFORE class, unless otherwise noted) *readings in Bb
		<u>Read</u> “writing labels” guide- in *AASLH Exhibits guide, p26-33
12	11/4	Draft of labels due
13	11/11	Writing / Revisions week
14	11/18	Final Project Due
	11/19	Project Presentation (date TBD)
15	11/25	Wrap Up: Reflect and celebrate! We did it!! 😊 Reflection / blog post on the experience- due 12/5/20

HIS 440: Project Instructions

Fall 2020

There are multiple components to this practicum course, all of which provide incremental steps to prepare you to create an original public history exhibit. Along the way, you will read supplementary sources on exhibit theory and preparation, and you will conduct independent research to contextualize the sources you choose for your exhibit. The instructions below will assist you in formulating your topic, exhibit plan, object analyses, and final project.

Annotated Bibliography and Lit Review (20% of final grade)

Preliminary bibliography due 9/9/20

Annotated bib & review due 9/16/20

For the preliminary bibliography, you should identify 8-10 secondary sources (books and articles, primarily) that will help you contextualize your topic. Dr. Black may be able to provide some suggestions. Arrange the citations in Chicago style, alphabetically. We will discuss this list at our meeting on 9/9. Keep in mind that if your sources are only marginally relevant, you may be asked to find additional sources to round out your contextual research.

For the annotated bib & lit review, you should identify **at least six** high-quality secondary sources related to your topic, and write an annotation for each. Choose your sources carefully to construct the best possible context for topic. For each source, you will list its full citation (in Chicago style), and then give a brief (approx. 150-200 words) summary and evaluation of the argument. Paraphrase and summarize the author’s main points using parenthetical page references only—no direct quotes. Pay specific attention to the significance of the author’s argument and the usefulness of the work for your research paper. You will be graded on the quality of your annotations and the relevance of the sources for your research. If you have questions about how to write an effective annotation, please refer to topic #1Q in Storey (p.29).

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Finally, you will write a one-page literature review of these sources. Summarize your sources as a group and comment on their contribution to our knowledge on this topic. For example, you might begin by grouping the authors together by approach (“While Jones and Smith examine this topic from a political perspective, Pearlman is interested in economics”), or by argument (“Jones argues that X was true for this period, while Smith believes Y”). Think about putting these authors in conversation with each other—what would they say to one another, or how would they argue about this topic if placed face-to-face?

Exhibit Plan (10% of final grade)

Preliminary object list due 9/23/20

Plan due 10/7/20

For this assignment you will develop a sample exhibit plan using a preselected primary source set. An exhibit plan provides a basic outline of the theme of the exhibit, the key ideas of that theme, the objects you’ve chosen to highlight those ideas, and how the objects relate to those ideas. For example, if you were creating an exhibit on Abraham Lincoln, you might divide the exhibit into sections such as Early Life, the Civil War, and his Legacy. Within those areas you’ll want to highlight certain objects (such as newspapers, photographs, diaries or letters, clothing, maps, etc.) that illustrate the narrative you want to tell about his Early Life, for example. Perhaps education was a key element in shaping Lincoln’s life—thus you’ll want to choose an object that references his education somehow. Think of the objects as windows that lead you to different landscapes, each of which are important for understanding a region as a whole. So, we might have a pen and letter, which points to education, which allows us to talk about how education was an important factor in shaping Lincoln’s early life.

Begin by reviewing the guidelines for exhibit planning in the relevant folder on the Blackboard. Next, you’ll need to identify a preliminary object list. Choose at least 10 but no more than 15 primary source documents, photographs, objects, or other historical materials from digitized online collections. Ideally, these materials will come from publicly accessible (open access) collections, such as DPLA or LOC. Create a list that includes full object citation, thumbnail image (if possible), and source / collection information, and URL. If you find a source that is behind a paywall, include it in your preliminary list and we will discuss it together when we meet on 9/23/20.

Next, consider the story you want to tell, using these sources. From your preliminary list, select at least 5 but no more than 8 objects that will form your final exhibit. Consider organizing the objects into sub-themes, if it makes sense to do so. Create an exhibit plan that identifies your audience, potential interpretive schemes, organization, and evaluation. You might want to use the [Planning Tool](#) developed by the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art to get started. Finally, you will write up your plan. In 2-3 pages, please address the following, using headings to organize your plan:

- Title
- Abstract / message in 150wds or less
- Audience
- Purpose / goals
- Outline / organization of the materials, including:
 - subthemes / section titles and brief (i.e. one sentence) description
 - potential interpretive schemes (such as interactive displays, audio / visuals, etc.)

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- List of potential supplementary programs
- Potential evaluation measures
- Bibliography of 3-4 relevant scholarly sources on the topic

You needn't provide extensive analysis of the objects yet, but you should sketch out how the objects fit together and fit with the ideas pertinent to your theme. If possible, try to also sketch out the story you will hope to tell within your theme. You may omit any marketing plan, and assume an unlimited budget / resources for planning this sample exhibit (yay!). You may also attach your completed Planning Tool worksheet as an appendix and refer to it in the plan.

Object Analyses (3) (30% of final grade)

Due 10/21/20

This assignment asks you to systematically describe and analyze three historical “objects” (i.e. primary source document, image, or object), each in a discreet paper that provides a thorough description; proper contextualization of production, use / reception, and effects; and relation of the item to the key ideas within your theme. Using the tips and methodologies discussed in *Nearby History*, write a 1-2 page paper that analyzes the item, its relation to the context of the period, and its significance. A key question to answer is, “what do we learn about [my theme] by looking at this item?” Place the item in its historical context: Who produced it and when? What was going on in the US (or the world) at the time? Giving relevant context will help frame what we will learn from this item. The next several paragraphs should work systematically to analyze the item. Point out specific details, and explain their meaning. What elements of the item help you determine its overall significance? What does it tell us about the time period in which it was produced? How might audiences have responded to this item? What impact did it have, or legacy left behind? **You should write one 1-2 page paper for each “object” you choose (for a total of 3-6 pages).**

Final Project (35% of final grade)

Draft intro due 10/28/20

Draft section introductions (200-250 wds ea.) due 10/28

Draft labels due 11/4/20

Final Project due 11/18/20

Reflection due 12/5/20

This includes the exhibit plan, introduction, object “labels,” visual presentation of the exhibit (digital and otherwise), and a short reflection. Your final project will be a completed exhibit, including a narrative introduction, object labels, proper attribution, supplemental bibliography, and visual presentation. Like any good historical presentation, your exhibit needs to be grounded in solid historical research, it should draw upon relevant and engaging primary sources, and it should present a narrative argument using those sources to illustrate its points. Think of your exhibit like an argumentative paper, broken up into discreet units that, when put together, formulate the discussion. Remember though, that public history exhibits are typically free from academic jargon because they are written for a public (i.e. lay-person) audience.

Your **introduction** should be a 2-3 page narrative of the pertinent ideas / issues highlighted in the objects selected for your exhibit. This is where you'll give any important

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background information that leads into your narrative, and place the story within relevant broader contexts such as trends in US or global history, social movements, etc. It should situate the items within the appropriate historical context, situate the key ideas / issues within relevant context. Your introduction will also help make the argument of your exhibit clear, by gesturing to the significance of these materials within the broader story, and the importance of that story within broader US or global history.

Each item in your exhibit will have an **object label**. The label includes a citation, and a caption. The citation can be drawn from your preliminary object list, and should include producer, title, date, medium (if appropriate), collection name / repository, and URL. The caption should analyze the item and point to its contribution / significance for the theme as a whole, in approximately 100-150 words. You can think of these labels as a concise summary of the information you presented in your earlier object analyses (to that point, it might be helpful to write longer object analyses of each item in your exhibit before you trim the captions down to label size).

Your **visual presentation** of the exhibit may use the medium of your choice. You may use digital tools to organize your materials—such as mapping or GIS software, or you might create a more traditional representation of images and texts. You may use wordpress, Google Arts & Culture, or another platform of your choice for the exhibit. Your digital work should be proofed, clean, and professional—i.e. free from all grammatical errors, historically accurate, rhetorically sound, and engaging for the audience. Since the site will be open to the public you need to present a professional, finished product. You will be graded on both the form and content of this exhibit.

Grading Rubric

(35% of the final grade)

Objects and Labels (15pts)

- Choice of objects is sound; objects relate to the corresponding topic in a clear and thoughtful manner
- Objects are shown to have significance for the topic at hand
- Presentation demonstrates an active and critical engagement with the primary sources
- Labels analyze the objects successfully
- Labels connect the objects both to each other and to the broader exhibit narrative
- Objects are attributed properly with citations

Introduction / Relation to Context (10pts)

- Introduction identifies and explains relevant historical contexts
- Relation to context is completed in a clear and thoughtful manner
- Presentation demonstrates an active and critical engagement with relevant scholarly sources
- Introduction demonstrates significance of this topic for broader historical themes
- Contextual sources are attributed properly in a bibliography

Organization / Aesthetics (14pts)

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- Exhibit / medium displays creativity, and is engaging / interesting overall
- Fonts, headings, and texts are visually accessible and clear
- Sizing of various elements is appropriate, and presentation shows balance
- Exhibit is organized logically, and flows easily between segments / components
- Formatting is sound, and text is free from grammatical errors and historical inaccuracies
- Texts adhere to proper word count limits
- Language is free from jargon and audience-appropriate

Reflection / Blog Post (5% of final grade)

Due 12/5/20 (ungraded / credit-only)

Your last task in this class will be to reflect on the experience of building an original exhibit. Compose a 1-2p paper (min. 300 words), evaluating the project and the work you did. This is an opportunity both for reflection on your own work and on the educational components of the course. In your paper, comment on the relative success of each step in the process: the planning / preparation for the project, conducting research, drafting the exhibit components, putting it all together, etc. Offer some feedback on what you felt went well, and what may have been improved. What would you have done differently? What could you have done to improve your experience in the class? What could the professor have done differently to improve your experience? Were the instructional materials provided (readings, discussions, tutorials, written instructions) adequate to get you through the project? Why or why not? Did the exhibit turn out the way you had hoped? How so? Do you feel the class was a good learning experience? Why or why not? Would you recommend the class to friends? Why or why not?