

English 170 Assignment Sequence

Assignment 1-Museum Journal:

Over the course of the semester, you will visit the MPM at least 4 times. Each time you go, bring your iPad for photographs, video, notes, or voice recordings. You will keep an electronic journal of your visits that documents your process as you work towards completing each assignment. Each entry should contain 250-500 words, along with at least one other kind of supporting material (photo, video, etc.). I will also ask you to try at least 3 different media forms (photography, video, etc.) in the journal. In other words, all five entries cannot simply be a page of writing and a photo.

When grading your journal, I will look for a thoughtful engagement with the task at hand.

- These are not supposed to be mini-essays but a way for you to explicitly consider your own process. For example, your second visit to the museum will involve selecting a display for your analytic essay. Your journal could document your decision-making, especially if you have a hard time picking between exhibits. It could present your initial thoughts about a particular exhibit, if the selection process was easy. Or it could simply provide your thoughts as you consider various sections of the museum.
- If these journal entries are not mini-essays, they are not simply summaries of your trip either. (“I went in and looked at x. Then I walked down the hall and looked at y. Y looked cooler.” Etc.) I will be looking for evidence that you actually considered the task at hand and did not simply pick the first exhibit you passed. You must be able to EXPLAIN your process.

Assignment 2-Initial Reflection

I would like you to write a short reflection (2-3 pages) that briefly documents your experiences with and/or your preconceptions of museums. What do you think of when someone says the word “museum”? You could think about your own experiences with museums, stereotypes you have of museums/staff members/exhibits/etc., or cultural representations of museums (in the movies, on television, etc.). In your response, I would like you to briefly discuss what you think a museum is. Why do we have these institutions? Whom do they serve? You could consider a particular museum, museums in general, or a “type” of museum (one dedicated to: a particular historical event, the history of an area or period, a particular kind of artifact as in art museums, etc.).

Unit 1: Introduction to the Museum

Overview:

In the first unit, you will examine your assumptions about museums and begin to familiarize yourself with the MPM. We will also begin to consider how museums function in the early 21st century. Who are the audiences? The stakeholders? The employees and curators? How do materials make it in front of the public? How are exhibits designed? What happens to all of the other materials the museum owns?

Along the way, we consider the basics of rhetorical analysis and examine some crucial concepts for college level writing, including ethos/pathos/logos and analysis (as opposed to summary). We will employ our knowledge in a range of writing assignments, including a short reflection, a business letter, and a formal analytic essay.

Assignment 3-Reflection on the First Visit

While visiting the museum for the first time, I would like you to note down everything you can about the experience outside of the individual exhibits. What does the building look like (both from the outside and inside)? What kind of visitors are there? What kinds of signs do you see? What kind of guides/information does the museum provide?

Your explicit task will be finding a particular promotional material to analyze in your business letter and you can write your journal entry about this task. But you will then write me a 2 page response that considers the museum itself. What details do you note and what do they suggest to you about the kind of place this is, who its market is, etc.

Assignment 4-Analyzing Promotional Materials

Writing Tasks: Composing a business letter; rhetoric review; introduction to analysis.

First, select one promotional piece from the MPM. It can be a pamphlet, a billboard, an educational brochure, etc. For the purposes of the paper, you headed the team that produced this ad. The Senior Vice President of Marketing and Communications, Mary Bridges, is upset. She was out of the country during the planning process and is unhappy with the way the ad turned out. Your job is to explain to her what is going on in the ad and why.

NOTE: You may not use the same piece as anyone else in your group.

Your assignment is to write Ms. Bridges a 2-3 page business letter explaining the purpose of the ad and how its elements work to convey that message to the ad's audience.

Her information: Ms. Mary Bridges, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Communications, The Milwaukee Public Museum, 800 West Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53233.

A successful letter will briefly discuss the primary "point" or message of the piece and who it is intended to reach (as specifically as you can but without making unwarranted assumptions). Then, you must explain how the ad's linguistic and visual elements contribute to that message. As we discussed in class, a contextual analysis (considering the context of the ad) may be necessary to illustrate the purpose of certain elements.

Clarity of prose, effective organization, and grammatical correctness will also factor into your final grade.

Bring a completed hard copy along with a copy of your ad to class on:

Final draft due:

Assignment 5-Analyzing an Exhibit

Writing Tasks: Composing a formal academic paper; in-depth analysis.

You will write a 4 page analysis of an exhibit that depicts a particular culture at the Milwaukee Public Museum.

- Keep in mind that you are not evaluating your source (“This isn’t accurate”) and you are not speculating about the actual culture (what real people might have thought, felt, believed, etc.). You are explaining how the exhibit conveys a particular impression of this culture.
- Your analysis should build to some larger point about the exhibit. What did you learn from examining it?

The four major things that I am looking for in this paper are:

- 1. Your ability to GENERATE A PAPER TOPIC.**
- 2. Your ability to SUPPORT CLAIMS with evidence/details from the exhibit.**
- 3. Your ability to ANALYZE details/evidence from the exhibit.**
- 4. Your ability to ORGANIZE CLAIMS into a coherent argument.**

You are not required to consult outside sources. Remember that if you do use any sources, no matter how unscholarly, and they influence the development of your ideas, you must cite them in a works cited list.

NOTE: You cannot work on the same exhibit as someone else in your group.

A few questions to consider:

- How is the exhibit arranged in the museum? (Is it part of a geographical range, chronological, thematic, etc.?)
- Does the organization or placement of the exhibit influence the viewer in any way?
- What is the impression that this exhibit creates on you? Why?
- How is the exhibit structured? Is it a collection of objects, a scene, etc.?
- What objects are included in the exhibit? How are they grouped?
- What is the focus of attention in the exhibit?
- What information is provided to help explain the objects?
- How are visitors encouraged to interact or react to this exhibit?

Formatting: See “Course Policies” for formatting requirements

Grading:

- A successful paper will demonstrate the writer's familiarity with the exhibit and his/her ability to conduct an in-depth analysis, which is to say, the paper will make a clear argument, have well-organized points, and provide analysis to support each point.
- Your final grade will be dependent on your ability to ANALYZE the exhibit. Your insight into particular details (the amount of analysis and the significance of your insights) will be important as well.
- As in the last feeder, I will also pay careful attention to your ability to connect your paragraphs with transitions and create a logical flow in your paper.
- As always, clarity of prose and grammatical correctness will factor into your final grade.

You will submit to me a BINDING choice of exhibit to work on for your paper:

1st draft due:

Final draft due:

Unit 2: Museums and Culture

Overview:

After developing a basic understanding of the museum and sharpening your analytic skills, you will reflect on how we conceptualize culture and the role that museums can or might play in those conceptualizations. In this unit, we will take a step back from the narrow focus of Unit 1 to consider how exhibits at the MPM are organized and how the MPM approaches the collection and display of cultural objects more generally. We will examine the museum's mission statement, analyze its layout and observe audiences at the museum. At the end of the unit, you will select a particular culture and category to be the focus of your research.

Assignment 6-Self-Exhibit

If you had to curate an exhibition whose topic was YOU, what are the objects you would choose to represent your life? What are the milestones and mementos that you have saved? How could these artifacts and memories be organized to give strangers a glimpse into your life and past?

For this assignment, you will be asked to create a digital exhibit that reflects you. You cannot, of course, physically insert your football jersey or a promise ring into the computer. And it would be too boring if you just put a bunch of photos together in a chronological chain. (Way too one-dimensional and flickr-y!) Digital exhibitions are becoming increasingly popular in part because they allow institutions to showcase large amounts of work while employing multimedia elements such as sounds, music, images, and words that make information easy to access.

We will discuss potential resources to assist you in class, but here are a couple to get you started.

- www.artsteps.com
This one's easy and obvious. **artsteps.com** will hand-guide you to select photographs or other digital images from your archives, computers or online and kickstart a virtual gallery. You can choose the mood, theme, color scheme, lighting design and other attributes. Straightforward and definitely not rocket science.
- www.imapbuilder.com
This one's a bit unique, because generally, maps are not considered obvious materials for an online / virtual museum. **imapbuilder.com** helps you set up an interactive map across any city, state, country or continent with images, text, logos or captions. So, imagine in the State of California, you go to high school at Beverly Hills, and music classes in your neighborhood, plus drinks and kicking back at the local bar on your 21st birthday – you get to plot all these events and important days on the map.
- www.dipity.com
The **dipity** timeline creator got this journalism grad his job at Huffington Post (<http://techcrunch.com/2011/03/22/infographic-nation/>). Simple, easy to upload and with a variety of uses, the timeline creator can notch up your **memories, milestones and mad magic moments** via color-coded, chart-and-bar diagram types, and pop-up bubbled infographics.

So, remember, virtually curating an exhibition means you have the freedom to explore NEW ways of doing a show. There is no written rule or law which says that art objects and artefacts need to be showcased in a particular manner, within pillared walls and squeaky clean glass cases. An autobiographic museum exhibition of a famous personality, Martin Luther King, for example, would mean lots of photographs, publications and copies of his speech, and other material things which have been done to death before. The virtual world gives you the means to think out the box and get people to respond to what you have curated.

In class, you will also play the role of tour guide and, in a short presentation, walk us through your exhibit.

Assignment 7-The Museum and Its Mission

First, you must select one aspect of one culture represented at the museum **for your final research project**. (For example, you could select the religious, hunting, culinary, etc. aspects of a particular culture.) Then you will use initial research on your topic to propose a plan of further study. In other words, you must learn just enough to convincingly craft a persuasive argument for learning more.

Note: this is not a full-blown research paper. It will require you to do some preliminary research on your particular area and think about the issues we will read about and discuss in class. But you do not yet have to demonstrate significant knowledge of your topic.

In such a short space you need to be impressive, focused, and convincing. When the Museum officer reads this statement, he or she needs to be sure of the following things:

- You understand the mission of the MPM and have some knowledge about the culture in question (ethos)
- The particular topic you have chosen is in fact important and the MPM would benefit from devoting time and resources to developing further knowledge about it (logos and pathos)
- The typical visitors of the MPM might be interested in your topic (pathos and logos)

In this statement, you need to explain what you want to look at, why you want to do it, and why doing it is important to the MPM. You need to cite research (at least 4 sources). As always, clarity of prose, effective organization, and grammatical correctness will factor into your final grade.

Draft Workshop:

Final Project Due:

Unit 3: Cultural Research

You will research a particular culture, category, or object at the museum (as determined at the end of Unit 2).

Assignment 8-Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a tool for organizing and indexing research. It includes two parts: a correct citation and a summary of the salient points of the source. The purpose of this assignment is not only to teach you how to write an annotated bibliography, but also to help you begin thinking about your unit project.

Annotated bibliographies can be either *descriptive*, providing nothing more than a brief summary of the information in an article, or *evaluative*, summarizing the main points of an article and then making evaluative comments on it.

Descriptive entry:

Gere, Anne Ruggles. "Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition." Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook. Ed. Ellen Cushman, Eugene R. Kintgen, Barry M. Kroll, and Mike Rose. Boston: Bedford, 2001. 275-89.)

This history of writing instruction argues that writing instruction takes place, and has historically taken place, in far less formal venues than the writing classroom. Gere presents numerous examples and comments on their importance to the study of writing today.

Evaluative entry:

This history of how and where writing is learned includes what's been missing from other accounts: the history of learning writing outside of the academic classroom. What Gere calls the "extracurriculum" are the clubs and groups that have formed since the nineteenth century and continue to form to help participants improve their writing, and often to improve their communities. If writing teachers in academe would take these groups into account, Gere argues, they could enrich their understanding and teaching of writing. Like many other articles in this book, Gere's piece concerns both the history of literacy and current practices. The date of her article (1994) precedes the enormous popularity of contemporary book clubs, but I wonder what Gere would have to say about those.

Your annotated bibliography should include XXXX credible sources cited in MLA style. You should write no more than 10 and no less than 5 sentences about each source. You may choose a descriptive or an evaluative form, depending on your plans for using the article, but use the same style for both articles.

Each entry will be evaluated on the type of source, the format of each citation, and the thoroughness of your summaries.

Final due date:

Assignment 9-Research Paper and Presentation

You will play the role of a curator who is the expert on some aspect of a particular culture. After completing your research on some facet of a particular culture, you will design an imaginary exhibit around five items. (Your “items” do not have to be in the collection at the MPM.) You will then write up your proposed exhibit. Your final report will include background information on the aspect of your culture and an explanation of your proposed exhibit. You will have to explain the layout of your exhibit and your rationale for your selection of objects. You will also have to consider how your exhibit would actually work in the context of the MPM. You could consider such questions as: how does your case supplement other exhibit(s) at the MPM? How is your exhibit similar to or different from other exhibits you have looked at? Does your case represent a specific era or time period of this culture? More details on the research paper will be given in class. Ultimately, the project will be a combination of your creative thought, diligent research on some aspect of a particular culture, and professional writing on your topic.

Assignment 10-Digital Project

After you have completed your papers, you will be placed in a group of students who have related interests. You will work in this team to compile your research into a digital text. For example, students dealing with similar aspects of different cultures (weapons and war, cooking, fashion, religion) could work together to produce a comparative survey on their topic. Those who are interested in the same culture could create a more detailed examination of that culture combining individual research.

The primary goal of the final project is to create an exciting digital text that 1. meets the needs of a specific audience and 2. combines the different skills that you have been developing over the course of the semester. You will use your research on particular cultures or artifacts. You will further develop your understanding of “culture.” You will incorporate knowledge of museums in general and the MPM more specifically. Finally, you will use your own observations and analyses of specific artifacts and exhibits at the MPM.

More details will be given in class.

Assignment 11-Final Reflection

I would like you to think back over the course of the semester. Think about the various assignments we have worked on and the materials we have examined. In particular, consider things that you have found challenging or that have challenged your thinking.

The assignment: write a 3 page response to the course. Your response will discuss how your ideas on this subject were challenged and what you have learned from reflecting on the issue.

You are likely to receive this kind of assignment in a variety of different classes over the course of your college career. Your first response might be, “Easy. I just have to write what I think...” However, a response that will impress your teachers will likely adhere to the principles of writing that we have been talking about throughout this class.

1. Did some aspect of this class force you to change some previous belief? Did it challenge you to re-think your assumptions but, ultimately, your opinion has remained unchanged?
In short, the crux of your response should be an account of how you were challenged by some aspect of this class. The end point of the paper should be what you have learned from or come to believe as a result of these reflections.
2. In order to convey these points, you need to explain what it was in the class that challenged you, which means you need to briefly lay out points from the essays or stories or assignments or discussions that you found most interesting. In other words, you will need to provide some evidence and analysis to back up your claim about the class.
3. You will need to be clear about the personal belief you had that was challenged. Don’t just say: “it made me rethink issue x.” The more precise and complex your response is, the more thoughtful you will seem to those who are grading the paper.

So, your personal response, while laying out your own ideas, will still follow the form we have been tracing in class. One idea per paragraph. Begin each paragraph with a main point that you will support/prove with evidence and analysis.

Final Draft due: