HIS/IAR 547: History Museum Curatorship: Collections Management

Faculty: Mr. Jon B. Zachman

Introduction
This course is designed to introduce students to the professional principles and practices in the care and management of history museum collections and historic sites, including collections development, museum registration methods, cataloging, collections care and preservation. The course will provide an overview of collections-related jobs in the museum field: curator, registrar and collections manager, and explore what it means to be physically and intellectually responsible for museum objects. The course will also focus on two crucial documents: the collections management policy and the collections plan.


To achieve these goals, students will participate in discussions based on assigned weekly readings. Students will also be required to lead discussions of specific topics assigned by the instructor. During the first part of the semester, students will complete several “hands-on” exercises as part of the course, and in the latter part of the semester students will be required to complete 30 hours outside of the classroom at the Greensboro Masonic Museum. This project will entail cataloging, data entry, photography and preventative conservation of objects. And finally, a writing assignment due at the end of the semester should incorporate the assigned readings and discussions and draw on other relevant materials.
Grading
Each student will be evaluated by the instructor on the following:

40% Class participation and contribution to discussion
30% Hands-on exercises and class project at Greensboro Masonic Museum
30% Writing Assignment

Charles Wilson Peale's *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822.

Course Readings
The principal book for the course is *The New Museum Registration Methods* edited by Rebecca Buck and Jean Gilmore. Students will also read parts or all of three books: *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections*, *Legacies: Collecting America’s History at the Smithsonian* and *The Ethics of Collecting Cultural Property: Whose Culture / Whose Property?* In addition, numerous excerpts from various books and journals are included in the readings. Most of these readings are available on Electronic Reserve via Blackboard and a few are on reserve in the library. Select hand-outs and other materials will be distributed in class.
Each reading assignment and/or video will form the basis of the class lecture and discussion. For each weekly assignment the student will be required to:

1. Prepare two questions from the week’s readings that you would like to discuss in class. These questions should reference the different readings and should provoke conversation and discussion. Be prepared to share your response in class.

2. Submit a written response to the weekly discussion question posted on Blackboard.

Students will email their reading assignments to the instructor in the body of the email no later than 9:00am on the day of class. Each submittal must include your name and the date. In the subject heading of the email, please identify it as HIS 547, date of class. Send emails to Jon.Zachman@greensboro-nc.gov. Responses to questions posted on Blackboard must also be submitted no later than 9:00am on the Wednesday prior to class.

The quality of these written submittals and verbal participation during class will form the basis of the faculty evaluation of each student’s participation and contribution. Late submittals will be penalized. Submittals will be ranked as excellent, good, fair or poor.

Active participation in class discussions is critical! In addition to completing the reading assignments, students will also be responsible for leading the discussion of specific topics or reading assigned by the instructor. Class attendance is compulsory and unexcused absences will negatively impact the student’s final grade.

**Writing Assignment**
The final paper will require students to respond to a hypothetical situation that a museum curator or registrar could face during their career in the museum profession. Drawing on readings and class discussions, students must organize their ideas and prepare a thoughtful, well-written response that addresses all of the relevant legal and ethical issues. Specific recommendations and actions should be fully explained and justified in a five to seven page typed double-spaced paper, plus end notes and a bibliography. The paper must be submitted to the instructor via email attachment or hard copy no later than 6:00pm on the last day of class.

**Contact Information**
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Email: Jon.Zachman@greensboro-nc.gov

Office hours are Thursday from 5:00-6:15pm and by appointment.
Course Schedule and Assignments

WEEK ONE
January 21, 2010: Introductions and Course Overview
Class meets at MHRA 3209

WEEK TWO
January 28, 2010: Collectors, Collecting and Museums, Part 1
Class meets at Greensboro Historical Museum


Jonathan and his collection, Everything is Illuminated, 2005
WEEK THREE
February 4, 2010: Collectors, Collecting and Museums, Part 2
Collections Development and Collection Plans


(copy loaned by instructor)


WEEK FOUR
February 11, 2010: Collectors, Collecting and Museums, Part 3
Collections Management Policy


AAM Writing a Collections Management Policy—handout

*Object Handling and Condition Reporting Exercise*

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**WEEK FIVE**

**February 18, 2010:** Collecting Cultural Property & NAGPRA


Messenger, Phyllis Mauch. *The Ethics of Collecting Cultural Property: Whose Culture/ Whose Property?* Intro, Chapters 1, 2, 6-10, 12.

UNESCO: A Brief History—hand-out

*Object Handling and Condition Reporting Exercise, continued*

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**WEEK SIX**

**February 25, 2010:** Museum Registration Methods: Acquisitions, Accessions Cataloging, Collections Documentation & Automation

Classification schemes; Management, Descriptive Data and Historical Information: Records and Inventory


Object Cataloging Exercise

WEEK SEVEN
March 4, 2010: National Tragedies and Contemporary Collecting

Objects left at Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Objects and Memory, 2008


Objects and Memory: A Documentary Film. produced and directed by Jonathan Fein and Brian Danitz, 2008.

Object Cataloging Exercise, continued

WEEK EIGHT
March 11, 2010: SPRING BREAK

NO CLASS
WEEK NINE
March 18, 2010: What is Free Masonry
Bill Simpson, Guest Speaker from Greensboro Masonic Lodge

Additional readings on Masonic History

WEEK TEN
March 25, 2010: Care of Collections, Conservation, Preservation and Storage
Temperature, Relative Humidity, Light Levels, Pollutants, Housekeeping

AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice


AAM Technical Information Service, “Describing the Museum Environment”—handout
AIC Definition of Conservation Terminology—hand out

WEEK ELEVEN
April 1, 2010: Nazi-Era Collecting, Ethics and Museum Law


American Association of Museums. Recommended Procedures for Providing Information to the Public about Objects Transferred in Europe during the Nazi Era. 2000.
WEEK TWELVE

April 8, 2010: Deaccessions, Incoming & Outgoing Loans
Standard Facility Report, Packing and Shipping, Couriers, Appraisals and Authentications


First Ticket to the Peale Museum, Etching by C.W. Peale, 1788

WEEK THIRTEEN

April 15, 2010: Risk Management, Disaster Planning and Emergency Plans
Copyright, Insurance, Rights and Reproduction, and Security

Flitner, Arthur. AASLH Technical Leaflet #147 “An Insurance Primer for the Local Historical Organization.”

Common Security Mistakes—hand out
WEEK FOURTEEN
April 22, 2010:
Class meets at Greensboro Masonic Museum

WEEK FIFTEEN
April 29, 2010: Final Papers Presented

Required Readings

Required Video recordings
Everything is Illuminated. Warner Independent Pictures; a Big Beach production; produced by Peter Saraf and Marc Turtletaub; directed by Liev Schreiber, 2007.
Objects and Memory: A Documentary Film. produced and directed by Jonathan Fein and Brian Danitz, 2008.

Recommended Readings
Greensboro Historical Museum
130 Summit Avenue
Greensboro, NC 27401
Free parking in lot behind museum

Greensboro Masonic Temple
426 West Market Street
Greensboro, NC 27401
Free parking in gravel lot behind the building
Greensboro Masonic Museum is located on the second floor of the Masonic Temple

*This syllabus is subject to change due to extenuating circumstances.

To Be Scheduled
Tour of Greensboro Masonic Temple & Museum