

This syllabus was revised as part of the 2016 Magnolias Project at Wake Forest University. To tie the course material and key concepts to issues of sustainability, I refocused the third unit around sustainable heritage development. That unit's assignment now has students craft a plan that think about the long-term sustainability of a cultural site of their choice. I've also changed the field trip to Bethabara, to expand on the idea of a cultural landscape as social construct. This is returned to during the fourth unit of case studies when we will look at how zoos do or do not promote sustainability, zeroing in the National Zoo in DC and the Greensboro Science Center as cases.

I am very pleased with how the revisions turned out. I started with only one day devoted to sustainability, and have increased the count to four, including a field trip. In addition, one of the assignments is now centered on sustainability.

Introduction to Museum Studies

ANT 190

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Gurstelle
Email: gurstew@wfu.edu
Class Period:
Classroom:
Office Hours:
Office: Other times may be available by appointment.
Anthropology 014B

Course Information

Welcome to the exciting field of museum studies. Why have an entire field of study dedicated to museums? Simply put, museums are big. According to statistics compiled by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, there are 35,000 museums in the US alone. That's more than the number of Starbucks and McDonalds combined. The American Alliance of Museums reports that there are approximately 850 million visits to museums in the US every year—more than the number of visits to all professional sporting events and theme parks combined. US museums hold over 1 billion objects in their collections, and actively sponsor over 2,500 field research projects. Finally, US museums directly employ over 400,000 people, and over a quarter of museums are located in rural areas. It's not just the monumental architecture of the great museums—museums are BIG.

This course will introduce you to the “behind-the-scenes” world of museums. You will learn about what museums are; what museums do in society; and the theoretical, practical, and cultural underpinnings of museum work. Class readings, discussions, and assignments will be complemented by field trips and practical experience with collections from the WFU Museum of Anthropology.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a general understanding of the history and organization of museums.
- Conduct original research on museum collections.
- Investigate the different philosophies of museums and their respective roles in society.
- Critically evaluate the practices and ethics of heritage sites.
- Articulate the major issues facing museums today.

Academic Integrity

As students at a premier institution of higher learning, I expect the most out of you—including academic integrity. Academic integrity refers to abstaining from cheating, plagiarism, and falsifying your work. It also refers to your general conduct in class. You are expected to come to class periods prepared, ready to take notes and discuss the topic of the day. You are expected to treat me and your classmates with respect. You should expect the same in return. For more information about academic integrity, please review the Wake Forest University Student Code of Conduct: <http://static.wfu.edu/files/pdf/students/judicial-handbook.pdf>

Office Hours and Email

Email and office hours are the best ways to communicate with me outside of class periods. If you wish to discuss something with me in private, contact me via email so we can make alternative arrangements. You are also encouraged to email me questions you may have about course topics. These questions will be answered during discussions.

I will try to answer emails as promptly as possible. I will respond within 24 hours to emails received Monday-Thursday, 48 hours to emails received Friday-Sunday. Generally, I will not check email after 8:00pm or before 8:00am.

Readings

There are two required texts for this course:

- Weschler, Lawrence. *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder*. New York: Vintage, 1996.
- Anderson, Gail, ed. *Reinventing the Museum*. 2nd edition. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2012.

We will read the first text, *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder*, in its entirety early in the semester. This book asks the question of “what makes a museum a real museum?” while simultaneously explaining the history of museums and collections. The second text, *Reinventing the Museum* (2nd ed.), is a collection of essays from different authors republished in a single volume. We will read most, but not all, the essays from this text. Each student will be responsible for leading a discussion about an essay chosen from this text (see below for more details).

In addition, there are handful of other required readings not in the textbook. These readings are available on the course's Sakai site. There are optional readings available on Sakai. If you are feeling lost on a particular day, finding the concepts unfamiliar, or having difficulties with the subject matter for any reason, then you are encouraged to consult the optional reading for that day. These readings are all from the recent book *Museums 101* by Mark Walhimer. It is a very short, straightforward book that attempts to provide clear and concise definitions to complex ideas.

Grading

Course grades are based on leadership of one discussion, two short museum projects, four writing assignments, and a term-long museum exhibition project. Grades are based on a possible total of 100 points. Percentages are then converted to letter grades (A 93-100, A- 90-92, B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82, etc.).

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Object Biography | 10 |
| • Museum Profile | 10 |
| • Heritage Sustainability Plan | 10 |
| • Case Study Presentation | 10 |
| • Field Trip Reflection Essays | 20 (4 @ 5 each) |
| • Midterm Exam | 20 |
| • Final Exam | 20 |

Attendance & Late Work

Attendance for all class periods is required and expected. However, I understand that things happens. That is why you may have up to three unexcused absences without an effect on your grade. A penalty of 5 points per class period will be assessed against your course grade for each unexcused absence in excess of three. Please inform me of excused absences for health issues, religious observances, representing the University at an authorized function as approved by the appropriate dean, etc., as soon as you can. Absence from class for any reason does not excuse you from knowing the required material. It is imperative that you meet with me or your classmates to review material covered during absences. Late work is not accepted. If you have extenuating circumstances and cannot turn in an assignment on time, you must email me before the assignment is due. You need to explain why you will not be able to complete it on time and when you anticipate turning it in. I will attempt to accommodate your circumstances if possible.

Schedule

DATE	UNIT	TOPIC	READING	NOTES
01		Why study museums?		
02		Biographies of museum objects		
03	Context	What are museums?	Weschler 1996, p3-38	
04		What do museums do?	Weschler 1996, p39-69	Meet at MOA
05		Cultural history of museums 1500-1800	Weschler 1996, p71-109	
06		Cultural history of museums 1800-1950	Ch 1 & 2	Meet at MOA
07		Museums and their communities	Ch 7 & 8	
08		Field Trip: Reynolda House Museum		Object Biography due, Meet at RHM
09		Organization	Museum Missions	Ch 3 & 12
10	Curation		Ch 32 & 33	
11	Conservation		Ch 6 & 20	
12	Exhibition		Ch 23 & 26	
13	Education		Ch 22 & 28	
14	Field Trip: TBD			Museum Profile due, Meet at MOA
15		Midterm Exam		In-class exam
16	Heritage	Theories of heritage		Essay 2 due
17		Intangible heritage		
18		Cultural landscapes	Gurstelle 2013	
19		Tourism		
20		Heritage loss		
21		Field Trip: Historic Bethabara Park		Heritage Sustainability Plan due, Meet at MOA
22	Case Studies	Race, class, and gender in museums of art		Essay 3 due
23		Visitor experiences in museums of science		
24		Negative heritage in museums of history		
25		Indigenization in museums of culture		
26		Sustainability in museums of nature	Miller et al 2004	
27		Field Trip: TBD		Meet at MOA
28		Heritage conservation vs. sustainability	UNESCO 2016	Essay 4 due
29		Who are museums for?	Ch 15 & 16	

Object Biography

Museum Profile

Heritage Sustainability Plan

For this assignment you will choose a heritage site with which you are familiar. It may be a museum, historic marker, monument, sacred site, or cultural landscape. You will develop a sustainability plan that addresses the unique challenges faced by your site. The goal of the plan is to promote the long-term use, enjoyment, and benefit of your heritage site. The problems (and solutions) you address should reflect real world possibilities and limitations as much as possible.

As each student's site and plan will be unique, it is difficult to specify what kinds of information should be included in the plan. However, at minimum, every plan should include basic information about the site, including:

What is the site called? Where is it located?

When was the site created?

For whom is the site important? Why is it important?

How is the site used today? Was it used differently in the past?

In addition, every plan should identify as many potential stakeholders in the site as possible:

Who owns the site? Who manages the site?

Who uses the site? Are there multiple uses? Do uses of the site conflict?

Who has a cultural or historical interest in the site? Who has a personal or academic interest in the site? Who has a financial interest in the site?

Most importantly, every plan should identify the impediments to sustainability for the site:

What cultural or social problems does the site face?

What financial problems does the site face?

What environmental problems does the site face?

Is the site in immediate danger? Within 10 years? Within 100 years?

For the problems you've identified, try to think of solutions (as well as the limitations of your solutions):

What would sustainable use of the site look like?

How do your solutions affect the integrity of the site?

How do your solutions affect access to the site?

What resources, financial or otherwise, would you need to put your plan into place?

Who might be opposed to your solutions, and why?

Case Study Presentation

Field Trip Reflection Essays

Midterm and Final Exams