

**Art 350.A. Museums and Their Communities
Spring 2008**

**Wed/Fri 1:30-2:45 (or sometimes Fri 1:30-4:30)
Upper Gallery, Berman Museum of Art**

Dr. Susan Shifrin

Office: 2nd Floor, Berman Museum
Phone: (610) 409-3500 x2636

Office hrs: **Fri 12:00-1:30** or by appt
Email: sshifrin@ursinus.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this new Project Pericles course, we will investigate the theoretical underpinnings for the notion of the museum as a site of civic engagement through varied readings, classroom discussion, and group work. We will then put these theories into action in community-based projects centered in Norristown and Trappe, building on the resources of those communities as well as on the resources of the Berman Museum of Art and your resources as the student stakeholders in this course.

Through the process of planning and implementing these community partnerships, you will gain insights into how you and the museum can work from community needs and priorities while benefiting from community insights, skills, and input. Students in the course will learn to design, implement, and evaluate arts-centered collaborative projects rooted in the community and based on the common ground of their own strengths and those of their community partners.

This is a course that depends upon individual and communal engagement; it will take place on campus at the Berman Museum and on site in Norristown and Trappe, as well as including a few site visits to regional museums.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Readings.

There is one book required for the class, which will be available from Dr. Shifrin during the first week of class: Project Pericles funds have generously paid for it, so you will not need to!

Sheila Watson (ed.), *Museums and Their Communities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

All other readings can be purchased directly in course packs [CP] from Dr. Shifrin during the first two weeks of class. The course pack will also be put on reserve at Myrin Library.

Site Visits and Guest Speakers.

In the course of the semester, you will be required to attend two or three museum site visits and/or attend guest lectures during our class meetings. These are crucial to what you will learn in the course and to your ability to plan and implement your own projects. You will be asked to write *strategy reports* (see *Writing Assignments* below) *after* each of these visits as a means of consolidating what you have learned and maintaining a record for your and your classmates' future reference.

Writing Assignments.

Your writing assignments for the semester will come in four categories:

1. as “strategy reports” summarizing what you learn from guest lectures and field trips
2. as museum news journal entries
3. as journal entries and planning documents leading to midterm group projects
4. and as journal entries, planning documents, and final project papers.

1. Strategy Reports

During the semester, you will be required to complete **five** “strategy reports.” You will write a brief (2-3 page) report in response to each of our site visits and/or guest lectures. Each report will be based on the notes you take and the observations you make during those visits. They should summarize as concretely and specifically as possible what you learned during the guest lecture or visit that you feel will be pertinent, helpful, and significant as you work on your projects for the course. They should make connections between what was learned during the site visits and what we have been discussing in class – again, as concretely and specifically as possible. They will be collected in class on the dates listed on the syllabus and in the schedule; **late assignments will only be accepted with prior notice of illness or in case of emergency.**

2. Course Journals

“Museums and Their Communities” News Entries

You will be asked to keep a journal throughout the semester in which you clip and briefly summarize every week one article relating to a “museums and their communities” topic. Each entry must include a print-out or photocopy of the article itself; the journal entry should begin with a proper citation of the article (see, for proper citation methods, <http://myrin.ursinus.edu/help/cite_guides.htm>, or consult with the reference librarians at Myrin), followed by a summary of the main points of the article, written in your own words. (You may incorporate one or two quotations from the article that you feel are particularly important, if you wish. Always make sure that the quotations are properly cited.) Indicate briefly what it was about the article that caught your interest and how it connects to particular issues or topics discussed in class. Vary the sources you consult for these articles; these might include newspapers, news videos, magazines, Web sites, and professional museum publications, among other possible sources. (The entry for each week should be completed by the Friday class meeting of that week, as reflected in the course schedule.)

Project Journals.

You will have **two** projects for the semester: one group project and a final project that you will plan and write up on your own, based on your individual interests. The notes, ideas, strategies, hurdles, and documentation leading up to these projects should all be recorded in your course journal – the same journal in which you are keeping your weekly news entries. (This can be a binder in which you keep your notes and papers, a notebook into which you clip notes and papers, or a folder of some sort.) In each case, you will use your journal to map the trajectory of your project, including references to relevant class readings and discussions that inform the process, notes from working sessions and meetings with museum and community stakeholders, strategy reports based on site visits (see above), and notes regarding challenges and revelations along the way.

Your journal should be brought to every class meeting. It will be collected periodically over the course of the semester, and graded as follows: your “museums and their communities” news entries will be graded on a plus, check or minus system (with these symbols roughly corresponding to A, B and C) based on thoughtfulness and clarity in the selection and analysis of news items and how they are connected to class discussion topics. Your project documentation will be graded using the same system based on the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of your documentation; your attention to making connections between in-class readings and discussions and your project work; and the timeliness of your documentation (that is, did you record a range of observations during a scheduled work session or did you wait for a week to do so). All journal entries (news entries, project entries, etc.) should be dated.

3. Project Planning Documents

In the first part of the semester, we will develop a list of planning documents necessary for envisioning, planning, revising, implementing, and evaluating museum- and community-based partnership projects. You will be responsible for creating and completing a set of these documents for your group projects and your individual projects. In the case of the group projects, these documents will be created collaboratively; for your individual projects, you will create them on your own.

4. Final Project Papers

The final project gives you the opportunity to explore a topic of your choice in depth, and to envision your own community-based museum partnership and what that would look like. Time will not permit us to realize these projects, but by the end of the final project, you should have everything in place that would allow you to pursue your project in real time. Potential topics will be discussed in class. The primary goal of the project is to challenge your abilities gained during the course to manifest your sensitivities to and understanding of what is involved in envisioning, planning, revising, implementing, and evaluating a museum- and community-based partnership project.

To this end, you will be asked to complete the following as components of the final paper:

1. ***a project description*** which will be revised into a project abstract for the paper (1 page)
2. ***a research context*** for the project, which will draw on readings from the course bibliography; other, more specialized source materials relevant to your chosen topic; and preliminary discussion with community stakeholders; this research summary will comprise the second part of the paper (4-5 pages)
3. ***a planning document*** for the project, including a proposed timeline and projected schedule of community interactions, which will comprise the third part of the paper (as long as it needs to be to cover all of the necessary elements)
4. ***a project summary***, envisioning desired outcomes and the relevance of the project for its various stakeholders
5. ***an evaluation instrument*** for the project that could be used to assess whether and how the project has achieved its stated objectives (as long as it needs to be to cover all of the necessary elements)

In the interest of facilitating the gradual process of developing and completing these varied components of the final project, you will be asked to complete those components in stages, receiving feedback along the way:

1. a one-paragraph description of the project with preliminary bibliography will be **due Wednesday, March 19**
2. you will meet with Dr. Shifrin to discuss your project and preliminary bibliography on **Friday, March 21**
3. an outline of the research summary with expanded, working bibliography will be **due Wednesday, April 2**
4. a draft of the planning document for the project will be **due Wednesday, April 16**
5. you will meet with Dr. Shifrin to discuss your draft planning document on **Friday, April 18**
6. a draft of the evaluation instrument for the project will be **due Friday, April 25**
7. a class presentation (on one of the following dates: **April 30 or May 2**) – class presentations should be 15-20 minutes, followed by discussion; students will incorporate comments from the discussion into their final papers
8. the final paper will be **due on May 5**

Please note: The project description and bibliography, the research summary outline, the draft planning document, the draft evaluation instrument, and the class presentation for this final project are intended to help you achieve the most successful final paper and community-based project possible; for this reason, they will not be graded. (However, be aware that late or missing paragraphs/bibliographies, outlines, planning documents, evaluation instruments and/or presentations will be cause for reductions in the final paper grade.)

Exams

There is no midterm exam scheduled for this class, though through a mutual process of midterm assessment, both students and professor will gain a sense of “how things are going.” There is no final exam.

General Attendance and Participation.

You will learn effectively only if you attend class consistently and participate actively in class and/or online discussions. Your active participation will be easier if you are well prepared when you come to class, having done the assigned readings and thought about them in some depth. Successful participation therefore involves critical reading, thinking, asking questions, analyzing and summarizing arguments, listening to others’ points of view, expressing your own, and engaging in discussion.

In order to facilitate this process, you will be required to submit to me via email **by 9:00 AM the day of class** at least one question that addresses a central issue in the readings for that class meeting. The question(s) should be phrased in such a way as to encourage class discussion; a selection of these questions will be introduced in class.

Since you must attend class in order to participate, and since this is a Project Pericles seminar and is therefore particularly reliant on collaboration and participation, any unexcused absence (that is, any absence that you have not arranged with me prior to the affected class meeting) will have an impact on your class participation grade. Students with more than **two (2)** unexcused absences will receive an academic warning slip and a full-grade deduction in their class participation grade; more than **three (3)** unexcused absences may result in dismissal from the course **with failure**.

Grading for class participation is based on the following criteria: “A” requires near-perfect attendance and frequent contributions that reflect an excellent understanding of the course material. “B” also requires excellent attendance and frequent contributions that demonstrate a good understanding of the course material. “C” indicates either good attendance but infrequent contributions to class discussions OR sporadic attendance with good contributions. “D” indicates sporadic attendance and infrequent, poorly-informed contributions. “F” will result from poor attendance and no thoughtful contributions.

College Notice Regarding Class Attendance:

*In keeping with a strong liberal arts tradition that encourages active learning and complete participation in the education process, **the college expects students to attend class on a regular basis**. Specific attendance policies are set by individual instructors and indicated on the course syllabus at the beginning of each term (see above). Warning slips will be issued by instructors for all students failing to meet the stated course attendance policies. Excessive absences by first year students and students on academic probation will be reported to the Dean’s office. Students may be dropped from a course with a grade of F for failing to meet the stated policy.*

ACADEMIC HONESTY – IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU READ THIS!

You are expected to do your own work in this class. According to the Ursinus College Statement on Plagiarism, “Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, written or spoken, or the ideas of someone else and passing them off as one's own” <http://myrin.ursinus.edu/help/resrch_guides/plagiarism.htm>. More specifically, such an act might include *one or more* of the following infringements:

- Quoting any part of a printed or electronic source without enclosing the quotation in quotation marks and providing a full and accurate reference for the source.
- Paraphrasing any part of a printed or electronic source without acknowledging the source.
- Presenting the point of view stated in a printed or electronic source without acknowledging your reliance on the source.
- Copying phrases and sentences from a printed or electronic source that is paraphrased without enclosing the cited text directly in quotation marks.
- Copying work submitted by another student.
- Submitting work written by someone else as if it is your own.

Unintentional plagiarism can occur when you are writing an essay or paper from notes (or from memory) by reproducing sentences, phrases, or a general line of argument or point of view expressed by the sources you have consulted as if they were your own work. To avoid such liabilities, it is helpful to be particularly careful when taking notes to enclose in quotation marks any text copied *verbatim* from a source (no matter how brief the passage copied) and to note the number of the page on which the text was found. Be careful to properly identify (either by using quotation marks or by setting off lengthy quotations in separate paragraphs) and cite all quotes, as well as citing sources of ideas and arguments in your papers. Any act of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the assignment and will be referred to the Dean's office for further disciplinary action.

If you have any questions regarding this policy or regarding the definition of plagiarism, please come and see me immediately.

BREAKDOWN OF GRADE

ASSIGNMENT	PERCENT
Strategy Reports	15%
Course Journals: Museum News Journal Entries Project Journal Entries	10% 10%
Site Visit/Guest Lecture Attendance and Participation	15%
General Attendance and Active Participation	15%
Submitted Questions for Class Discussion	10%
Final Project -- Paper	25%
Total	100%

LIST OF IMPORTANT DUE DATES

<u>COURSE REQUIREMENT</u>	<u>DUE DATE</u>
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS	
Strategy Report #1	Wednesday, February 13
Strategy Report #2	Wednesday, February 20
Strategy Report #3	Wednesday, February 27
Strategy Report #4	Friday, March 7
Strategy Report #5	Friday, March 28
GROUP PROJECTS	
Group Project – Work Session I	Wednesday, February 20
Group Project – Work Session II	Wednesday, February 27
Group Project – Work Session III	Friday, February 29
FINAL PROJECTS	
Project Descr. and Prelim Bibliography	Wednesday, March 19
Individual meetings with Dr. Shifrin	Friday, March 21
Research Outline and Expanded Biblio	Wednesday, April 2
Draft of Planning Document	Wednesday, April 16
Individual meetings with Dr. Shifrin	Friday, April 18
Draft of Evaluation Instrument	Friday, April 25
Final Project Presentations	Wed, April 30 and Friday, May 2
Final Paper	Monday, May 5

--	--