

HIST / MSST 385 (3 cr.)

History Behind the Scenes: Exploring Delaware's Libraries, Museums and Historic Sites



Kitchen of the George Read II House in New Castle. Courtesy of the Delaware Historical Society.

Instructor: Dr. Alex L. Ames

Meetings: Tuesdays, 9:45 – 11:15 a.m. Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (07/10/18 – 08/09/18)

Locations: Tuesdays, Old College 325, unless otherwise noted. Thursdays, field trips.

Instructor Office Hours: Munroe Hall Room 231, Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., other times/venues by appointment.

Description of Course: This course will provide you with behind-the-scenes access to some of the most important and interesting cultural institutions in Delaware, as well as an opportunity to engage with collections of rare, historical artifacts and the talented professionals who care for them. In addition to visiting museums, libraries, and historic sites across the state, we will do readings, have conversations, and complete assignments that get us thinking about the role of collections-based organizations in our civic and cultural life. The purpose of the course is to help you discover the wonderful cultural institutions here in Delaware while learning the basics of how to visit these sorts of organizations, wherever life may take you.

Course Goals and Objectives

This course is probably quite unlike other history and humanities classes you have taken at the University of Delaware, in that the majority of class time will be spent engaging in off-campus field studies. Rather than analyze any one scholarly theme or time period, we will be studying *how non-profit cultural institutions work*, and the benefits they render for our society. You will acquire a better understanding of how collections-based organizations steward community and national heritage, and how you can access that heritage. By the end of the course, you will be able to address four important questions:

1. *What role do—and what role should—museums, historic sites, and special collections libraries play in the functioning of our republican society? In other words, how does cultural heritage enhance democracy?*
2. *How do museums, libraries, and historic sites use collections to interpret diverse and inclusive stories about Delaware's, and America's, past?*
3. *How, and what, do people learn at museums and other cultural institution? How does this learning compare to "formal," classroom learning?*
4. *Should you, as a visitor of cultural institutions, strive to make a difference in the work that museums, libraries, and historic sites do for our society, and if so, how?*

Attendance: This is a short class, and the vast majority of the content will be delivered via field studies. Therefore, attendance is vital. If you miss one Thursday field study, then you will lose an entire letter grade. If you miss two Thursday field studies, then you will fail the class. Missing Tuesday sessions will have a negative impact on your class participation and journal entry assignment grades (see below). If extenuating circumstances present themselves, please contact me to discuss.

Required Course Materials

Tuesday Meetings

- Course readings
- Note-taking materials

Thursday Meetings

- A notebook/hard writing surface
- Pencils
- Comfortable and weather-appropriate clothing and footwear
- Water in a tight, sealed bottle, and dry snacks if you get hungry throughout the day

- Any other supplies for your comfort while traveling (sunscreen, umbrella, etc.)

Assignments and Evaluation

You will do well in this course, so long as you come to class sessions prepared, turn in your assignments on time, and actively participate in discussions and field studies.

Completion, and Class Discussion, of Course Readings (10 points / 10% of grade)

I have assigned readings that you should complete *before class* on most Tuesdays. Please be prepared to summarize and discuss the readings with me and your classmates.

Active and Respectful Participation in Field Studies (35 points / 35% of grade)

When we visit institutions, treat our hosts, their buildings, and their collections with respect. Be punctual for our departures, ask thoughtful questions of our hosts, and present yourself in a professional and engaged manner.

Completion of Site Evaluation Forms (30 points / 30% of grade)

At the end of every field study, fill out a reflection form that pinpoints key details about the sites we visit. Time will be allotted at the end of every field study for you to fill these out. (In other words, you will complete the forms in class and won't need to do them as homework.) Once graded, I will return them to you so that you can reference them for your final project.

Final Project: Advocacy Assignment (25 points / 25% of grade)

Write a letter to a member of the Delaware Assembly or, if you wish, another public figure of your choosing, regarding the importance of museums, libraries, and historic sites to civic life.

Grading Scale

A (excellent): 95-100

C: 73-76 C-: 70-72

A-: 90-94

D+ (poor): 67-69

B+ (good): 87-89

D: 63-66

B: 83-86

D-: 60-62

B-: 80-82

F (failing): 0-50

C+ (average): 77-79

Policies and Procedures

- Late work is not accepted.
- I will only discuss your grades and class performance in person, i.e. not over e-mail or the phone, or with someone other than you, per privacy-in-education rules.

Refer to the grading rubrics at the end of the syllabus for more information about evaluation.

Classroom Environment and Participation

The bulk of the course will be spent visiting off-campus institutions, and when we meet on campus, we will be talking with staff people from other departments and engaging in conversations about what we have learned. Therefore, your active participation is essential for our collective success! Please come prepared to both our class sessions and field studies with your readings complete, and be ready to ask questions and share ideas. In this course, we will co-create our new knowledge about how cultural institutions operate, and this will only happen if all of us voice our ideas and opinions.

Field Study Logistics

- On Thursdays, I will meet you with university vehicles at the Trabant University Center Circle at 8:55 a.m., for a prompt 9 a.m. departure.
- You may not drive yourself to our field study sites. You must ride with the class.
- Lunch will be provided every Thursday by the Museum Studies Program. If you frequently get hungry throughout the day, pack some snacks (granola bars, nuts, etc.) to bring with you, though be mindful of where—and when—is an appropriate time to eat them. Always ask permission to eat a snack if inside one of our host institutions. Also, feel free to bring bottled water, but no other beverage. We will provide water for lunch.
- During each Tuesday class session, I will ask you to make your lunch selections for the following Thursday field trip. If you are not in class on Tuesday, you must e-mail me and Meg Hutchins (mhutch@udel.edu) no later than noon on Wednesday in order to choose your lunch. If we don't hear from you, we'll get you a turkey sandwich.
- Bear in mind that the actual amount of time spent in class every Thursday may vary slightly, based on traffic, the distance of our sites from campus, and how much content our hosts have planned for us. We will always leave UD at 9 a.m. and, barring extenuating circumstances, will arrive back on campus between 4 and 5 p.m.
- Both Meg and I plan to take photos of our field studies to use in History Department / Museum Studies program social media posts and other publicity. If you mind our using your image, let me know!

Inclusion Statement

Your academic success is very important to me! I am one of several resources at the University of Delaware that you can use to achieve your goals for this course. Everyone learns differently, so please let me know if there is anything I can do to facilitate your learning in this class. I will try my best to help. This is a unique course that will involve travel and walking, so I especially urge you to be in touch with me if you find completing the course challenging or difficult.

If you have a documented disability that may impact your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Disability Support Services office (DSS) in order to receive official University services and accommodations. DSS can be reached at 302-831-4643 or 302-831-4563 (TDD). DSS is located in 240 Academy Street, Alison Hall, Suite 130, and online at <https://sites.udel.edu/dss/>. You may contact DSS at dssoffice@udel.edu.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

According to UD's Student Guide to University Policies, "All students must be honest and forthright in their academic studies. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance." Read more here: <http://www1.udel.edu/stuguide/17-18/code.html>. Please adhere to standard rules of honesty and integrity when completing assignments for this course. Per the University of Delaware Faculty Handbook: "It is the official policy of the University of Delaware that all acts or attempted acts of alleged student academic dishonesty be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs."

Course Schedule

(Subject to Change)

Tuesday, July 10 – Introduction to Museums, and the Basics of Visiting Cultural Heritage Sites

Introductions, description of course, favorite museum activity, and formal / informal learning

Lecture topic: What are museums, libraries, and archives? A Winterthur case study.

Thursday, July 12 – Introduction to Collections and Material Culture at the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library (Site #1)

Meet at the Trabant University Center Circle no later than 8:55 a.m. for a 9 a.m. departure.

All students should complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- “The Anthropologist in the Museum: What is a Museum?”
<https://savageminds.org/2012/10/01/the-anthropologist-in-the-museum-what-is-a-museum/>.
- Visit the Winterthur website to get a sense of the institution’s modern brand:
<http://www.winterthur.org/visit/about-winterthur/>.
- Edgar P. Richardson, “The Arts in America,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 1 (1964): 4-6 – find on Canvas.

Each student will read *one* of these articles in preparation for the field trip, and be prepared to discuss in seminar at Winterthur. (We will choose who reads what on July 10.)

- E. McClung Fleming, “History of the Winterthur Estate,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 1 (1964): 8-51 – find on Canvas.
- Charles F. Montgomery, “The First Ten Years of Winterthur as a Museum,” *Winterthur Portfolio* (1964): 52-79 – find on Canvas.
- Jonathan L. Fairbanks, “The Architectural Development of Winterthur House,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 1 (1964): 80-105 – find on Canvas.
- John A. H. Sweeney, “The Evolution of Winterthur Rooms,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 1 (1964): 106-120 – find on Canvas.
- Frank H. Sommer and Elizabeth A. Ingerman, “The Joseph Downs Manuscript and Microfilm Library. The Winterthur Libraries: An Introductory Note,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 1 (1964): 150-159 – find on Canvas.

Tuesday, July 17 – The “GLAM Sector”: Studying Rare Books and Manuscripts at the UD Library

NOTE: Please meet inside the front door of Morris Library at 9:40 a.m. Class today will be held in a classroom on the second floor of Morris Library.

Lecture topics: Reflecting on the Winterthur experience, objects-based research, and connecting galleries, libraries, museums, and archives

Complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- Eugene Dillenburg, “What, if Anything, Is a Museum?” – find on Canvas.
- Arlette Farge, “Traps and Temptations,” from *The Allure of the Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 69-78 – find on Canvas.
- Explore the “big six” [historical thinking concepts](#) outlined by The Historical Thinking Project at the University of British Columbia.
- Rachel P. Maines and James J. Glynn, “Numinous Objects,” *The Public Historian* 15, no 1 (Winter, 1993): 8-25 – find on Canvas.

Thursday, July 19 – Other Kinds of Collections, at the Delaware Museum of Natural History (Site #2) and Delaware Art Museum (Site #3)

Meet at the Trabant University Center Circle no later than 8:55 a.m. for a 9 a.m. departure.

Complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- Shane J. MacFarlan and Eileen Johnson, “Education Collections as Museum Collections,” *Curator* 47, no. 1 (January 2004): 101-113 – find on Canvas.
- Review a sample (successful) grant application to the Institute for Museum and Library Services made by the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh – find on Canvas.
- Read the DAM’s “Museum History: 100 Years of Art” – find on Canvas.

Tuesday, July 24 – The Purposes of Collections and Exhibitions, at UD Museums

Lecture topic: Collections care, outreach, and the art of the exhibition

9:45 - 10:15 – Lecture and discussion

10:15 – 11:15 – Guest speaker: Ashley Rye-Kopec, Curator of Education and Outreach, UD Special Collections and Museums

Complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- Stephen Bitgood, “Exhibition Design that Provides High Value and Engages Visitor Attention,” *Exhibitionist* (Spring, 2014): 6-11 – find on Canvas.
- Carol Bossert, “Labels Unleashed: Breaking the Tyranny of Information,” *Exhibition* (Spring, 2016): 17-22 – find on Canvas.
- Judy Rand, “Less is More. And More is Less.” *Exhibition* (Spring, 2016): 37-41 – find on Canvas.

Thursday, July 26 – Integrating Diverse Collections, at the Hagley Museum & Library (Site #4)

Meet at the Trabant University Center Circle no later than 8:55 a.m. for a 9 a.m. departure.

Complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- Review the Hagley website: <https://www.hagley.org/about-us/what-is-hagley>.
- American Alliance of Museums, “Collections Management Policy,” <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/collections-management-policy/>.
- Review Hagley’s collections management policy and collections processing paperwork – find on Canvas.

Tuesday, July 31 – How Collections are Born: A Conversation with a Collector

NOTE: Meet inside the front door of Morris Library at 9:40 a.m.

Lecture topics: The work of the private collector, and “the market”

9:45 - 10:15 – Lecture and discussion

10:15 – 11:15 – Guest speaker: Mark Samuels Lasner, Senior Research Fellow, UD Library

All students should complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- Alex Ames, “Useful & Beautiful: The Mark Samuels Lasner Collection at the University of Delaware Brings Victorian Britain to Life”: <https://www.finebooksmagazine.com/issue/1502/mark-samuels-lasner-1.phtml>.
- Skim: American Alliance of Museums, “Direct Care of Collections: Ethics, Guidelines and Recommendations” (April, 2016): <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/direct-care-of-collections-ethics-guidelines-and-recommendations-pdf.pdf>.

Choose *one* of these articles/case studies to complete by the time class meets (we will chose who reads what in class on Thursday the 26th):

- Read [this article](#) about collections issues at the Berkshire Museum. (A more recent article is located [here](#).)
- Read this article from *The Atlantic* that details the controversy around Washington, D.C.'s new Museum of the Bible.
- Monica L. Udvardy, Linda L. Giles, and John B. Mitsanze, "The Transatlantic Trade in African Ancestors: Mijikenda Memorial Statues (Vigango) and the Ethics of Collecting and Curating Non-Western Cultural Property," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 3: 566-580 – find on Canvas.

Thursday, August 2 – Architecture, Landscapes, and Accessibility in Historic New Castle (Site #'s 5 & 6)

Meet at the Trabant University Center Circle no later than 8:55 a.m. for a 9 a.m. departure.

Complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- Choose *one* of these presidential historic sites, and review its website to assess how it deals with the issue of slavery: George Washington's Mount Vernon, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, President Lincoln's Cottage, James Madison's Montpelier, James Monroe's Highland, and Andrew Jackson's Hermitage. Be prepared to give a brief synopsis to the class.
 - <http://www.mountvernon.org/>
 - <https://home.monticello.org/>
 - <http://www.lincolncottage.org/> (enter the word "slavery" into the search bar)
 - <https://www.montpelier.org>
 - <http://highland.org>
 - <https://thehermitage.com/>
- Catherine Kudlick, "Subversive Access: Disability History Goes Public in the United States," *Public Disability History*, <https://www.public-disabilityhistory.org/2016/05/subversive-access-disability-history.html>
- "Making Public History Accessible: Exploring Best Practices for Disability Access – 2016 Working Group," *National Council on Public History*, <http://ncph.org/phc/ncph-working-groups/making-public-history-accessible-2016-working-group/>
- Glance at this document on accessibility: Janice Majewski, *Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design* <http://www.si.edu/Accessibility/SGAED>

Tuesday, August 7 – Advocacy Assignment Workshop, and Course Wrap-Up/Evaluations

Lecture topic: Advocacy, and the past, present, and future of cultural heritage sites

FIRST DRAFT OF ADVOCACY PROJECT DUE IN CLASS ON AUGUST 7

Bring *two printed copies* of your letter with you to class. We will workshop our letters in small groups and then discuss major themes to emerge in the projects.

Thursday, August 9 – Last Class! The Air Mobility Command Museum in Dover (Site #7)

Meet at the Trabant University Center Circle no later than 8:55 a.m. for a 9 a.m. departure.

Complete the following readings by the time our class meets:

- Jeff Duford, “The Things We Are: Air Force Heritage and History in Artifacts,” *Air Power History* (Spring 2008): 4-15 – find on Canvas
- Delaware House Bill No. 282, available here: <https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail/26215>
- “Field Trip Funding Bill Would Give Relief To Low-Income Schools”:
<https://exceptionaldelaware.wordpress.com/2017/12/15/field-trip-funding-bill-would-give-relief-to-low-income-schools/>

FINAL PROJECT DUE IN CLASS ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 9

Please bring a hard copy of your letter to our field trip. If you want to mail it, please sign it, and I'll have you fill out an envelope and then send it on your behalf after grading.

Field Study Participation Grading Rubric

Grade Level	Traits
A	The student was well-prepared with background information about the host site, listened thoughtfully to/engaged professionally with host site staff, asked well-informed questions about the site’s mission, strategic plan, collections, and programs; and demonstrated sophisticated knowledge of, and opinions about, the site’s role in Delaware civic life.
B	The student listened thoughtfully and respectfully to our hosts’ presentations, engaged professionally with staff, and asked meaningful questions about the site. S/he demonstrated comprehension of the site’s purpose.
C	The student respectfully represented the University and History Department/Museum Studies Program and engaged positively with activities planned by our hosts.
D	The student demonstrated little/no background knowledge or active interest in the host site, and/or activities planned by our guides.
F	The student was disrespectful of the host site and our guides. The student demonstrated no knowledge of, or interest in, the field study experience.

Journal Entry Grading Rubric

Grade Level	Traits
A	The student clearly paid close attention to our hosts' comments and the sites/collections studied during the visit. All of the questions on the form are clearly and articulately answered in complete sentences that demonstrate depth of understanding of the site's governing principles, unique assets, and civic impact. The student includes multiple references to sites and collection items studied during the visit.
B	The student paid attention to the hosts' comments, as well as the sites/collections studied during the visit, and answered all of the questions on the form. S/he may reference one or more collection items viewed during the visit. The student possesses a firm understanding of the site's significance.
C	Responses demonstrate that the student was paying attention and participating during the visit, but they do not reveal great depth of understanding of the site's collections and significance.
D	The journal entry was carelessly completed, with no attention to detail and poorly-written comments. S/he does not grasp the site's purpose.
F	The journal entry was either not submitted or so carelessly completed as to indicate a lack of any interest or effort.

Final Project Assignment Description

Your final project for this course is to write a letter to an elected official or some other influential public figure that shares your opinions on the place of heritage preservation and cultural institutions in local, regional, and national life.

The purpose of the assignment is to help you formulate opinions about cultural heritage preservation policy and the importance of museums, libraries, and historic sites to civic life, and then to practice your skills in persuasive and analytical writing. You will write a letter of one to two pages in length to a public figure of your choice, dealing with some aspect of cultural heritage preservation and your thoughts on the matter. You should express a coherent opinion that you justify with empirical evidence drawn from our readings and field studies.

You can choose whichever issue and public official(s) you wish, but one good option is to write to members of the Delaware General Assembly about House Bill No. 282, which aims to provide extra funding to Delaware high-poverty public schools in order to enable students to take field trips. The bill is currently in appropriations committee. Given that this issue aligns so closely with the nature of our class, you could draw on your own field trip experiences to argue a position on the worth of this legislation. You can write to some of the bill's sponsors and/or members of the appropriations committee. Find more information here: <https://legis.delaware.gov/>.

A Few Details

- Your letter should be no less than one page and no more than two pages in length, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font.
- You must submit a hard copy of your letter to me on the last day of class, Thursday, August 9.
- **You are under no obligation to send your letter**, but I encourage you to do so, if you are so inclined. If you want to send it, sign it and I'll give you an envelope and stamp.
- **There is no right or wrong opinion for you to express in your letter.** The only obligation is that you develop a critically-informed opinion about this issue and then support your perspective with empirical evidence and logical reasoning. (In other words, I am not trying to make you think one certain way about any issue! You will not be graded on your opinion, but rather the strength of your argument and quality of your writing.)
- **You will be graded on composition and formatting as well as content!** Please understand this assignment first and foremost as a writing project.

Final Project Grading Rubric

Grade Level	Traits
A	The student's letter is well-written, properly formatted, and presents a critically-informed argument about some aspect of cultural institutions and heritage preservation. The letter draws on numerous specific examples from the students' HIST/MSST 385 field trip experiences. The student strategically chose to whom to send the letter, and the content is appropriate to the recipient. The letter reflects that the student <i>analyzed</i> a critical issue in heritage preservation, <i>synthesized</i> data and reflections on the topic, and developed a thoughtful, rational, empirically grounded opinion. No typographical/formatting errors are present.
B	The students' letter is well-written, properly formatted, and presents a critically-informed argument about some aspect of cultural institutions and heritage preservation. The letter draws on at least one specific example from the students' HIST/MSST 385 field trip experiences. The letter reflects that the student assessed a critical issue in heritage preservation and synthesized data and reflections on the topic into a reasoned opinion. Two or fewer typographical/formatting errors are present.
C	The students' letter is well-written, properly formatted, and presents a carefully analyzed argument about some aspect of cultural institutions and heritage preservation. The letter may or may not draw on a specific example from HIST/MSST 385 field trips. The students' argument is sound but lacks sophistication or depth. Three or fewer typographical/formatting errors are present.
D	The letter is poorly written and reflects no serious thought about advocacy or the significance of cultural heritage. Typographical errors and formatting issues mar the document.
F	The student's letter was never turned in, plagiarized from another source, or so poorly composed that it lacks value as a piece of persuasive writing.