Master of Arts in Museum Studies

Museum Studies Graduate Program

These are exciting and challenging times for museums -- longstanding premises are being questioned, and many established practices are being reconsidered. Museum professionals today work in an environment far different than that of even a few years ago. Emerging technologies now allow museums to bring their collections and their programs to audiences well beyond the confines of museum buildings. With this expanded reach, museums are preparing for dramatic changes in the age, ethnicity, education, and economic status of their audiences. Exhibitions and public programs are evolving; more than ever, educators, curators, and designers are seeking ways to engage visitors in complex issues of broad concern. Behind the scenes, collection stewardship is being reevaluated in response to practical, political, and ethical concerns. Additionally, unprecedented scholarly attention is being directed toward the ways in which museums have acquired their collections, represented their subjects, and engaged with the public. In the midst of this transformation, long-standing assumptions about museums' public value have been called into question, requiring museum leaders to craft new collaborations and community partnerships in order to survive.

To advance and thrive in this dynamic environment, twenty-first century museum professionals will need knowledge informed by practice, imagination tempered by rigor, and leadership stimulated by collaboration. This is what we can offer at the University of Kansas. Students take advantage of the superb facilities at KU, including the Dole Institute of Politics, Natural History Museum, Spencer Museum of Art, Spencer Research Library, and Wilcox Classical Museum, as well as nearby historical agencies, specialized libraries, and museums.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

Admission to the Museum Studies M.A. Program

To be considered for admission to regular graduate status in the Museum Studies program, a student must hold a baccalaureate degree and have earned at least a B (3.0) grade-point average in previous academic work. Acceptance in the program is determined by the Museum Studies Admissions Committee. A student interested in applying for admission must submit the following:

1. A completed application, along with a non-refundable application fee, submitted online through the Office of Graduate Studies (http://www.graduate.ku.edu/apply).
2. Transcripts from all undergraduate and graduate institutions attended. You may upload a scanned version of your official transcript from your undergraduate institution to the online application, however, official transcripts will be required upon admission to the program. Please note: A printout from a student portal is NOT considered to be an official copy of your transcript. In addition, please calculate (http://www.clas.ku.edu/undergrad/tools/gpa) your Junior/Senior GPA and include it on your resume.
3. A statement of academic objectives. This component of the application is very important. It should be a thoughtful, well-written, 2-3 page statement addressing such topics as (a) what about museums and museum studies that particularly interests you, (b) your career goals, and the area of museum work that most attracts you, (c) your relevant experience and background, (d) the match of KU’s program to your interests, and (e) anything else you think is important to your application. If you feel that your academic record does not reflect your potential, or if your test scores are below expectations, be certain to provide an explanation of any extenuating circumstances related to this issue.
4. 3 letters of recommendation, at least one of which must be from an academic source (Please use KU’s online letter of recommendation system when you apply).
5. GRE scores. To submit scores, use University code 6871.
6. A resume or curriculum vitae listing your employment history, any museum experience (paid or unpaid), scholarships/fellowships, and awards.
7. A sample of your written academic work (10 pages maximum, please).
8. For international students only, TOEFL scores or acceptable alternative to demonstrate English proficiency (http://graduate.ku.edu/english-proficiency-requirements).
9. For international students only, proof of financial support. Applications will not be considered without financial documentation.

Students are admitted to the M.A. program only in the fall semester. The deadline for submitting applications is January 1. The Museum Studies Admissions Committee seeks to notify applicants of admission decisions by early March. Only in exceptional circumstances will we consider applications past the deadline.

M.A. Degree Requirements

The M.A. degree in museum studies requires 36 credit hours at the graduate level. Students in the Museum Studies program will complete the following:

1. The Museum Studies Core - 9 credit hours
2. Museum Professional Areas - 9 credit hours
3. Museum Conceptual Domains - 6 credit hours
4. Electives - 9 credit hours
5. Museum Experience (Internship) - 3 credit hours
6. Final Product & Examination

1. Museum Studies Core (9 credit hours)
The Museum Studies Core ensures that all Museum Studies students gain a comprehensive understanding of the theories, history, techniques, and problems common to museums, historical agencies and related institutions. The Capstone course, taken in a student’s third semester
of study, provides an avenue for students to conduct research or other creative activities that advance the discipline of museum studies.

MUSE 801 The Nature of Museums 3
MUSE 802 Culture of Museums 3
MUSE 803 Seminar in Current Museum Topics 3

2. Museum Professional Areas (9 credit hours)

Students will develop expertise in one of the principal specialties of museum work by completing at least two courses in that area, at least one of which must be a Museum Studies (MUSE) course. Many courses in other departments could fulfill requirements; it is the responsibility of students, and their advisors, to ensure that individual courses meet program requirements based on the general relevance of the course and assurance that the student’s work in the class will be applicable to museum studies by meeting with instructors and examining syllabi. Courses taken must be at the 500 level or above. The following lists include examples of courses that may fulfill the professional areas requirement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Courses cover areas such as administration, policy, fundraising, and legal issues related to the management of non-profit organizations.

MUSE 701 Museum Management 3
Examples of Courses in Other Departments and Programs:

LAW 867 Law and the Arts 2-3
MEMT 823 Seminar in: ______ 1-3
PUAD 828 Nonprofit Management and Policy 3
PUAD 830 Administrative Ethics 3
PUAD 855 Financial Management for Public and Not-for-Profit Organizations 3

INTERPRETATION

Interpretation includes developing skills in exhibition design and installation, graphics, and marketing, public programs, as well as innovative approaches to new and emerging technologies.

MUSE 703 Introduction to Museum Exhibits 3
MUSE 705 Introduction to Museum Public Education 3
Examples of Courses in Other Departments and Programs:

ADS 712 Design Strategies and Methods 3
BIOL 720 Scientific Illustration 3
THR 618 Scenography and the Musical Theatre 3

COLLECTIONS

Courses provide opportunities to develop expertise in the practices and policies associated with the management and care of the range of materials in museum collections.

MUSE 704 Introduction to Collections Management and Utilization 3
MUSE 706 Conservation Principles and Practices 3
MUSE 707 Practical Archival Principles 3
Examples of Courses in Other Departments and Programs:

ANTH 520 Archaeological Ceramics 3
ANTH 582 Ethnobotany 3
ANTH 648 Human Osteology 4
BIOL 603 Systematic Botany 3
GEOL 725 Paleontology of Lower Vertebrates 3
TD 504 History of Textiles, Lecture 3
UBPL 760 Historic Preservation Planning 3

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Courses enable students to develop skills in public programming, curriculum planning, visitor studies, audience development, and volunteer management.

MUSE 705 Introduction to Museum Public Education 3
Examples of Courses in Other Departments and Programs:

ABSC 719 Experimental Field Work in Community Settings 1-5
C&T 808 Qualitative Research: Curriculum Inquiry 3
COMS 855 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication Studies 3
COMS 855 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication Studies 3
HIST 601 Oral History 3
VAE 750 Introduction to Art Museum Education 1-4

3. Courses focusing on Museum Conceptual Domains (6 credit hours)

The conceptual domains of museum work address in depth the conceptual and theoretical foundations of museums. Courses that emphasize conceptual domains will place museological subjects in broader historical and intellectual frameworks. Students may take courses which may be offered in one or several disciplines. Courses will be selected based on the general relevance of the course, and assurance that the student’s work in the class will be applicable to museum studies. Please see Museum Studies website for examples of possible courses.

4. Electives and Other Museum Studies Courses (9 credit hours)

Students are expected to deepen their knowledge of the field by taking courses in a subject area pertinent to their area of specialization. Courses will be selected with the approval of the student’s committee chair, as well as the course instructor.

5. Museum Experience (3 credit hours)

While enrolled in the Museum Studies program, students are required to gain at least 500 hours of museum experience, of which at least 250 hours must be in an approved, professionally supervised internship

MUSE 799 Museum Internship

6. Final Product and Examination

Each student will be responsible for a final product, developed through research or other creative activity, that contributes to museum studies and demonstrates the student’s ability to engage conceptually and professionally with the discipline of museum studies.