Museum Studies Program

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.

KU Museum Studies offers a master's program and a graduate certificate program. Students who are interested in enrolling in graduate level coursework in the Museum Studies Program without formal admission to a graduate program at KU are encouraged to apply for graduate non-degree seeking student status. See our admission webpage (http://museumstudies.ku.edu/non-degree-seeking) for further details.

Courses

MUSE 177. First Year Seminar: ______. 3 Hours GE11.
A limited-enrollment, seminar course for first-time freshmen, addressing current issues in Museum Studies. Course is designed to meet the critical thinking learning outcome of the KU Core. First-Year Seminar topics are coordinated and approved by the Office of First-Year Experience. Prerequisite: First-time freshman status. SEM.

MUSE 301. Museums and Society: Past, Present, Future. 3 Hours H.
An introduction to museums and the field of museum studies. Using short lectures, discussion, laboratory exercises, field trips, and guest speakers, students will explore the history, role, and function of museums including types, dimensions, creation and management of collections, exhibition development, administration, and visitor experiences. Includes instruction and practice in writing for a variety of museum contexts and audiences. Designed for students interested in museums and curious about museum careers. LEC.

MUSE 400. Directed Readings in Museum Studies. 1-3 Hours.
Directed reading in an area of Museum Studies for which there is no course in the Museum Studies program or in cooperating departments and in which a member of the faculty has expertise. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor. IND.

MUSE 480. Special Topics in Museum Studies: ______. 1-3 Hours.
Courses on special topics in museum studies, given as need arises. Lectures, discussions of readings, and guest speakers. Topic for semester to be announced. Instructor permission usually required. Prerequisite: Varies by section and instructor. LEC.

MUSE 699. Anthropology in Museums. 3 Hours S.
The course reviews the history of archeological, ethnographic, physical anthropological and other types of collections. It also considers current issues facing anthropologists, such as: contested rights to collections and the stories that accompany them; representation and interpretation of cultures; art and artifact; conceptualization, design and building of exhibitions; and anthropological research and education in the museum. (Same as ANTH 699.) Prerequisite: ANTH 150 or ANTH 108 or consent of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 701. Museum Management. 3 Hours.
Lecture, discussion, and laboratory exercises on the nature of museums as organizations; accounting, budget cycles, personnel management, and related topics will be presented using, as appropriate, case studies and a simulated museum organization model. (Same as AMS 731, BIOL 785, GEOL 783, and HIST 728.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 703. Introduction to Museum Exhibits. 3 Hours.
Presentation of principles and practices of exhibit management, design, and production. Topics will include developing a master plan for museum exhibits; concept development; design, installation, and maintenance of exhibits; design theory; design process; label writing and editing; selection of materials architectural requirements and building codes; cost estimating; publicity; security; and exhibit evaluation. Consideration will be given to exhibition problems in public and private museums in the areas of anthropology, art, history, natural history, and technology. (Same as AMS 700, BIOL 787, GEOL 781, and HIST 723.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 704. Introduction to Collections Management and Utilization. 3 Hours.
This course examines the roles collections play in fulfilling a museum’s mission; the obligations ownership/preservation of collections materials create for a museum; and the policies, practices, and professional standards that museums are required to put in place. The course will cover utilization of collections for research, education, and public engagement; address how that utilization informs the need for and structure of collections policies, and introduce the basic practices of professional collections management. (Same as ANTH 798, AMS 730, ANTH 798, BIOL 798, GEOL 785, and HIST 728.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 705. Introduction to Museum Public Education. 3 Hours.
Consideration of the goals of an institution’s public education services, developing programs, identifying potential audiences, developing audiences, and funding. Workshops and demonstrations are designed for students to gain practical experience working with various programs and developing model programs. (Same as AMS 797, BIOL 784, GEOL 784, and HIST 721.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 706. Conservation Principles and Practices. 3 Hours.
This course will acquaint the future museum professional with problems in conserving all types of collections. Philosophical and ethical
approaches will be discussed, as well as the changing practices regarding conservation techniques. Emphasis will be placed on detection and identification of causes of deterioration in objects made of organic and inorganic materials, and how these problems can be remedied. Storage and care of objects will also be considered. (Same as AMS 714, BIOL 700, GEOL 780, and HIST 722.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 707. Practical Archival Principles. 3 Hours.
Study of the principles and practices applicable to the preservation, care, and administration of archives and manuscripts. Practical experience will be an integral part of this course. (Same as HIST 727.) LEC.

MUSE 710. Natural Sciences Curation and Collections Management. 3 Hours.
This course explores collections in the KU Museum of Natural History through the eyes of their curators and collection managers. It addresses aspects of collecting, cataloguing, preserving, storing, managing, and digitally archiving different types of natural science collections. The course format consists of lectures, readings, and guided tours of the museum’s paleontological, biological (flora and fauna) and anthropological division collections. Student projects will involve one of the museum’s collections with the opportunity for hands-on experience. (Same as BIOL 706.) LEC.

MUSE 780. Special Topics: ____. 1-3 Hours.
Advanced courses on special topics in museum studies, given as need arises. Lectures, discussions of readings, and guest speakers. Topic for semester to be announced. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in Museum Studies Program or permission of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 782. Seminar in Museum Topics: ____. 1-3 Hours.
In-depth examination of specific topics currently of concern to museums and museum professionals. Topic for semester to be announced. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in Museum Studies Program, or permission of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 790. Advanced Study. 1-3 Hours.
Individual research in a specialized topic not ordinarily treated in a Museum Studies core course for which there is a member of the graduate faculty competent and willing to direct a research project. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor. RSH.

MUSE 792. Directed Readings. 1-3 Hours.
Directed reading in an area of Museum Studies in which there is no particular course in the Museum Studies program or in cooperating departments but in which there is a member of the graduate faculty competent and willing to direct a program study. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor. IND.

MUSE 799. Museum Internship. 1-6 Hours.
Provides directed, practical experience in research, collection, care, and management, public education, and exhibits with emphasis to suit the particular requirements of each student. Graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. (Same as AMS 799, ANTH 799, and GEOL 723.) INT.

MUSE 801. The Nature of Museums. 3 Hours.
The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the kinds of museums, their various missions, and their characteristics and potentials as research, education, and public service institutions responsible for collections of natural and cultural objects. (Same as AMS 720, BIOL 788, GEOL 782, and HIST 720.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

MUSE 802. Culture of Museums. 3 Hours.
Culture of Museums is the second of a 2-semester course sequence, and highlights classic texts and current directions in museum studies. It is organized around the core conceptual domains of museums - Materiality, Representation, and Engagement. The course establishes the framework for understanding changes on the horizon for museums, and enables students to be familiar with classic texts in the field. Museums of art, history, natural history, are included, as well as museums large and small. Each week the class will read assigned articles or chapters and will be prepared to discuss and analyze the assignment. In addition, each week there will be several monographs assigned that elaborate and inform the topic. One student will take responsibility for each work and will lead discussion concerning the material. The student will familiarize themselves with the work, and should meet with the instructor before class to structure their presentation. In class, the student will lead discussion and emphasize key elements in the work. SEM.

MUSE 803. Seminar in Current Museum Topics. 3 Hours.
This course has two core objectives - (1) to consider current issues in and around museums that will have a bearing on the field’s future, and (2) to be a springboard for museum studies students to formulate and make substantial headway on their required final projects. Therefore, in addition to each week’s readings assigned by the instructor, each student will have several opportunities to select the readings for the rest of the class. The student-assigned readings will be relevant to each student’s research, and will (1) help students acquire a more nuanced and critical grasp of works that are key to their research by getting feedback from the rest of the class; and (2) build the class’s general awareness of important scholarship in the field. SEM.