SYLLABUS

Course Time: MTWTH, 9:00am-12:10pm
Course Location: -- Asbury 226

Instructor: Caren S. Oberg
E-mail: oberg@obergresearch.com
Instructor’s Office Hours: By Appointment

Audience research is the study of the interactions between visitors and museums. This highly interactive and practical course will provide students with an introduction to the history and theory supporting audience research; a study of current research and its adaptability to museums; and practical experience using evaluation data to inform program/exhibition development and assessment. By the end of the semester students will gain an understanding audience research theory and methods so that they may be critical users of audience research at their home institutions (post graduation).

The main assignment for the class will be to develop and execute audience research work for SI Gardens. Through their partnership with SI Gardens students will develop basic skills of research/evaluation, including study and instrument design, data collection techniques, analysis, interpretation and presentation of results so that SI Gardens may use the results to inform programatic and exhibition decisions. Additional assignments will support students’ ability to respond to audience research sections of funding proposals and develop their own proposals when seeking outside research assistance. All assignments will be papers. There are no exams for this class.

Class meets MTWTH from 9-12:10. We will discuss theory and readings for approximately two hours. The third hour will be used to apply the theory and readings work conducted for SI Gardens. Outside of class students should expect to collect data at the Smithsonian Gardens for a total of 6-8 hours on top of reading assignments and assignment/report preparations.

By the end of the class students will:

• Understand the history and theories that support audience research; including impact of visitor studies in museum field.

• Increase their awareness, knowledge, and skills related to audience research and project evaluation in museums in order to become critical users of evaluation

• Develop basic skills of research/evaluation, including study and instrument design, data collection techniques, analysis, interpretation and presentation of results so that they may use evaluation processes to inform programatic and exhibition decisions and support visitor experiences.

• Critically assess the quality and utility of published museum research/evaluation studies for improving their practice as museum professionals and build capacity for evaluation at their home institutions (post graduation).
Required Texts for all students


Required Text for all Public History Track

Required Text for all Art Management Track

Publications

Additional required readings for this course (detailed in the course schedule) will include evaluation studies, research articles, methodological texts, and related peer-reviewed articles. Electronic (PDF) copies of these readings will be made available through Google Sites.

Grading

Requirement 1. Class preparation, participation, project preparations 20%
This course is focused on discussion and application of theory into practice. It is essential that students come to class having completed all readings and assignments and prepared to discuss the materials.

Requirement 2. First response to audience research/evaluation section of a grant proposal. No more than 1 page single-spaced. Due Date 5-24-11 by 9am. 10%

Requirement 3. Second response to audience research/evaluation section of a grant proposal. No more than 1 page single-spaced. Due Date 5-31-11 by 9am. 10%

Requirement 4. SI Gardens Summary Report 60%
No more than 10 pages single spaced.
Oral presentation on 6-2-11
Report Due Date 6-2-11

Policy on late assignments/missed classes
Please contact Professor Oberg if you are going to be late on an assignment/miss class. Due to the very short semester, If you miss more than one class per week or more than two classes total, your grade will decrease by an entire letter. If you miss more than two classes total you will be asked to take an incomplete in the class.
2011 Course Schedule, Readings, Assignments

Day 1 M  5-16-11  Research and Evaluation in Museums: An Overview
What is visitor studies; use of visitor studies in museum field; AEA vs VSA vs CARE; Current issues in the field. Applying generalizable visitor research to localized evaluations; pieces of an evaluation report.

Readings for Day 2:


Day 2 T  5-17-11  Evaluation Model, Approach, and Design I
Discussion of planning an evaluation; Writing questions for meaningful responses; Rise of outcome-based evaluation in museum evaluation. Observations at Museums possible.

Readings for Day 3:


Day 3 W  5-18-11  Evaluation Model, Approach and Design II (at SI Gardens)
Introduction to class project at SI Gardens; Speakers: Cynthia Brown
Determine evaluation goals and approach; Focus is on methodology and sample size;

Readings for Day 4:

Smithsonian IRB Form and Human Subjects Research FAQs
Diamond, et al. Chap. 1, 2, 3, 10

Day 4 TH  5-19-11  Evaluation Model, Approach and Design III
Ethics of audience research; Finalize SI Gardens evaluation plans

Readings for Day 5
Diamond, et al. Chap 4, 5, 6,
Rosenzweig, et al. Chap. 4, 5 or Pitman, et al. pages 1-42

WEEK 1 ENDS

Day 5 M  5-23-11  Data Analysis 1: Quantitative data
How to consolidate and work with quantitative data to develop findings

Readings for Day 6
Diamond, et al. Chap 7,8, 9
AEA365: Attributes of a successful qualitative coder
Pitman, et al, pages 43-117
Day 6  T  5-24-11  Data Analysis 2: Qualitative data  
*How to consolidate and work with qualitative data to develop findings*  
*Requirement 2 due.*

Readings for Day 7:  

Day 7  W  5-25-11  Findings 1: What does data mean  
*Developing findings from data; developing findings from SI Gardens project data*

Readings for Day 8:  
Rosenzweig, et al. Introduction, Appendix I or Pitman, et al pg. 120-170  

Day 8  TH  5-26-11  Findings 2: What does data mean  
*Developing findings from data; developing findings from SI Gardens project data*

Readings for Day 10 (no class Day 9)  
Rosenzweig, et al. Chap 2, 6 or Pitman, et al.pages 171-208

WEEK 2 ENDS

Day 9  M  5-30-11  Memorial Day - Class ?

Day 10  T  5-31-11  Recommendations  
*Developing recommendations; developing recommendations for SI Gardens; Report development. Requirement 3 due.*

No readings for Day 11.

Day 11  W  6-1-11  Review of report drafts in class  
No readings for Day 12.

Day 12  TH  6-2-11  Projects Due, Class Presentations