NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
School of Art  

ART 665: Museum Practicum  

General syllabus  

Instructor: Peter Van Ael  
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(Other instructors as needed.)  

Course description: Museum Practicum (1). Work experience at a campus museum, gallery, or other approved entity with collection(s) of related cultural or aesthetic objects and artifacts under the supervision of a member of the professional staff. Requires regular experience in day-to-day museum operations and completion of a major project arranged with the intern’s museum supervisor and a museum studies faculty member. May be repeated to a maximum of 2 semester hours. PRQ: Consent of School  

Contact hours: 120 contact hours per semester hour of credit, logged during the semester when the credit is given. Contact hours may include on-site work in galleries, storage, museum library, archives, and/or resource rooms, museum offices and other work spaces; time spent in staff meetings; research time off-site in libraries, other museums/collections, or other venues as directed by the museum staff member.  

Objectives: After completing the museum practicum, the student will:  
* be familiar with a variety of tasks performed by professionals in museums  
* be able to successfully perform at least one task normally required of a museum professional in the intern’s chosen area of interest (such as education, collections management, exhibition design, etc.)  
* have completed a project with a final product suitable for presenting as evidence of museum-related skills in a job interview  

Requirements:  

1. Student, faculty advisor, and museum supervisor should agree on a set of assignments and projects as specified on the attached contract, and all should sign off on this plan before the student begins the required contact hours.  

2. The contact hours must be logged during the semester in which credit is awarded, but need not be on a regular schedule: any work schedule that is appropriate for the student and for the museum supervisor is acceptable for credit.  

3. The student must keep a log (time sheet) of hours spent in the practicum,
submitting it with other items required at the end of the semester.

4. The student will report to the NIU faculty member on a regular basis (every two weeks is standard), describing what s/he is doing and reporting any questions that need addressing. This report may take the form of a meeting or an e-mailed journal (see next item):

5. The student will keep a regular journal describing assignments, insights, rewards, and problems in the museum work each day of the internship. This journal may be sent by e-mail to the faculty advisor as the regular report required in item 4 above, or may be kept separately and submitted at the end of the semester.

6. The student will write a two-page summary/reflective report, describing the practicum in general and assessing what was learned, questions raised, general reactions to the experience.

7. The student will submit a set of any final products of the practicum assignments. These products may include reports written, policies drafted, handouts drafted and/or used in teaching, labels/text drafted, condition reports created, etc. (This material will be returned to the student; no need to create full duplicates of complex products).

All required materials (items 3, 5, 6, and 7 above) are due on the last day of the semester. They, and a conversation between the faculty member and the museum supervisor, will provide the basis of the assigned grade. In summer sessions, it is normal for the grade to be assigned as an Incomplete until the faculty member is back on contract for the fall semester; those Incompletes will be converted to grades within two weeks of the start of fall semester.

**Grading standards:** Grades will be assigned on the basis of:

* **50%:** *Written materials* (items 5, 6, 7 above: thoughtfulness, completeness, timeliness, and (in the case of work projects) degree of fit with supervisor’s expectations.
* **30%:** *On-site work:* participation in meetings and events as appropriate; interaction with the public or other outsiders as appropriate in teaching, greeting, or assisting in programs/events; self-directedness in research, writing and other work as appropriate to assignments
* **20%:** *Professionalism:* attendance (reliability, punctuality), meeting deadlines, availability for additional duties as required, appropriate dress, adherence to museum rules and policies, collegial attitude.