

*This syllabus represents the course as it was taught in the fall of 2015. AMST 2696 (the Spring 2023 course) will be similar but focused more squarely on the philosophy and methods of museum education. We will not travel as widely but hope to meet frequently at the RISD Museum as well as nearby institutions such as the John Brown House Museum and the Providence Children's Museum. The updated syllabus will be posted soon and will include updates to readings and locations as well as statements on accessibility, accommodations, mental health, supply expenses, inclusion, diversity, and the academic code. The course has no prerequisites. Contact me if you are interested in learning more.*

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The Promise of Informal Learning  
Center for Public Humanities  
Tuesdays, 2:30 – 4:50 pm  
Fall 2015

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Office hours by appointment

This course will take as its focus “facilitated informal learning” – learning that happens outside of formal learning environments but is facilitated by an educator. Specifically, much of the course will explore facilitated informal learning within cultural institutions – museums, historic houses, zoos, libraries, science centers, children’s museums. We will begin with our own experiences with facilitated informal learning – whether that be a tour of a museum as a child or an ipad app exploration of a historic home only days ago. We will then zoom out in order to “think big” with big thinkers in the field: What are their visions for the future of informal learning? What are ours? Through the rest of the sessions, we will explore the pedagogical methods, underlying philosophies and learning theories, audiences, debates, and goals of facilitated informal learning today. Ultimately, we will consider whether and how these models should and could be re-considered and re-designed to reflect “the promise of cultural institutions” (David Carr).

Class sessions will consist of discussions of readings as well as facilitated experiences in Providence cultural institutions – the RISD Museum, a historic home, the Providence Children’s Museum, New Urban Arts, and possibly a science center or library – and opportunities for students to practice the most common pedagogical methods in the field. Assignments will include two blog posts or reflections (ideally based on attendance at two outside-of-class events), a teaching practicum, and one final project in which students will collaborate with a Providence organization to assess their needs and design and deliver educational programming. There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Objectives:** From this course, students will:

- Identify the qualities that make informal learning unique and worthwhile
- Develop an understanding of the philosophy and learning theory that underscores informal learning practices, as well as theories of informal learning
- Become familiar with and engage with the current methods, debates, and best practices in the fields of museum education, environmental education, and beyond
- Identify methods of -- and subject matters within -- informal education that they are interested in and pursue those interests through research, observation, and contacting professionals in the field
- Gain experience in teaching with objects, the most common pedagogical method in informal education today

**Readings:**

Students will be asked to purchase the following books:

- Burnham, Rika and Elliot Kai-Kee. *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011
- Carr, David. *The Promise of Cultural Institutions*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003
- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000
- Hein, George. *Learning in the Museum*. New York: Routledge, 1998

All other readings will be available on CANVAS, as either links or PDFs. Please complete the reading by the discussion date on the syllabus. Be sure to check the reading list for the week on CANVAS as some assignments might change slightly.

**Grading:**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent of Course Grade</u>
Partnership Project (Components: Proposal = 20%, Prototype = 15%, Delivery and Reflection = 25%)	60%
Teaching Practicum	20%
Attendance and Participation Plus Blogs/Reflections	20%

**Attendance and Participation:**

Attendance and participation will be key to making meaning together as well as completing assignments. If students think they will have to be absent, they should inform the instructor as soon as possible. Students will be graded, in part, on being present and actively participating. If students must miss a class, they will be required to post a blog entry reflecting on the readings. If students think they might be late in submitting an assignment, they should speak with the instructor.

There will be two opportunities for participation that do not take place during class hours. The instructor will do her best to accommodate everyone's schedule so that all students can attend. These events include: the Tours Conference at Brown on September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> and a trip to New York City to observe informal learning programs later in the fall. Reflections on these experiences will be assigned. If students cannot attend, they should speak to the instructor about alternative ways of completing these assignments.

### **The Instructor:**

Jackie Delamatre has been a museum educator for over a decade. She has taught thousands of classes for all ages – from newborn babies to senior citizens – at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum, and the RISD Museum. Over the years, she has run museum programs, conducted research on the impact of programs, founded programs, and written educational materials for several institutions, including teacher curricula and family guides about museum exhibitions. She has also written on the topic of museum education for blogs and professional journals. She holds a BA from Brown University and an MFA from New York University.

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

(To be submitted via email by the due date, unless otherwise stated.)

#### 1. Partnership Project:

- a. Proposal (Due October 15): In small groups, students will choose one of five Providence informal learning organizations to collaborate with. Students will research their organization's mission and programs. They will then meet with the lead contact from their organization, interview them, and determine the goals and parameters of the project they will complete for them. Students will also observe a program that is similar to their proposed project. The proposal should be six to eight pages and should include:
  - i. A description of the proposed project
  - ii. An analysis of how it fits into the mission and goals of the organization and the needs of the audience
  - iii. An evaluation of the program they observed and reflection on what their observations mean for their project
  - iv. A survey of and reflection on relevant literature on the topic
  - v. A plan for documentation of the project (photographs, video, etc.)

#### Partnering Organizations:

- ~~Urban Pond Procession~~
- Bell Gallery – part of Brown Arts Institute
- Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology
- Lippitt House Museum
- Providence Public Library, Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative
- TBD, possibly AS220 FabLab

- b. Prototype (Due October 29): In groups, students will produce a prototype of the project they will deliver. If it is a program they will teach, for instance, they can submit a lesson plan. If it is an educational app, they will submit a mock-up. This prototype should be delivered to the lead contact at the organization as well as to the instructor. Students should then set up two meetings – one with the instructor, the other with the organization contact – in order to receive feedback on the prototypes. These meetings should take place by November 5<sup>th</sup>.
- c. Delivery and Reflection (Due November 19): Students will deliver the products – whether that be a program for families, an educational app, a lesson for ESL adults, or a professional development for educators. (The instructor and the organization contact will be present for the “delivery” of the product.) Students should document these products in the ways outlined in the proposal. They should then write a reflection (five to seven pages) on their experience, citing research and other literature on the topic, and making suggestions for improvement. Students will be graded by the instructor and the organization contact based on a rubric. This rubric will address whether their projects aligned with the mission of the organization, met the stated goals of the collaborators, engaged the needs of the audience, etc.

## 2. Teaching Practicum:

Each student will develop a lesson and teach it at the RISD Museum – twice. They will receive feedback the first time and will be asked to incorporate feedback into their second presentation.

- a. Lesson Plan (Due October 15<sup>th</sup>)
- b. First Presentations (Scheduled outside of class in small groups for week of November 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- c. Second Presentations (Presented in class on December 1<sup>st</sup>)

Students will be graded with a rubric outlining objectives such as meeting the needs of the stated audience and addressing the mission of the RISD Museum’s education department.

## 3. Blog Posts/Reflections:

Each student will write two blog posts or reflections - ideally on the Tours Conference at Brown University and the class trip to NYC. If they cannot make either of these events, they will determine their topics with the instructor. If they miss class, they will be required to write a blog post on the readings.

## READINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### **Week One: Definition of Informal Learning**

Location: Center for Public Humanities classroom

Essential Questions: What are the qualities of informal learning? What does informal learning do well (as compared to formal learning)? What does it not do as well?

Class Format: We will reflect on our own experiences with informal learning (in general and specifically with facilitated informal learning such as museum tours). What are the qualities that our experiences have in common? (We will revisit these thoughts on the last day of class. Have our ideas about informal learning changed? Have they become more complicated?) We will reflect on the experience and connect it to our ideas about and experiences of informal learning. The instructor will facilitate an object-based exploration, as well as a close reading of short texts on informal learning. Finally, we will review the syllabus – the objectives, the grading and assignments, as well as the format and locations of the classes.

### **Week Two: Visions for Informal Learning**

Location: Center for Public Humanities classroom and RISD Museum

Essential Questions: How do we think big about informal learning – and the cultural institutions that create environments for informal learning? What do we envision if we imagine our ideal? How close is what we envision to reality? What can we do to bring our visions and reality closer?

Class Format: We will discuss the readings and develop our own visions for informal learning in cultural institutions. The instructor will conduct a tour in the RISD Museum.

Readings:

- Carr, David. *The Promise of Cultural Institutions*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003, pgs. 17 – 35, 55 – 68, and 131- 176
- RAQS Media Collective, “Waiting for Rain,”  
<http://www.raqsmediacollective.net/images/pdf/61246a15-7d3c-41d6-b552-07e34c3dca29.pdf>
- Ryan, Deborah and Franklin Vagnone. “Reorienting Historic House Museums: An Anarchist’s Guide”  
[www.arcc-journal.org/index.php/repository/article/download/255/197](http://www.arcc-journal.org/index.php/repository/article/download/255/197)

### **Week Three: Visions for Informal Learning, Part Two**

Location: RISD Museum

Essential Questions: How do we think big about informal learning – and the cultural institutions that create environments for informal learning? What do we envision if we

imagine our ideal? How close is what we envision to reality? What can we do to bring our visions and reality closer?

**Class Format:** The instructor will demo a variety of facilitated informal learning techniques. We will discuss the readings and develop our own visions for informal learning in cultural institutions.

**Readings:**

- Weil, Stephen E. *Making Museums Matter*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2002, chapters 3, 5, and 7
- Louv, Richard, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2008, pgs. 27-70, 203-234

### **Week Four: Philosophy and Methods of Object-Based Informal Learning**

Location: RISD Museum

**Essential Questions:** What are the most common pedagogical methods museums and other informal learning institutions are using today? What can we learn from objects and how?

**Class Format:** We will discuss the readings. We will apply what students have experienced in the past and with me to what they have read. We will do an activity that John Hennigar Shuh describes in his article. Then students will work in the museum, together or on their own, to develop their own lesson plan for a Teaching Practicum.

**Readings:**

#### **Methodology**

- Burnham, Rika and Elliot Kai-Kee. *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011, pgs. 7-18 and 79-93
- Hennigar Shuh, John. "Teaching yourself to teach with objects," *The Educational Role of Museums*, ed. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, pgs. 80-91
- Ron Ritchhart, "Cultivating a Culture of Thinking in Museums," *Journal of Museum Education*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer 2007), pgs. 137-54.  
[http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking\\_html\\_files/06\\_AdditionalResources/CultivatingACultureofThinking.pdf](http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/06_AdditionalResources/CultivatingACultureofThinking.pdf)

#### **Philosophy**

- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000, pgs. 135-48
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Rick E. Robinson. *The Art of Seeing: An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 1990, pgs. 139 – 188
- Carr, David. *The Promise of Cultural Institutions*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003, pgs. 69–108

- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916, pgs. 179-184
- Hein, George. *Learning in the Museum*. New York: Routledge, 1998, pgs. 14-40

### **Week Five: Debates/Schools of Thought in Object-Based Informal Learning**

Location: RISD Museum

Essential Questions: What are the different schools of thought in object-based informal learning today? What are the hot topics/debates? Should educators provide information about objects? Should educators use questions?

Class Format: We will debate the hot topics about pedagogy in the field today.

Readings:

- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000, pgs. 1-14, 177-204

#### **Debate over Information**

- Burnham, Rika and Elliot Kai-Kee. *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011, pgs. 112-125
- Rice, Danielle and Philip Yenawine, "A Conversation on Object-Centered Learning in Art Museums," *Curator AS*, No. 4 (2002), pgs. 289-301  
<http://www.vtshome.org/research/articles-other-readings>
- Barrett, Terry. "Interactive Touring in Art Museums: Constructing Meanings and Creating Communities of Understanding," *Visual Arts Research*, Vol. 34, No. 2, *Museum Education* (2008), pgs. 76-84
- Sollins, Susan. "Games Children Play: In Museums," *Art Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Spring, 1972), pgs. 271-275

#### **Debate over Questions**

- Burnham, Rika and Elliot Kai-Kee. *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011, pgs. 94-111
- Delamatre, Jackie. "Questioning the Questioning of Questions." *Art Museum Teaching*. Art Museum Teaching, 23 January 2015. Web.  
<http://artmuseumteaching.com/2015/01/23/questioning-the-questioning-of-questions/#comment-12974>

### **Week Six: Audiences in Informal Learning**

Location: RISD Museum



Essential Questions: How have ideas about informal learning evolved over time? How do they reflect social, political, and cultural contexts? When and how should we rethink old models?

Class Format: We will go on a tour of an historic house in Providence. We will discuss the experience in terms of our own learning as well as the readings on the history of informal learning. We will critique the experience with Linda Norris's work in mind. Finally, one third of the students will present their Program Assessment projects (5-7 min. each).

Readings:

- Hein, George. *Learning in the Museum*. New York: Routledge, 1998, pgs. 1 – 13.
- Kai-Kee, Elliot, "A Brief History of Teaching in the Art Museum," from *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011, pgs. 19-58.
- Hein, George. *Progressive Museum Practice: John Dewey and Democracy*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2012, selections TBD
- Norris, Linda. *The Uncatalogued Museum* blog. "Surrender the Chronology!" and "Imagine: Can Your Visitor Do It? Not Unless You Try" and "Seeing IS Believing: What Prototyping Can Do" and "Over-Estimate? Under-Estimate? What Do We Think of Our Visitors?"  
<http://uncatalogedmuseum.blogspot.com/search?q=stowe>

### **Week Eight: Goals of and Program Design for Informal Learning**

Location: Public Humanities seminar room or TBD: Boston Science Center, Roger Williams Zoo, or Providence Public Library

Essential Questions: How do program designs and pedagogical methodologies reflect our goals – and our institution's mission? How do our goals and missions affect outcomes – learning and affective?

Class Format: We will look at how different programs have been shaped by their institution's missions. We will consider how different goals – free play, democracy-building, life-long museum-going – can vastly alter teaching and program design. We will consider our ideal goals or missions for cultural institutions and experiment with changing program design accordingly. Finally, the second third of the students will present their Program Assessment projects (5-7 min. each).

Readings:

- Simon, Nina. *Participatory Museum*, Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010, pgs. i – 36
- Russell-Ciardi, Maggie. "The Museum as a Democracy-Building Institution: Reflections on the Shared Journeys Program at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (February 2008), pgs. 39 – 52
- Herz, Rebecca. "Schools and Museums: Goals for Students," *Museum Questions* blog, 2014,

<http://museumquestions.com/2015/01/19/schools-and-museums-goals-for-students/>

- Delamatre, Jackie. "But Will YOU Be Here: An Argument for Tours that Encourage Life-Long Museum-Going," *Museum Questions* blog, 2014. <http://museumquestions.com/2015/01/12/but-will-you-be-here-an-argument-for-tours-that-encourage-life-long-museum-going/>
- Bigelow, Bill. "How My Schooling Taught Me Contempt for the Earth," *Rethinking Schools*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Fall 1996).
- Marantz Henig, Robin. "Taking Play Seriously," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 17, 2008. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/magazine/17play.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/magazine/17play.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

### **Week Nine: Evaluation and Research in Informal Learning**

Location: Providence Children's Museum

Essential Questions: How do we evaluate teaching and learning? How do we measure learning? For instance, is it possible to learn anything from single-visit school field trips? Are affective outcomes even more important? How can individual educators evaluate their own practice (i.e. tools for reflection)?

Class Format: We will meet at the Providence Children's Museum where researchers there will tell us about their work measuring learning and how their research feeds into exhibition design. We will discuss other research methods – ranging from quasi-experimental to self-reflection. Finally, the last third of the students will present their Program Assessment projects (5-7 min. each).

Readings:

- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000, pgs. 149-75
- Hein, George. *Learning in the Museum*. New York: Routledge, 1998, pgs. 100 – 179

### **Case Study: School Programs**

- Kelly, Lynda. "Student Learning in Museums: What Do We Know," Art Museum Teaching blog, 2014. <http://artmuseumteaching.com/2014/11/19/student-learning-in-museums-what-do-we-know/>
- Kisida, Brian, Jay P. Greene, Daniel H. Bowen. "Art Makes You Smart," *The New York Times Magazine*, November 23, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/opinion/sunday/art-makes-you-smart.html>
- Downey, Stephanie, Jackie Delamatre, and Johanna Jones. "Measuring the Impact of Museum-School Programs: Findings and Implications for Practice," *Journal of Museum Education*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (June 1, 2007)

- Bowles, David. "Status Update: Facebook as a Reflection Tool." *Art Museum Teaching*. Art Museum Teaching, 5 January 2015. Web.  
<<http://artmuseumteaching.com/2015/01/05/status-update-facebook-as-a-reflection-tool/>>

### Research and Evaluation Methods

- Vagnone, Franklin, Deborah Ryan, and Olivia Cothren. "The Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums: Evaluation Methodology for Historic House Museums," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (May 2015)  
[https://twistedpreservation.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/tph3702\\_09\\_vagnone.pdf](https://twistedpreservation.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/tph3702_09_vagnone.pdf)
- Selections from Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean, ed. *The Educational Role of the Museum*, London: Routledge, 1994, pgs. 295-311

### Children's Museums

- Letourneau, Susan and Robin Meisner. "Using Research to Make Learning Through Play Visible," Hand to Hand.  
<http://www.childrensmuseums.org/images/Publications/H2HFall14Research.pdf>
- Posts on Providence Children's Museum research on this blog:  
<http://providencechildrensmuseum.blogspot.com/search/label/Learning%20About%20Learning>
- Association of Children's Museums' research agenda:  
<http://www.childrensmuseums.org/images/learningvalueresearchagenda.pdf>

### Week Ten: Social Justice and Informal Learning

Location: Public Humanities seminar room or TBD: New Urban Arts

Essential Questions: How does/should social justice inform facilitated informal learning?

Class Format: We will visit New Urban Arts where we will observe a program and discuss with the teachers and/or program managers the ways in which they are informed by social justice. We will discuss in terms of our readings.

Readings:

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum, 2005, pgs. 43-144
- Dewhurst, Marit. *Social Justice Art: A Framework for Activist Art Pedagogy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014, selections TBD

### Case Study: Ferguson

- "Joint Statement from Museum Bloggers and Colleagues on Ferguson and Related Events," 2014,  
<https://stevenlubar.wordpress.com/2014/12/11/joint-statement-from-museum-bloggers-and-colleagues-on-ferguson-and-related-events/>
- Herz, Rebecca. "Should museums respond to the grand jury verdicts in Ferguson and New York City?" Museum Questions blog, 2014,

<http://museumquestions.com/2014/12/08/should-museums-respond-to-the-grand-jury-verdicts-in-ferguson-and-new-york-city/>

## **Week Eleven: Informal Learning with Designed Facilitation**

Location: RISD Museum

Essential Questions: What kind of facilitated informal learning happens even without a human present? How can technology guide informal learning? How can it and can it not replace humans?

Class Format: We will experiment with the RISD Museum's technological interpretative materials, as well as explore apps and guides from other cultural institutions. We will also discuss how exhibits, spaces, and written guides can facilitate informal learning. We may experiment with visitor mapping to track learning in the museum's galleries.

Readings:

- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000, pgs. 69-134
- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. "The 95 Percent Solution: School is not where most Americans learn most of their science." *The American Scientist*, Vol. 98, No. 6, (November-December 2010).  
[http://www.upf.edu/pcstacademy/docs/The\\_95x\\_solution.pdf](http://www.upf.edu/pcstacademy/docs/The_95x_solution.pdf)
- Rui Olds, Anita. "Sending Them Home Alive," *The Educational Role of Museums*, ed. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, pgs. 332-336

### **Technology**

- Friday, Rebecca. "Looking Up, Looking Down: Designing Mobile Interpretation that Engages with Art," *Art Museum Teaching* blog, 2014.  
<http://artmuseumteaching.com/2014/10/22/looking-up-looking-down-designing-mobile-interpretation-that-engages-with-art/>
- Murawski, Mike. "Museums Un/Plugged: Are We Becoming Too Reliant on Technology?" *Art Museum Teaching* blog, 2013.  
<http://artmuseumteaching.com/2013/07/06/museums-unplugged-are-we-becoming-too-reliant-on-technology/>

## **Week Twelve: Teaching Practicum Presentations**

Location: RISD Museum

Class Format: Students will present their revised lessons in the galleries. We will discuss what we learned from these as well as lingering questions about teaching with objects. Where do students stand on the hot topics or debates in the field now that they have taught? How do they think teaching methodology should evolve in informal education?

### **Week Thirteen: Final Project Presentations**

Location: Center for Public Humanities Classroom

Class Format: Students will present their Partnership Projects. We will then reflect on the whole course – returning to our original reflections on informal learning. What has changed about our thinking? What has gotten more confusing? What has become clear? What questions would we like to pursue in the future?