

SYLLABUS

ARCH 554: HISTORIC SITE MANAGEMENT

Fall 2015 (3 units) Tuesdays 6:00 – 9:00 pm at The Gamble House, Pasadena

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Overview

Why do some historic house museums thrive while others struggle from one crisis to the next? Five decades of successful operation have shown that the Gamble House in Pasadena can serve as a useful paradigm for understanding practical strategies to identify, develop and manage viable historic sites. Learning objectives will include: developing a mission statement; creating a business plan and budget; strategic planning; interpretative strategies; understanding conservation issues and collections management; planning the visitor experience from the standpoint of infrastructure and volunteer engagement; funding strategies; developing a volunteer base; developing membership support; creating a public relations and marketing plan; launching retail sales; and other important operational concerns. Class sessions will take place at the Gamble House (Pasadena) and other historic houses in the area as noted below. This course will serve as an essential foundation for anyone interested in pursuing historic site management or administration.

Primary Texts:

Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* (AltaMira Press, 2007).

Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Alta Mira Press, 2002).

Susana Smith Bautista, *Museums in the Digital Age* (Alta Mira Press, 2014).

Barbara Levy, Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd and Susan Porter Schreiber, *Great Tours!: Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites* (Alta Mira Press, 2001).

Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press), expected publication Sept. 30, 2015.

Samantha Chmelik, *Museum and Historic Site Management: A Case Study Approach* (American Association of State and Local History), expected publication October 16, 2015.

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Prerequisite

Class participants will have taken Arch 549 or have demonstrated to the degree-program director (Prof. Sandmeier) or the instructor (Prof. Bosley) a basic understanding of historic site and preservation concepts.

The course consists of weekly class meetings, either at The Gamble House or at other sites as noted, with discussion of assigned readings and topical lectures. All readings and assignments for the following class session will be distributed in class weekly and will be posted on Blackboard. There will be three required field trips to other historic house museums during regular class sessions, with guest lecturers as noted.

While this syllabus is accurate as of the time of publication, speakers, readings and assignments are subject to revision as needed.

Assignments and Grades

Assignments will be distributed in class, and may be submitted via Blackboard (papers only), by email or by hand as hard copies.

Class participation/weekly reading: 10% of final grade.

Attendance at class session is required, and all students are expected to participate actively and contribute to class discussion with relevant questions and thoughtful observations. Weekly readings are important to developing useful classroom discussions, and so constitute a critical part of the course. Students are expected to understand the main concepts and themes that are touched upon in the readings. Students are also encouraged to follow blog discussions as directed. This can be a valuable “fly-on-the-wall” way to learn what historic site managers around the country are thinking. Each week, readings will be posted on Blackboard, and classes will begin with a discussion of the readings.

Quasi-weekly, short class assignments: 20% of final grade.

These short written assignments are handed out in class the week before they are due, and are posted on Blackboard.

Short paper #1: 20% of final grade.

Detailed information on this assignment will be distributed in Class #4 (September 17) and will be due at the beginning of Class #6 (October 1).

Short paper #2: 20% of final grade.

Detailed information on this assignment will be distributed in Class #11 (November 5) and will be due at the beginning of Class #13 (November 19).

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Take-Home Final Exam: 30% of final grade.

The final exam for the course will be a take-home, written exam, the assignment for which will be distributed in Class # 14 (November 26) and must be submitted by email no later than Tuesday, December 17, at 9:00 p.m. The exam will consist of a multiple-choice section and an essay section.

Logistics

Attendance: More than one unexcused absence will result in a failing grade for the class. Medical or family emergencies are the only excuses acceptable for late assignments, make-up exams, or the granting of incomplete grades.

Students may be excused for recognized religious holidays (per the University's list at http://www.usc.edu/programs/religious_life/calendar/). Any conflicts must be discussed at the beginning of the semester so that the matter can be resolved before the withdraw deadline if the conflict is not resolvable in an acceptable academic manner.

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by the instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Class Schedule

Tuesday, August 25, 2015 (Class #1)

Introduction: Tour of the Gamble House

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In this first class session we will introduce ourselves to each other, discuss the objectives of the course, and take an in-depth tour of The Gamble House, a National Historic Landmark administered by USC in a joint agreement with the City of Pasadena and the Gamble family.

Tuesday, September 1, 2015 (Class #2)

Co-stewardship: The Gamble House, USC and the City of Pasadena

In this session we will examine the Gamble House gift agreement of 1966, which lays out the distinct, legally binding roles of the University, the City of Pasadena, and the Gamble family in overseeing the quasi-public role of The Gamble House in the community. Reading for next week: Chapter 1 in *New Solutions for House Museums* (NSHM).

Tuesday, September 8, 2015 (Class #3)

What is the "Right Stuff" for a Historic Site?

This session will take a critical look at attributes essential to the viability of a historic house museum, including infrastructure, personnel, and financing. We will also identify potential flaws that can cause even the most promising historic sites to fail as institutions. Reading for next week: Chapters 2 and 3 in NSHM.

Tuesday, September 15, 2015 (Class #4)

"What Are We Doing Here, Anyway?": The Importance of the Mission Statement

In this session we will study the importance of the institutional mission statement—why it is critical that it be broad enough to allow operational flexibility, yet focused enough to provide guidance when faced with important choices. **Assignment distributed: Short paper #1 (The House as Museum).** (Due at next class session.)

Reading for next week: Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of "Interpreting Historic House Museums" by Jessica Foy Donnelly, and the introductory pages of "Great Tours!" by Barbara Levy, et al.

Tuesday, September 22, 2015 (Class #5)

The Story

This session will look at interpretive strategies for developing engaging narratives that can bring a site to life and make the visitor feel connected to the story. Reading for next week: Chapter 4 in NSHM (you may also want to review Ch. 3: "Legal and Ethical Issues" in NSHM).

Tuesday, September 29, 2015 (Class #6)

Time is Money: Developing a Volunteer Corps and Membership Base

Most historic sites are not viable, or even particularly interesting, without a solid volunteer and membership base. Volunteers bring fresh enthusiasm that staff may gradually lose over time, and members provide financial support while enjoying the company of like-minded

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people. We will examine ways to keep both constituencies engaged and excited about their commitments. No reading for this week.

Tuesday, October 6, 2015 (Class #7)

Toward a Better Business Plan

This session will examine economic and operational models that have proven to work well, and not so well, for historic sites. We will also cover ethical standards and best practices. Reading for next week: Chapters 4 and 5 in HHM (Butcher-Youngmans). For optional, more in-depth reading on interpretation see *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, by Jessica Foy Donnelly.

Tuesday, October 13, 2015 (Class #8)

Forecasting The Needs of a Future Historic Site

In this class session we will discuss the broader themes touched on in the course so far (stewardship of a site, its history and contents; programming; funding, etc.) as they apply to the promised gift to USC of an architecturally significant historic house still occupied by the donors. Class session to take place at the King Residence (Buff and Hensman, 1979), 5-minutes from the Gamble House.

Tuesday, October 20, 2015 (Class #9)

Programming: Education Plans, Changing Exhibits, Flexible Spaces

This session will be held at the R. M. Schindler House (1924-25), 835 North Kings Road, West Hollywood, and will be led by Kimberli Meyer, Executive Director of the MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House.

Tuesday, October 27, 2015 (Class #10)

Conservation and Collections Management

Perspectives on how to catalog and care for a collection whose most valuable object is the house itself. Guest presenter will be John Griswold, Principal, Griswold Conservation Associates. **Short Paper #1 due today.**

Tuesday, November 3, 2015 (Class #11)

In My Backyard: A Modernist House in a Neighborhood Setting

We'll examine the Van der Leeuw (VDL) Research house designed in 1932 by Richard J. Neutra. After suffering a fire, the house was largely rebuilt beginning in 1963 by Neutra and his son, Dion, thus raising interesting issues around period(s) of significance, historic integrity, and interpretation. The preservation of the house is now overseen by Cal Poly Pomona's College of Environmental Design. The session will be led by Sarah Lorenzen, chair of the Architecture Department at Cal Poly Pomona, who will discuss how

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contemporary art interventions have brought new audiences to the site. (Reading for next week: chapters 2 and 3 in “Museums in the Digital Age” by Susana Bautista.)

Tuesday, November 10, 2015 (Class #12)

Getting the Word Out: Marketing in the Age of Pinterest

In this session we will examine the marketing role of websites, social media, blogs, media relations, and their inter-connectedness with programming and scholarship. **Assignment distributed: Short paper #2 (Non-profit Solvency)**

Tuesday, November 17, 2015 (Class #13)

When Things Go Horribly Wrong: Emergency Procedures, Disaster Plans, and Security

We'll discuss how to prepare for an emergency, and what to do during and after an incident, with focus on earthquake, fire, flood, theft and vandalism.

Tuesday, November 24, 2015 (Class #14)

The Power of Passion: Why Even The Best Narratives Will Fail Without It

The most beautiful and noteworthy structure, the most gorgeous grounds, the most engaging story, and the best-funded endowment may not be enough to save the historic site that does not also have people with passion behind it, and in front of it, for that matter.

What is this kind of passion, and how does an institution keep it alive? **Short paper #2 is due today. The final exam will be distributed today, and will be due (via email) on December 17 by 9:00 p.m.**

Tuesday, December 1, 2015 (Class #15)

Retail sales: “related income” options for historic sites

This session will look at the retail potential of historic sites, not only in supplementing operational income but to extend the reach of a site's ‘brand’ and image. To stimulate discussion we will visit the Gamble House Bookstore, adjacent to the main residence.

Tuesday, December 8, 2015 (No Class—Study Week)

Tuesday, December 15, 2015 (Final Exam to be submitted by email by 9:00 p.m.)

Revised: July 31, 2015