This course introduces students to the methodologies and issues involved in public history with an emphasis on creating interpretive historical exhibits using the Mexican Revolution of 1910. November 2010 marks the centennial of the beginning of the Mexican Revolution, an historic event that helped shape the history of Mexico, the borderlands, and the Ciudad Juárez-El Paso region. El Paso played a critical role in the Revolution. Planning is underway, both in México and the United States, for commemorations of the Revolution and museum exhibits represent a significant component of these remembrances. During the fall semester students will begin developing exhibits focusing on the Mexican Revolution in this region. The proposed exhibits would be both inside the walls of a museum and possibly out on the streets, with self-guided walking tours through downtown, perhaps the projection of historical images and/or public art on some buildings, perhaps building on the model of the Museo Urbano in South El Paso, which uses building walls to mount historic photographs. Students in History 5304 will be eligible to continue working on this exhibit through an internship class in the Spring semester of 2010.
The following description of the exhibit, taken from a grant application, will provide us guidance:

Using David Romo’s prize-winning Ringside Seat to a Revolution as a roadmap, the exhibition will focus on the spectacular, cultural and social developments brought about by the Mexican Revolution on the U.S.-Mexico border and their impact on the border today. The exhibition will be organized around the interrelated themes of spectacle, cosmopolitanism, laboratory, and race.

This 7,500 square-foot bilingual exhibition will open at both the El Paso Museum of History and the Centennial Museum at the University of Texas at El Paso in November 2010 and will run for seven months. The EPMH will incorporate a substantial portion of the exhibit into its permanent exhibition space. It is being designed by a team of scholars at UTEP, in collaboration with professionals at the two museums; UTEP graduate students will participate in its development and implementation. The exhibition will include photographs, archival documents, physical and digitized printed matter (maps, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, books); memoirs and oral histories; film footage; music; and objects. It will also include a GIS mapping component that will highlight key areas of downtown El Paso and show change over time. Beginning in the summer of 2011, a 2,500 square-foot version of the exhibit will travel to selected venues.

The El Paso version of the exhibition will also capitalize on the city’s built environment, which in its own way served as an arena for the Revolution. A self-guided walking tour will lead visitors to key sites in historic downtown. Historical images and public art will be projected on selected building walls. The exhibition will also be accompanied by a website with digitized archival and printed material on the Revolution in the UTEP library’s Special Collections, and education initiatives including teacher workshops and the creation of curriculum.

A note about the class: This is a particularly large graduate class (20 students) and because it is public history, the work will be highly collaborative. We will work together in teams but we will also work in partnership with museum staff and community members. This will require flexibility, patience, and thoughtfulness. In addition, students in this class bring a wealth of diverse knowledge and experiences, ranging from historical research to museum curation to visual art and creative writing. In my years as public historian at UTEP, students have consistently told me that the class is challenging because it requires both scholarly work but also intense organizational skills in creating the capstone project. The chair of the history department, Dr. Paul Edison, will also collaborate with us on developing the project.
Contact information for Dr. Leyva

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Course objectives

In this course, students will develop (or continue to develop)

○ knowledge and skills of professional standards & ethics of museum work
○ archival research skills (including identifying appropriate visual and textual elements for an exhibit)
○ critical thinking skills, particularly around representation and presentation of history
○ working effectively in collaborative teams
○ a solid foundation for understanding museums and their role/ function in contemporary society

Class assignments and grading

Class participation and preparation (20%)

Participation and preparation will be evaluated on regular class attendance, the quality of discussion, and the completion of a weekly 2-page paper. The paper should be typed, double-spaced and proofread.

Weekly papers are intended to promote thought and discussion. They should not summarize the readings. Rather, they should focus on particular issues and questions. What significant arguments does the author raise? How do you respond to them? What questions does the reading raise? What did the author do well? What would you improve? This is intended to be a reflection paper rather than a summary.

Weekly papers must be turned in by 5 p.m. the Monday before class. You may leave your paper in my mailbox in the Department of History office (LART 320). Please do not email me the paper—I won't accept it.
There will be several weeks dedicated to project development where we will not read. I still expect a 2-page paper during these weeks, but the paper should focus on your activities that week. In addition to describing your activities, please take the time to reflect on how your tasks relate to the questions and issues raised in class.

I expect papers to be typed, double-spaced, written in proper style, grammatically correct, stapled and on time. Papers that do not follow these basic expectations will receive lower grades.

Leading class discussion (10%)

Once during the semester you will be responsible for leading the class discussion on the readings. You should come to class prepared with a list of at least five discussion questions focusing on the arguments and issues raised in that week’s reading. You will provide me a copy of the questions at the beginning of class. (You will still be responsible for the 2-page paper as well.)

Museum exhibit evaluation due by 5 p.m. on Monday, September 28 (20%)

For this assignment you will visit any museum in the El Paso area.

The 4 to 5-page review must contain the following elements: a description of the exhibit, a discussion of what you believe to be the goals of the exhibit, and a critique of the exhibit. The critique should address whether the exhibit achieved its goals as well as specific suggestions for improvement. Among the questions to consider when visiting the exhibit:

1. Are the goals or mission statement displayed anywhere?
2. Who do you think is the audience for this exhibit?
3. Does the exhibit tell a story? What is it? Whose story is it?
4. How well do the artifacts and text work together to tell the story?
5. Is the exhibit historically accurate?
6. What is missing?
7. What does the exhibit do well?
8. What is your response to the visual aspects of the exhibit?

You may want to refer to issues of *The Public Historian* (available in our library) for examples of exhibit reviews. The questions listed above also represent important questions for the class to consider as we develop plans for our Mexican Revolution exhibit.

Museums in El Paso include:

The El Paso Museum of History
[www.elpasotexas.gov/history](http://www.elpasotexas.gov/history)

Museo Mayachen
[http://www.mujerobrera.org/mercadomayapan.html](http://www.mujerobrera.org/mercadomayapan.html)
Centennial Museum, UTEP  
www.museum.utep.edu

El Paso Holocaust Museum & Study Center  
http://www.elpasoholocaustmuseum.org/index.sstg

El Paso Museum of Archeology  
http://www.elpasotexas.gov/arch_museum/default.asp

Magoffin Home State Historical Site  

National Border Patrol Museum  
http://www.borderpatrolmuseum.com/

There are others, as well. You may choose any history related museum in the area, including Las Cruces and Ciudad Juárez.


Museum exhibit project (50%)

The capstone project of this course will be the conceptualization, research and design of at least two historical exhibits focusing on the Mexican Revolution and El Paso. This project will allow us to work collaboratively, using the talents, skills, interests, and passions that each of us bring to this class. The exhibits are scheduled to open in the fall of 2010, the centennial of the Revolution.

The museum exhibit project will be comprised of various phases, including:

1. Brainstorming and creating a written document that includes our ideas about our audience, the story we want to tell, and how we believe we can best tell the story.
2. Creating a vision statement for the exhibits
3. Researching appropriate archives & collections for photographs and artifacts
4. Drafting a walk-through. (You will be provided an example.)
5. Finalizing plans for the exhibits.

Required online resource

Please look at the website of the American Museum Association, http://www.aam-us.org/

Read the code of ethics for museums at http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/index.cfm

Required readings


Weekly schedule (subject to change)

In this course we will read both conceptual/theoretical works as well as practical/logistical studies focusing on museum exhibits. The logic of the reading schedule is that we will begin with the book that provided the inspiration for the exhibits, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution*, followed by a very practical and logistical guide on how to develop historical exhibits, *Exhibit Makeovers*. This workbook will provide us a framework for creating work teams so that we can start moving forward with the research. We will then turn to several books that focus on issues of the role of museums, as well as the power and the politics of museum representation. Then we will return to another hands-on type of book, *Ideas and Images*, which will highlight the steps towards producing an outstanding exhibit. By that point, we will be well into our research and can refine our ideas regarding what the exhibit will be like. We will end the reading portion of the class by discussing a book on the contemporary role of museums.

**Week 1: August 25**- Meet at the El Paso Museum of History.
Sue Taylor, education curator, will give us a curatorial tour of the museum.
We will assign discussion leaders for the six books.
Read the AAM Code of Ethics for Museums (link above).

**Week 2: September 1**- Read Romo’s *Ringside Seat to a Revolution*.
Field trip to the Centennial Museum on campus. We will walk from the classroom.

**Week 3: September 8**- Read *Exhibit Makeovers*
We will make a work plan for the rest of the semester, including creating teams and a timeline.

**Week 4: September 15**- Read Karp’s *Museums and Communities*, chapters 1-10
Field trip to the Museo Mayachem. We will meet there. It is on the corner of Myrtle and Walnut. Meet in the large room with tables and a stage.

**Week 5: September 22**- Read Karp’s *Museums and Communities*, chapters 11-16

**Week 6: September 29**- Team meetings
Museum critique due by 5 p.m. on Monday, September 28. Leave in my mailbox.

**Week 7: October 6**- Team meetings

**Week 8: October 13**- Read Karp’s *Museum Frictions*, pp. 267-535
Week 9: October 20- Read Karp's *Museum Frictions*, pp. 1-256

Week 10: October 27- Team meetings

Week 11: November 3- Team meetings

Week 12: November 10- Read Ames, *Ideas and Images*

Week 13: November 17- Team meetings

Week 14: November 24- Read Sandell's *Museums, Society, Inequality*

Week 15: December 1- Final presentation by teams

Finals week: December 8- Final reflection paper due by 5 p.m.

Important UTEP dates- Fall Semester 2009

Classes begin August 24

Labor Day (University Closed) Sept. 7

Course drop deadline Oct. 30
Thanksgiving Holiday (University Closed)  Nov. 26-27

Last day of classes and complete withdrawal from University  Dec. 3
Dead Day  Dec. 4