

ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS: MUSEUM QUEERIES (PAPER)

Grade weight: This assignment is worth 15% of your overall course grade.

Assignment length: 6-8 pages or approx. 1500-2000 words

Due date: January 10, 2018 (in class)

Description: The framing and representation of 2S+LGBTQ lives and issues in museums is significant for the way that museums contribute to public discourse on historical and contemporary issues. Drawing on key concepts and readings from the course, this assignment asks you to carry out a critical analysis of one exhibit (or more than one in conversation) on display at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) that deals with “queer content.” A class visit to the Museum for a guided “Pride Tour” will provide some context for your paper. This assignment will also serve as a jumping off point for the development of your Queering the Museum Audio Guide assignments. Please limit your use of external sources.

Assignment Criteria:

1. Choose from the content currently on display at the CMHR one exhibit (or potentially more than one “in conversation”) as your paper’s main object(s) of analysis. Give a **brief description** of the exhibit(s), referring to your museum ethnography prompt sheet notes and/or photos taken while on the “Pride Tour” and/or subsequent visits.
2. How are 2S+LGBTQ lives and issues **framed and represented** in the exhibit(s) through the selective use of objects, images, narratives, language/terminology, text labels, sounds, interactive technologies, placement/location in the museum collection, and/or other techniques of communication and display?
3. (How) does **intersectionality** (ala Roberts and others) operate here? In other words, are sex, gender, and sexuality inter-implicated or interwoven with considerations of race, nation, indigeneity, citizenship, colonialism, migration, diaspora, etc. in the exhibit(s)?
4. Bring a couple of key **course concepts** to bear upon your analysis of the exhibit(s). How do these concepts help you notice or understand the exhibit(s) in ways that potentially deepen common-sense (surface level) interpretations, and challenge hegemonic ideas about queer lives and experiences?
5. You may attach to your assignment relevant illustrations (i.e. photo images, transcripts of exhibit labels, museum takeaways) that you feel help give context to or describe your object of analysis. These will not be counted in your assignment’s page length but will constitute an “Appendix.” Please use in-text citations and include a Bibliography or Works Cited, formatted according to MLA, APA or Chicago Manual Style.

MUSEUM ETHNOGRAPHY PROMPT SHEET

These are some general “prompts” to help you navigate the museum. They are by no means exhaustive, but are meant as starting points for collecting observations toward your analysis of exhibits.

1. Museums of national scope/scale typically have multiple exhibits housed within several different gallery spaces. Familiarize yourself with the overarching themes and physical layout of the museum and its various galleries (an introductory tour, a museum map, and/or a visit to the museum’s website in advance of your in-person visit are all useful toward this).
2. Make special note of a few exhibits/displays that you are most interested in during the tour. Notice which galleries they are housed within, and the overarching theme of those particular galleries. Also notice where and how the exhibits are positioned in relation to one another and in relation to the museum’s architecture.
3. What elements make up the content of the exhibit(s) you have chosen to focus on for your assignment? I.e. objects, images, narratives, language/terminology, text labels, sounds, digital screens, and/or other techniques of display? (tip: take notes with a pen and paper while you are visiting the exhibit. If photography is permitted, take photos with your digital camera/smartphone to use as reminders after you leave the museum).
4. What is the general “story” of the exhibits, and how are the above elements used to frame and tell the story?
5. What particular stories are being told about 2S+LGBTQ lives and issues? Whose voice/voices are used to frame and tell these stories, and how?
6. How are visitors invited to interact with the exhibit(s) (or one another)? What is the museum guide’s role in facilitating this interaction? From what you observed, how do visitors (including yourself) actually interact with the exhibit(s) (or one another)?
7. Do your chosen exhibits have on-line versions, or any digital applications (downloadable app’s, audio guides, etc.) that allow you to access them virtually? How do they augment or extend the experience of site-specific version? Did you notice or collect any other exhibition “takeaways,” (e.g. brochures, souvenirs)? What do they communicate?
8. What features of the exhibit(s) did you find most/least engaging and why?
9. What did you learn that was new or noteworthy?
10. In general, do you think the exhibit was effective? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
11. What are the most significant impressions and/or feelings you are left with from the exhibits and your visit to the museum?