Notes about the Midterm Project: Museum Review

By mid-semester, you will be asked to visit one of the following museums: the Field Museum, the Art Institute, and/or the Oriental Institute (at the University of Chicago). All three museums contain exhibits pertaining to this course. Your goal is to select one exhibit, look through it thoroughly, read all of the literature available at the exhibit, and write a review of your visit. The review should be approximately 5-8 pages and include the place and date of your encounter, a description of the exhibit (as complete as possible), a researched discussion of two or three artifacts and how they pertain to this course, and your reaction to it. Your reaction should include what you feel the exhibit does well in presenting the culture, what it could do better, what you particularly liked and disliked about the exhibit (which is not the same as what they do well or poorly), and whether or not the exhibit contributed to your own knowledge of the culture. If there is enough interest, we will try to schedule some group outings for Saturday visits to the museums; we might be able to get group rates.

The Assignment
Your essay will be written as one coherent piece, with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. However, the paper will be divided into two sections: a description of the exhibit and a review of the exhibit:

• In your description (approximately 2-4 pages), first give a general description of the whole exhibit: what kinds of pieces are included, how are they organized, etc.? Then select two or three specific objects to discuss in more detail. Fully describe the objects and look up their excavation history, cultural contexts, etc. The best place to begin your research is the museum website, but you may also look them up on the web and in art history textbooks. Some of the objects may be difficult to find on-line, so have at least five to ten objects that you want to focus on and then choose the two or three you find the most information about. Make sure you identify the objects you talk about, even in the more general description. Include names, dates, and specific details (not just “a mummy” or “a statue of a god”). Be very descriptive. Stress the relevance of the exhibit (particularly of your two or three special pieces) to topics presented in class and/or in the text. Show how your exhibit relates to what we are doing in class. Cite pages from the Benton and DiYanni textbook or other assigned e-reserve, web, xeroxed readings when appropriate.

• In the review component (approximately 3-4 pages), stress what you think was done well and what you think could have been done better. Do this with an eye as to how you plan to design and organize your own exhibit. Give specific examples and explain why it was done well or could have been done better. Be very specific.

Some General Guidelines

1. Important Reminder: Choose only one exhibit (not the entire museum), and if the exhibit you like isn’t directly covered in class, if any material about it shows up in the textbook, it is appropriate for a museum review.
2. **Do not plagiarize!** If you quote or paraphrase any information from a book, article, brochure, website, etc., be sure to give credit by citing the author and page, using quotes, and attaching a Works Cited page. Please note that the dates and any information provided about an artifact on one of the museum placards or wall text that you use must be cited. See below for specifics on citing museums.

3. **This is a formal academic essay.** Poor, non-college level writing detracts from your effectiveness and will affect your grade. The review should be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides.

   Please note that if you use Microsoft Office, the word processing program sets the default margins to 1.25 inches; this is not standard in MLA format. To change to one-inch margins click on the “File” icon, scroll down to page set-up, click on it, and the margins menu should come up. If it doesn't, click on the margins tab in the upper right hand corner of the pop-up screen. When you are in the margins menu, the left and right margins are 1.25 inches; click on the down arrow keys located to the right of each set margin until the margins say 1 inch.

   One other important piece of information: the college computers have not updated to Microsoft Office 2007. If you use the newer programs, you must print your materials at home. I will not be able to download it for you here.

4. Include with your review a ticket stub, receipt, exhibit brochures or some other tangible evidence that you actually attended.

**Museums You May Visit**

1. **The Art Institute of Chicago**
   Intersection of Michigan and Adams (111 S. Michigan Ave.)
   Enter at the Michigan Ave. entrance (The Columbus Avenue Entrance is closed due to construction).

   Hours: MTWF: 10:30a.m.-5:00 p.m.; R: 10:30 a.m.- 8:00 p.m.; Sat, Sun: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

   Admission: $7 for students (bring your I.D.); Admission price is suggested. You may pay what you wish, but you must pay something. Free to all on Thursday evenings from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Free to Art Institute Members at all times.

   For information: 312-443-3600 or www.artic.edu

   The Art Institute has a classical collection of Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman art on the first floor (Columbus Drive side); there are also various medieval exhibits on the decorative arts and armor, but they vary throughout the museum (keep in mind that anything prior to 1500 is appropriate for this course). Be sure to pick up a map when you enter. Using the museum website, find out more about the art.

2. **The Field Museum**
   1400 S. Lake Shore Drive
   Hours: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. every day after Labor Day

   Admission: General Pass: $7 for students with ID ($6 if a student and a Chicago resident). Gold Pass: $14 for students with ID ($13 if a student and a Chicago resident). Platinum Pass: $17 for students with ID ($16 if a student and a Chicago resident). Free to members everyday. Discounts are available on select Mondays and Tuesdays from September 10th through November 27th (See website for specific dates).
The Field Museum has a permanent Egyptian exhibit, *Inside Ancient Egypt*, based on the construction of an Old Kingdom Mastaba (the General Pass is required for this one); however, if you want to explore the Ancient Americas, which is the only other exhibit appropriate for this course, you will need the Gold Pass.

3. The Oriental Institute
   University of Chicago
   1155 East 58th St.

   Hours: T, R, F, S: 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; W: 10:00 a.m.-8:30 p.m.; Sun: 12:00-6:00 p.m.; closed Mondays

   Admission is free, but a suggested donation of $5 for adults and $2 for children under 12 is appreciated.

   For information: 773-702-9524 or [http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/default.html](http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/default.html)

   There are permanent exhibits on Assyria, Anatolia, Ancient Israel, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, and Nubia. There is also a special exhibit, which would be appropriate for this course, “Daily Life Ornamented: The Medieval Persian City Of Rayy” (through October 14th). This exhibit “presents the distinctive artistic traditions of Rayy, an Islamic city located at today’s Tehran, renowned for its famous glazed ceramics and its prominent position at the crossroads of major trade routes in Iran” (OI: Website).

   For information on trains and buses to and in Chicago: 312-836-7000.

   **NOTE:** Remember to take a notebook and your Midterm Assignment when you visit a museum. And remember to keep your receipt and any brochures from the museum to attach to your log. Take specific notes on the pieces/exhibits you plan to write on in your entries.

**Citation Guidelines**

When citing a museum exhibit, please use the following designations for in-text and block citation:

- **Museum Pamphlet:** (abbreviated title of museum, colon, pamphlet): (Field: Pamphlet)
- **Museum Placard:** (abbreviated title of museum, colon, placard): (Field: Placard)
- **Museum Wall text:** (abbreviated title of museum, colon, wall text): (Field: Wall Text)
- **Museum Website:** (abbreviated title of museum, colon, web): (Field: Web)

It is important to remember that the composition dates of pieces and any information you took from placards, pamphlets, or wall text must be cited in the body of your essay even if you write the information in your own words. Any citations from other sources should be cited using the guidelines set forth in the blue MLA handout I have distributed.

When doing your works cited page, you must cite the museum as a source as well. Use the following format for citing the museum:

“Title of Exhibit.” Title of Museum. Address of Museum. Date of visit.

Look at the following example:

All other works cited citations should follow the examples outlined in the blue MLA handout.

Due Date and Grading Criteria

This project will be due Friday, April 4th (or earlier if you wish). I will evaluate the review based on how clearly and how accurately you describe the exhibit, how well you describe and research your two/three special objects, how well you present your evidence for your critique, and the general quality of your writing (see note below for an important exception). The assignment is worth 50 points. You will lose points for the following:

- Papers that do NOT have one-inch margins will cost you 2.5 points.
- Papers WITHOUT numbered pages will cost you 2.5 points.
- NO Works Cited Page will cost you 5 points
- Citations must be accurate. Using the MLA inconsistently or poorly will cost you at least 7.5 points. If you do not use the MLA at all, you will lose 15 points.

You may think me obsessive or picky, but attention to even the small details is important. Surgeons who miss that one speck of dust on their skin when they are scrubbing for surgery could kill their patients. These issues I mention may not be as critical, but they are important and should not be ignored.

Additionally, I am not your editor. The paper must be carefully proofread and checked for spelling, typographical errors, punctuation, and major grammatical issues before you submit it. Do not rely on spell-check or grammar-check; they are not always accurate, and they won’t notice if you are using the wrong form of a word (e.g., to, too, two; where, were, wear; their, there, they’re; etc.). Any paper with more than five (5) grammatical errors in a single paragraph will be returned ungraded. You will be given approximately twenty-four (24) hours to revise it for a reduced grade; I will take approximately five (5) points off your grade.