

MUSE E-123 – Visitor Studies  
Spring 2004  
Instructors: Alana Parkes and Christine Reich

**Location and time** (unless otherwise announced)

**Room:** Sever Hall 112

**Time:** Wednesday, 5:30 to 7:30pm (Please note that some classes may take place off-site)

**Description**

Exploration of the history and current status of research and evaluation studies in museums and other cultural and educational settings. Topics will include survey of research and evaluation methodologies, history of the application of evaluation techniques to museums, analytical approaches to interpreting results, case studies, and institutional accountability.

**Instructors**

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**Required Text** (available at the Coop)

Diamond, J. (2002). *Practical Evaluation Guide: Tools for Museums and Other Informal Educational Settings*. Alta Mira Press. 192 pgs.

**Recommend Text** (available at the Coop)

Dierking, L.D. & Pollock, W. (1998). *Questioning Assumptions: An Introduction to Front-End Studies in Museums*. Washington DC: Association of Science-Technology Centers. 131 pgs.

**Overview**

During the class students will work in small teams to conduct a summative evaluation of a museum exhibition. Starting from the education goals, they will develop evaluation goals in consultation with the exhibit developers (where available). They will decide what methods will be appropriate to get the desired

results, and develop the instruments to collect the data. Each student will be responsible for one method of evaluation but will help collect the data for the other team members. Each student will then analyze all of the data collected for their method. Students will share their analysis with the team to incorporate relevant information into their final report.

## Syllabus

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker/ Place (if not Sever 112)</b>	<b>Assignments due &amp; Readings</b>
Feb. 4	Course Overview & Intro to Visitor studies	Christine Reich & Alana Parkes	
Feb. 11	Setting evaluation goals	Christine	Read: Diamond chpts.1 & 2; and two summative evaluations.
Feb. 18	In the field practice	Museum of Science (starts at 5:00 PM)	Read: exhibition educational goals; Diamond chpt. 3; Patton chpt. 4.
Feb. 25	Setting goals with the developers	Ed Rodley & Maureen McConnell	<b>Due: Draft evaluation goals and questions</b> Read: Diamond chpts. 4-6.
Mar. 3	Observing Visitors & Ethics	Alana	Read: CARE & VSA Ethics (reference coming); TBA.
Mar. 10	Writing questions & Ethics	Lynn Baum	<b>Due: Literature review</b> Read: Fink chpts 2&3; Dierking & Pollock chpts. TBA.
Mar. 17	Interviewing & In-class work reviewing instruments and protocols	Alana & Christine	<b>Due: Draft evaluation protocol and instruments</b> Read: Doering TBA; Serrell TBA.
Mar. 24	Conducting evaluations with diverse populations	Christine	<b>Due: Final protocol and instruments</b> Read: Gill; TBA.
Mar. 31	Spring Break — no class		
Apr. 7	Getting it done! On-site data collection	Museum of Science (flexible schedule) Office hours 5-7	
Apr. 14	Analyzing data	Susan Sunbury	<b>Due: Preliminary raw data</b> Read: Serrell & Solston

			chpt. 7
Apr. 21	Discussion of data	Christine & Alana	<b>Due: Final raw data</b>
Apr. 28	Writing evaluation reports	Christine & Alana	Read: Diamond chpt. 8
May 5	History of visitor studies in museums	TBA	<b>Due: Preliminary data analysis</b>
May 12	Summary of project findings	Christine & Alana	
May 19	Course review	Christine & Alana	<b>Due: Final project</b>

### Assignments

February 25 – Draft evaluation goals and questions due

Based on your reading of the exhibit goals write up a draft of the goals and questions of the evaluation. This draft will be a starting point for an in-class discussions with the exhibit developer about the exhibit goals. 1–2 pages.

March 10 – Literature Review due

Create an annotated bibliography summarizing 5 research references relevant to your evaluation. Bibliography will be copied and distributed to class as a reference. Annotations should include: Article citation, type of evaluation or study, purpose, methods used, sample size, and a summary of results 3–5 pages.

March 17 – Draft evaluation protocol and instruments due

Bring draft versions of your data collection instruments for testing and revision in class. 2–3 pages.

March 24 – Final evaluation protocol and instruments due

Bring copies of your instruments to distribute to your team members. 2–3 pages, multiple copies.

April 14 – Preliminary raw data due

Bring in the data you've collected so far to begin to look at analysis.

April 21 – Final raw data due

Bring in all data collected for your teammates.

May 5 – Preliminary data analysis review due

Using data analysis techniques, evaluate your data. Bring your results to class to share with your team

May 19 – Final project due

Final evaluation should include: evaluation goals, protocol and instruments, summary of findings, analysis of data, relevant charts and graphs, review of relevant literature.... Include findings from team members where appropriate.

### **Grades:**

Draft evaluation goals and questions: 5%  
Final evaluation protocol and instruments: 10%  
Literature review: 15%  
Final project: 35%  
Being a reliable team member: 15%  
Class participation: 20%

### **Recommended Readings (Publications on Reserve)**

Dierking, L.D. & Pollock, W. (1998). *Questioning Assumptions: An Introduction to Front-End Studies in Museums*. Washington DC: Association of Science-Technology Centers.

Hein, G. (1998). *Learning in the museum*. London: Routledge.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Screven, C. (1999). *Visitor Studies Bibliography and Abstracts*. Chicago, IL: Screven & Associates.

Serrell, B. (1998). *Paying attention: Visitors and museum exhibitions*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums.

Taylor, S. (1991). *Try it! Improving exhibits through formative evaluation*. Washington, DC: Association of Science-Technology Centers.

Tufte, E. R. (2001). *Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press.

### **Bibliography of Handouts**

Doering, Z. (1999). The Role of the Interviewer in Survey Research. In Borun, M. & Korn, R., (Eds.) and Adams, R. (Series Ed.). *Introduction to Museum Evaluation*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums. pp. 18–25.

Fink, A & Kosecoff, J. (1998). *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Chapters 2 & 3: The Survey Form:

Questions, Scales, and Appearance & Getting It Together: Some Practical Concerns, pp. 9–38.

Gill, C. J. (1999). Invisible Ubiquity: The Surprising Relevance of Disability Issues in Evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 20(2): 279-289.

Nichols, S. K. (Compiler) & Adams, R. (Series Ed.). (1999). *Visitor Surveys: A Users Manual*. Chapter 6: Training Data Collectors, pp. 59–68.

Patton, M. Q. (1987). *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. Chapter 4: Fieldwork and Observation, pp. 70–107.

PERG (1996). Investigate! Summative Evaluation Report. Cambridge, MA: Program Evaluation and Research Group, Lesley College. Unpublished.

Serrell, B. & Sulston, I. (2001, Summer). In Search of the Illusive Bimodal Distribution. *Visitor Studies Today!*, 4(2): pp. 4–9.

Serrell, B. (1998). *Paying attention: Visitors and museum exhibitions*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums. pp. TBA