

Graduate Academic Certificate in Art Museum Education

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General Summary

The Graduate Academic Certificate in Art Museum Education resides in the Department of Art Education and Art History at the University of North Texas. This program is open to all graduate students at UNT or those with 12 hours of post-baccalaureate courses or a previously earned Master's or doctoral degree.

Mission

The mission of the Graduate Academic Certificate in Art Museum Education is to provide outstanding professional training to prepare postbaccalaureate students for careers in art museum education.

About the Certificate Program

In the GAC program, students engage in coursework and experiential learning to build the skills and knowledge needed in today's art museums. The Certificate responds to both industry demands and the educational standards of the field of art museum education, creating a student who is professional, thoughtful, and curious about the world. This paper is a brief explanation of the program.

Goals of the Graduate Academic Certificate in Art Museum Education

Program Goals: The GAC program gives students a holistic grounding in art museum education best practices with a focus on teaching and creating programs for visitors. The coordinator promotes a visitor-centered, inclusive, and socially-engaged approach to art museum education through targeted readings, discussions, and experiences with museum professionals who employ recognized best practices in the field.

Student Goals: Through coursework, internships, lectures, guest speakers, and museum visits, Art Museum Education Certificate students learn to create and facilitate nuanced, impactful, and engaged art museum education experiences that reflect the highest standards of the discipline.

Specific Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the Certificate, Art Museum Education students autonomously lead a 30-minute teaching experience in an art museum, conceive of a museum-quality program for an audience of their choosing, write a thoroughly researched paper about a dilemma in museums today, and act as a junior member of an art museum through an internship.

Curriculum

The program curriculum is based upon current and historical museum studies and museum education practices and trends. The coordinator chooses readings and foci based on seminal publications in the field, contemporary practices and precedent in museums, and in consultation with area art museum professionals who engage the students during the courses. In all courses, students are exposed to local art museum professionals in their home institutions and they develop skills in using research and reference materials, synthesizing and organizing research, and presenting materials in both written and oral forms.

The program curriculum is revised every semester that a class is taught, with updated readings, seminar topics, and class visits depending on current and emerging trends in the field. The coordinator consults with museum professionals and other professors – locally, nationally and globally, keeps abreast with current literature, serves on museum journal editorial boards, and attends museum-focused conferences to maintain curricular currency in this everchanging field.

Academic Coursework

Students take three museum-specific courses and complete a six-credit hour internship.

The three classes are:

AEAH 5940: Seminar in Art Museums

AEAH 5942: Art Museum Education 1 addressing audiences, and

AEAH 5945: Art Museum Education 2 on teaching theories and practice.

AEAH 5940 focuses on the study of art museums: their human resources, their purpose, and their place in society. In this course, students explore the mission of art museums and the course is structured around the International Council of Museums, ICOM standards of what constitutes a museum: acquisition, research, stewardship, communication, and exhibition. Besides exploring operational museology, the course also uses a critical museological lens to introduce students to the history of art museums and the current philosophical and ethical debates that surround them. Students read seminal work by historical and contemporary academics and museum professionals, including John Cotton Dana, Stephen Weil, Carol Duncan, Ivan Karp, Steven Levine, Lois Silverman, and Susan Pearce, among many others. Students explore their interests by choosing a dilemma faced in contemporary art museum culture and write a formal research paper exploring both sides of this issue.

AEAH 5942 and 5945, the two museum education-specific classes, are taught from a constructivist theoretical approach. Program development for multiple audiences is the focus of AEAH 5942. In this class, students learn about different audiences in a museum and how programs are conceived of and delivered. The course is structured according to the audience focus of education programs, following the managerial role divisions employed by education departments at major art museums. Therefore, the course focuses on early learners, school-aged children, families, teachers, tweens and teens, adults, docents, and special needs populations. Students select and develop specialized expertise in one or more of these areas for the final course project, conceiving of and producing a program plan for this audience. Students read work by contemporary art museum educators and art museum education scholars who write about audience development, such as Lynn Dierking, John Falk, Nina Simon, Pat Villeneuve, and James Chung and Susie Wilkening.

AEAH 5945 emphasizes the study of contemporary and historical issues regarding the educational function of art museums with a concentration on pedagogical theory. In this course, students develop an understanding of the history, philosophy, and practice of art museum education through readings by Terry Zeller, Danielle Rice, Elliot Eisner, and Stephen Dobbs, to name a few. Students learn about learning and the teaching philosophies and practices that have evolved and changed over the history of the field of art museum education. The course concentrates on industry-standard pedagogies that are used by professional art museum educators in the Dallas-Forth Worth area: constructivism, Visual Thinking Strategies, dialogism, slow-looking, and Artful Thinking. Students read work by art museum educators and academics who write about teaching, including Rika Burnham, Elliott Kai-Kee, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, George Hein, Philip Yenawine, Abigail Housen, and Shari Tishman. Through theory and practice, students discover which teaching method, or hybrid of methods, works for them and practice it in a culminating teaching demonstration at a local museum. Students also define their own teaching approach by identifying the theoretical and pedagogical traditions they use in their teaching.

Internship

ART 5450 is a required, six-credit-hour internship for the Art Museum Education Certificate. The main goal of the internship is for students to put theory – what is learned in the classroom – into practice – what actually happens in a museum. Through the internship, students are able to apply and expand upon what is learned in class. The internship provides practical experience leading toward specific goals as a junior staff member of an art museum’s education department. Students must complete 300 hours total, of which 270 hours are in the service of the student’s internship site. The remaining 30 hours are devoted to documentating their experience through a class blog and a final reflection paper. Students are under the direction of a member of the professional staff who serves as the student’s internship supervisor. This course requires participation in day-to-day museum operations and completion of a major project arranged in consultation with the program coordinator and the intern’s museum supervisor. The museum supervisor evaluates the student at the end of the internship using a quantitative and qualitative rubric that measures the student’s professional demeanor and educational abilities.

Internship, Memorandum of Understanding

The goal of the internship is to provide students with a deep experience within an art museum. Before the internship begins students and their supervisors complete a Memorandum of Understanding developed by UNT, the program coordinator, and the hosting museum. This document outlines the duties of the intern, the learning objectives for the internship, the role of the supervisor in this experience, and how the student will be evaluated. This ensures that all parties know what their responsibilities and duties will be during their internship. It also keeps everyone accountable to the MOU, with the understanding that things change frequently in a museum environment.

Internship Placement

Internship placement is approached thoughtfully and critically. Most importantly, the program seeks an internship experience with an on-site mentor who will be an inspiring, consistent, and active internship supervisor, reflecting the highest professional standards of the field. The role of the supervisor is critical to the internship experience and supervisors must have been in the field for some time, have a history of supervising interns, have been trained in a museum education-focused academic program, and/or who actively contributes to the field in visible ways reflecting accepted current practices in the discipline.