

ARCH 4143 / 6143 Syllabus

Museums: History, Theory, Design (3 credits)

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

Description

This course investigates the architecture of museums and the installation of exhibitions, past and present, as manifestations of the construction and content of knowledge, the public mission of cultural and scientific institutions, and the framing of visitors' experience.

The course combines theory and practice. In the first part, we will review the history and theory of museums and discussed the museum as a public space of inclusive, quality life-long education. Assignments expect students to visit different museums in Atlanta and identify these principles and roles in practice. In the second part of the class, we use the Robert C. Williams Museum of Papermaking at Georgia Tech as a case study. We will consider the paper-related ethnographic collection and the sustainability lessons it teaches us, and we will partner with the staff of the museum to expand this collection into the future, design of the New Permanent Gallery on Paper Science + Technology to popularize the research currently done at RBI, with the goal to inspire the different audiences of the Museum.

If you are a scientist, engineer, sociologist, CM or CS, or designer, join us in shaping the new permanent gallery Paper Science and Technology at the Museum of Papermaking at the Renewable Bioproducts Institute at GT!

Course Learning Outcomes

Those students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

1. formulate ways that museums play a role in our society and

2. advocate for museums as spaces of informal lifelong learning opportunities for all, a main driver of sustainable development and contribute to facilitating quality education for all (UN SDG#4)

3. students learn to design exhibition panels or multi-modal applications with text, images, diagrams, data visualizations, and/or tactile objects to demystify research and to communicate complex concepts to non-experts.

Required Course Materials

Selected book chapters and papers will be assigned weekly. All materials will be placed in a Reading List in canvas. Here are some basic resources and anthologies:

Alexander, Edward P., Mary Alexander, and Juilee Decker. 2017. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Third edition. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Anderson, Gail, ed. 2023. *Reinventing the Museum: Relevance, Inclusion, and Global Responsibilities*. Third edition. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, an imprint of the Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

Anderson, Gail. 2012. *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*. 2nd ed. Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press.

Grading Policy:

Grade evaluations will be based on consistent, high-quality work over the entire semester. The grading of the class is distributed in the following fashion:

Daily Class participation and attendance	10%
5 biweekly discussions	50%
Exhibition Design (Research + Prototyping + Final Presentation + Documentation)	40%

Grading Scale

- A 90–100% Excellent work in conception, development, and craft.
- B 80–89% Good work: you have met the basic requirements of the course.
- C 70–79% Average work: substantially undeveloped deliverables that meet the basic requirements.
- D 60–69% Poor, minimally passing work, weak or very incomplete deliverables
- F Below 60% Failing work that does not meet the attendance and other course requirements

Description of Graded Components

1. **Biweekly Discussions (50%)** In-class discussions. Students will have to read certain papers, research examples online, and respond to these readings by presenting examples that they will have researched online through independent research and/or museum visits.
2. **Exhibition Design (50%)** Content Development and Design of museum boards, tactile interactive objects, an interactive Touchscreen Component with multi-media, multi-modal content or an auxiliary installation. Students will need to research a certain topic, design and prototype tactile replicas, and document the process.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Active Participation at all class meetings is mandatory and crucial to the successful completion of the class. Absences will be excused only for medical or family emergencies, Institute-approved events, and religious holidays documented in writing. (According to a new policy, you must notify your instructor in writing during the first two weeks of the semester about any anticipated absences for religious holidays.) Late arrivals will be counted as absences.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS

[Core IMPACTS](#) is the University System of Georgia's General Education curriculum. If you are teaching a course that counts towards Core IMPACTS, you should include a syllabus statement about the Core area and associated [career competencies](#). [This resource](#) developed by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Online Education at

Georgia State University includes template syllabus statements for each of the Core IMPACTS areas that you may adapt for your course.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

No prerequisites or Co-Requisites.

Extra Credit Opportunities

There are no formal extra credit opportunities.

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

Use of Generative AI is permitted in this course but only within instructor-approved boundaries (e.g., brainstorming, researching, drafting assignments, stages of writing, or support tasks such as grammar refinement or coding assistance). Its use must be transparent and documented in a required AI Usage Statement with each submission outlining:

All submitted work must include a brief AI Usage Statement outlining:

- Which tools were used
- When they were used
- What prompts or questions were given
- How the AI output informed or shaped your final submission

If used, you are expected to critically engage with any AI-generated content and ensure your final work reflects your own understanding and academic voice. Generative AI should never be used to fabricate data, cite non-existent sources, or replace traditional research methods through critical bibliographical review of scholarly sources and appropriate citing of them. Use of Generative AI must comply with Georgia Tech's Honor Code and academic integrity guidelines.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Late Submission of Deliverables is allowed only with approval from the Instructor with advance notice in writing.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

In the event of inclement weather, we will convert to modified operations for digital learning.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

Students are encouraged to keep notes in class digitally if they prefer. However, the use of a laptop for non-class related work is destructive to the class and is not allowed.

Additional Course Policies

Archiving

At the end of the semester, all students are required to submit physical and/or digital examples of their work to their instructors or administration for archiving no later than one week after the end of term. By enrolling, each student grants a license to reproduce and display their work online, in forthcoming print publications, and in public exhibitions.

College of Design Facility Rules and Guidelines

Please consult the [Georgia Tech Student Handbook](#) regarding the use of facilities and all Institute policies. Aerosol sprays of any kind are strictly banned from the studio and surrounding areas. A spray painting booth is now in operation in the College of Design shop on the ground floor of the East Architecture Building.

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Per the [GT Catalog](#), all work produced in the College of Design as part of a degree program becomes the property of the College; it may be retained or returned at the discretion of the faculty. The faculty of the School of Architecture also reserves the right to refuse credit for any project executed outside the precincts of the College or otherwise produced without proper coordination with the faculty.

All projects produced in the class will be retained by the faculty and the Museum of Papermaking and may be utilized in future exhibitions without prior notice. Of course, the author or designer of each project will be recognized in museum labels, but prior permission for exhibition of the same artifact or a similar version of it is not a requirement.

Emergencies

In case of emergency (e.g., fire, accident, or criminal act), please call the Georgia Tech Police at 404-894-2500. Please note that Perry Minyard, IT Support Administrator for the College of Design, is also a firefighter and an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certified in performing CPR.

Library & Archives

Need to do research but don't know where to start? Contact your Architecture Library subject specialist, Catherine Mancini (catherine.mancini@library.gatech.edu), for research help and information on available resources. Contact your Architecture Archives liaison, Jody Thompson (jody.thompson@library.gatech.edu), for assistance with archival research and collections.

Georgia Tech Library website: <https://library.gatech.edu/>

Georgia Tech Archives website: <http://library.gatech.edu/archives>

Ownership

For the purposes of continuous improvement efforts, such as accreditations and periodic program reviews, the School will select samples of student work submitted to satisfy course requirements. This includes digital files, papers, drawings, models, etc. Collected samples may be returned to students upon request.

Studio Housekeeping

While we do not have our designated studio space, we still need to keep up with the rules of using the studio spaces, the Laser-cutter Room.

Keep Drawings Filed and Models/Materials Off the Floor:

Our cleaning staff tries to keep the studio clean and tidy. To assist them in their efforts, please keep your drawings properly filed and ensure that models and materials are not left on the floor. **Material left on the floor in studios will be considered trash and will be disposed of accordingly.**

Desk Usage:

Please refrain from using a desk not assigned to you unless you have obtained prior

permission.

Work Surface Protection:

It is strictly prohibited to use spray paint, spray adhesive, paint, stain, plaster, concrete, resin, or any similar materials on unprotected desktops, floors, or other work surfaces within the studio, classrooms, corridors, and stairways. These types of production should be carried out at the CoD shop or other designated facilities.

Cutting Materials:

Under no circumstances should materials be cut on an unprotected desk surface. Doing so can lead to damage.

Clean up your workspace:

Please make it a habit to clean up after yourself at the end of each day. This includes organizing your desk, disposing of any trash, and returning equipment or supplies to their proper places.

Laser-cutter room and shop use:

Please clean up after you use any machinery in the CoD shop, DFL, laser cutter rooms, or any other shared work space. **If not properly taken care of, the laser cutter room or any other neglected resource will be closed until it is cleaned.**

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:

- Academic Support: Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at success.gatech.edu/tutoring, email us at tutoring@gatech.edu, or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources:

A list of resources for graduate students is given on the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education](#) website. Specific information for [current graduate students](#) includes

- Academic Resources such as the Communications Center, Language Institute, Library, Catalog, Registrar, resources for conducting research, Advocacy and Conflict Resolution resources, and how to manage unexpected situations that may impact your academic performance;
- Student Resources such as Campus Services, Child Care/Family programs, Health & Wellness, Career Services, and the Student Resource Guide; and
- Professional Development such as *the programming from the Career Center and other professional development resources and events*”

Student Well-Being:

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A comprehensive list of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#)).