

MUSEUM STUDIES

Established in 1976, Museum Studies at the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design responds to the evolving museum profession by combining hands-on training with future-focused theoretical engagement. Students gain foundational knowledge about the state of museum work today, practical skills, and the ability to critically engage with developments in the field. Coursework offers both breadth and depth in collections management, museum management, exhibitions, visitor experience, and public engagement.

Our students come from a range of academic disciplines, from history and anthropology to art history and the natural sciences. Our location in the nation's museum capital offers a unique opportunity to connect to national and global conversations at the cutting edge of museum practice.

In addition to the master's degree, the program offers a graduate certificate (p. 1) in museum studies (<https://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/museum-studies/certificate/>).

Students whose career interests are primarily in museum education should refer to the master of arts in teaching in the field of museum education (<https://bulletin.gwu.edu/education-human-development/educational-leadership/ma-teaching-museum-studies/>) program in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

Visit the program website (<https://corcoran.gwu.edu/museum-studies/>) for additional information.

GRADUATE

Master's program

- Master of Arts in the field of museum studies (<https://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/museum-studies/ma/>)

Combined programs

- Dual Bachelor of Arts with a major in classical and ancient Near Eastern studies and Master of Arts in the field of museum studies (<https://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/classical-near-eastern-languages-civilizations/combined-ba-classical-near-eastern-studies-ma-museum-studies/>)
- Dual Bachelor of Arts with a major in history and Master of Arts in the field of museum studies (<https://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/history/dual-ba-history-ma-museum-studies/>)
- Dual Master of Arts in the field of museum studies and Graduate Certificate in nonprofit management (<https://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/museum-studies/combined-ma-museum-studies-gc-nonprofit-management/>)

CERTIFICATE

Graduate certificate programs

- Museum studies

FACULTY

Associate Professors: S. Anderson (*Program Head*), L. Schiavo, M. Coughlin

Assistant Professors: M. van Balgoooy

COURSES

Explanation of Course Numbers

- Courses in the 1000s are primarily introductory undergraduate courses
- Those in the 2000s to 4000s are upper-level undergraduate courses that can also be taken for graduate credit with permission and additional work assigned
- Those in the 6000s and 8000s are for master's, doctoral, and professional-level students
- The 6000s are open to advanced undergraduate students with approval of the instructor and the dean or advising office

CMST 6101. Museum Management. 3 Credits.

Overall operation of the museum; legal status of the museum and its obligations to the public, governance, staffing, and policymaking as a nonprofit organization. Theory applied to practical situations. Restricted to graduate students. Same As: MST6101.

CMST 6102. Museum Financial Management. 3 Credits.

Financial management of museums, including how the roles and responsibilities of a variety of museum professionals involve financial management, revenue generation, and budgeting in order to assure a museum's daily operation, growth and sustainability. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6103. Leading Change. 3 Credits.

Leadership challenges and styles as they relate to organizational change efforts; museums undergoing change; best practices in leadership at all levels of the museum. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6104. Managing People and Projects. 3 Credits.

Organizational development and modern management concepts as applied to museums. Managing people in the organization; the importance of project management systems to museum administration. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6105. Museum Fundraising. 3 Credits.

Introductory topics in museum fundraising, including sources of funds, best practices and approaches, annual funds and capital campaigns, and the internal management of the fundraising effort. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6106. Museum Marketing. 3 Credits.

Opportunities and responsibilities within museum marketing. Development of a marketing plan; situational analysis and market research; segmentation and targeting; positioning and intent; identification of business, strategies and key performance metrics. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6107. Museum Ethics and Values. 3 Credits.

Ethical questions museums face in practical, political, and institutional contexts, including governance and funding, collecting and preservation, exhibiting culture, and education and public programs. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6109. Museum Governance. 3 Credits.

An informed, diverse board and effective board-staff partnerships are central to the success of museums. Board roles and responsibilities and the elements of a successful staff-board partnership are covered. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6201. Introduction to Museum Collections. 3 Credits.

Issues and practices in creating, controlling, protecting, and providing access to collections. Fundamentals of planning, policies, records, accession and the physical protection of objects; legal and ethical issues related to registrarial work and cultural heritage. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6202. Collections Management: Practical Applications. 3 Credits.

Development and implementation of policies and procedures relevant to management of museum collections. Practical experience with acquisition, documentation, loans, preservation, exhibition, storage, packing, transportation and disposal. Restricted to graduate students. Prerequisite: CMST 6201.

CMST 6203. Preventive Conservation Concepts. 3 Credits.

Histories of preventive conservation, ethics, team approaches to conservation. Basics of materials testing, interactions of materials, condition reports, museum storage and exhibition materials, and risk assessment. Restricted to graduate students. (Same as ANTH 6203)

CMST 6204. Preventive Conservation Techniques. 3 Credits.

Continuation of CMST 6203. Practical exercises and ethical issues; evaluation and monitoring of collections; development and implementation of policies and procedures to facilitate collections care. Prerequisites: One of the following: ANTH 6203, CAH 6286, or CMST 6203. Credit cannot be earned for this course and AH 6287, ANTH 6204.

CMST 6205. Archival Practice. 3 Credits.

Introduction for museum professionals to the core ideas and practices of archivists and archival institutions. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6206. Digitization and Digital Asset Management. 3 Credits.

Management of digital assets, projects, or programs involving digitization and access for museum professionals. Current methods in creation and dissemination of digital surrogates, associated metadata, and digital descriptive records of museum collections. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6301. Museum Exhibition Curatorial Research and Planning. 3 Credits.

The role of the curator in contemporary museums with an emphasis on curatorial work on exhibitions. Includes ethics, collecting, documentation, communication, scholarly research, and public presentation. Restricted to graduate students. Credit cannot be earned for this course and MSTD 6301.

CMST 6302. Museum Exhibition Design. 3 Credits.

Language, materials, and processes for developing and designing museum exhibitions.

CMST 6304. Exhibition Development and Scriptwriting. 3 Credits.

Exhibition development from a content perspective. How exhibitions incorporate storytelling, the role of the audience including community stakeholders, and the collaborative work of exhibitions teams. Restricted to graduate students. Prerequisites: CMST 6301 or permission of the Director for Graduate Studies.

CMST 6305. Visitor Perspectives: Museum Evaluation. 3 Credits.

Theory and practice of museum evaluation with emphasis on how evaluation informs stages of exhibition development, including concept generation, design, interpretation, and installation. Students conduct an evaluation study and present evaluation results to museum staff. Restricted to graduate students. Same As: MSTD 6305. Credit cannot be earned for this course and EDUC 6706.

CMST 6306. Race, Gender, Sexuality, and the Museum. 3 Credits.

Exploration of the role that museums play in the construction, reification, and representation of ideas about race and gender. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6307. Interpreting Historic Sites and House Museums. 3 Credits.

Interpretation of historic sites and house museums, the most common type of museum in the United States, including historical significance, visitor needs and interests, and online and on-site interpretive methods. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6308. Critical Visitor Experience. 3 Credits.

Examination of the values, assumptions, and rhetoric associated with visitors in the museum. Through readings, assignments, and field trips to museums, students develop understanding of how the museum visit is created and experienced. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6403. Museums and Technology. 3 Credits.

Critical analysis of the historical and contemporary relationships between museums and digital technologies. How human and institutional cultures shape and are shaped by their technologies and how such ideas inform museum practices. (Same as EDUC 6710)

CMST 6404. Museums and Social Media. 3 Credits.

How museums engage users through the internet. Online platforms used to evaluate the complexities of social media including strategies, tactics, and benchmarks for measuring online engagement and associated challenges and risks. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6501. Museum Studies Internship. 3 Credits.

Individual work experience in museums of the Washington area or elsewhere. Students are supervised by staff members of the cooperating museum in the areas of museum management, object care and conservation, or exhibitions. Restricted to students in the master's and certificate programs in museum studies. Recommended background: Cannot be taken in the first semester.

CMST 6502. Directed Research. 3 Credits.

Individual research on special topics in the museum field under supervision by a professor or museum professional. Topics must be approved by the director of the Museum Studies Program. May be repeated for credit. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6601. Special Topics in Museum Studies. 3 Credits.

Topics vary by semester. May be repeated for credit provided the topic differs. Consult the Schedule of Classes for more details. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6701. Museum History and Theory. 3 Credits.

Origins of the modern museum and the history of museums. Theorists whose ideas have been accessed to inform our understanding of museums as places of meaning making, power and empowerment, and cultural authority. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6703. Museums and Community Engagement. 3 Credits.

How museums engage with local communities as primary audiences for programming and support. Students perform community-engaged work with a local museum or historic site. Restricted to graduate students.

CMST 6704. Museums and Cultural Property. 3 Credits.

Legal and ethical principles of ownership and restitution of stolen art and other cultural property wrongfully removed from its owners or countries of origin. Current museum policies and procedures for acquisition, exhibition, retention, and restitution of their collections analyzed using claims brought against museums. Restricted to graduate students. Prerequisite: CMST 6201.