

Curating Guantánamo – Exhibit Panels

Working collaboratively with your classmates, as a group you will research, select images, and create text for two exhibit panels interpreting the history of the United States' base at Guantanamo Bay, and the history of American involvement in Cuba and the Caribbean more generally. Our class will be focusing on Guantanamo's history during the age of U.S. expansion and colonialism, and the pre-history to 1898. The work you create will ultimately go on display at NYU University in December 2012.

The Guantánamo Public Memory Project has compiled an archive of primary source materials relating to the site's history, which I am in the process of making available through our SAKAI site. **Please note that many of these materials are of a sensitive nature; please do not circulate these sources, without my permission, beyond their immediate use in our class.**

The different components of the assignment are outlined below. Due to the collaborative and even experimental nature of this assignment, keep in mind that when it comes to deadlines and completing tasks, all of us will have to be somewhat flexible.

Preliminary Research Report – Due March 27, in class

You will be responsible for creating a preliminary research report, due in-class on Wednesday, March 27, approximately three-to-five pages in length. The readings that are assigned for weeks six through eight and week ten will provide you with a strong background in the relevant secondary literature. In addition, I will be making available in the near future an even more extensive bibliography of secondary sources that you might use.

The research report should be arranged using the following sections:

Overview

What is the main argument/interpretation/intervention that you want to make with these two exhibit panels? What are the main issues, questions, and historical contexts that you want to bring to the audience for this exhibit?

Primary Sources

Explain your rationale and the selection process behind your decision to incorporate certain primary sources. Why do you think these documents and images will captivate audience members? How do they effectively support and advance the interpretation or argument that you want to make? What types of responses do you think that engagement with these sources will create?

Broader Themes

In this section, connect your selection of primary sources and the specific subjects that you have chosen to focus on to the broader themes relating to the history of Guantánamo and the United States' involvement with this site and in Cuba more broadly. Be sure to reference the relevant historiography and secondary literature, and how your content is in conversation with these scholarly arguments. What do audience members, many of whom likely have little knowledge of events such as the Spanish-Cuban-American War, US imperialism in the Caribbean, the politics of slavery in Cuba, and so on, need to know about these topics? What does the exhibit stand to accomplish by revising popular assumptions about these histories?

Bibliography

Include a bibliography listing the secondary and primary sources that you have used to this point.

Draft Exhibit Text and Images – Due in class on April 6 (we will use this class period to further revise as well, if need be)

Using the research report you have created, along with the feedback that I will provide, your next step is to evaluate what components of your research are the most interesting and which elements you want to highlight in the exhibit. Currently I am waiting to hear back from the exhibit designer about the design specifications you will be working with in terms of text length, numbers of images that you can include per panel, and so on. I will update you on this as soon as I know.

Final Revisions – Work to be conducted in class on April 24

On April 20, at the Organization of American Historians conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I will be sharing your exhibit panel mock-ups with professors from other collaborating institutions such as the University of Massachusetts, UNC-Greensboro, University of Minnesota, and Duke University. They will provide feedback on the work you have done, which will represent the first completed draft panels!

Using the feedback and comments I receive, we will dedicate the final class meeting to implementing changes and reflecting on the work as a whole. Before moving to a local pub for a proper end-of-the-semester celebration...