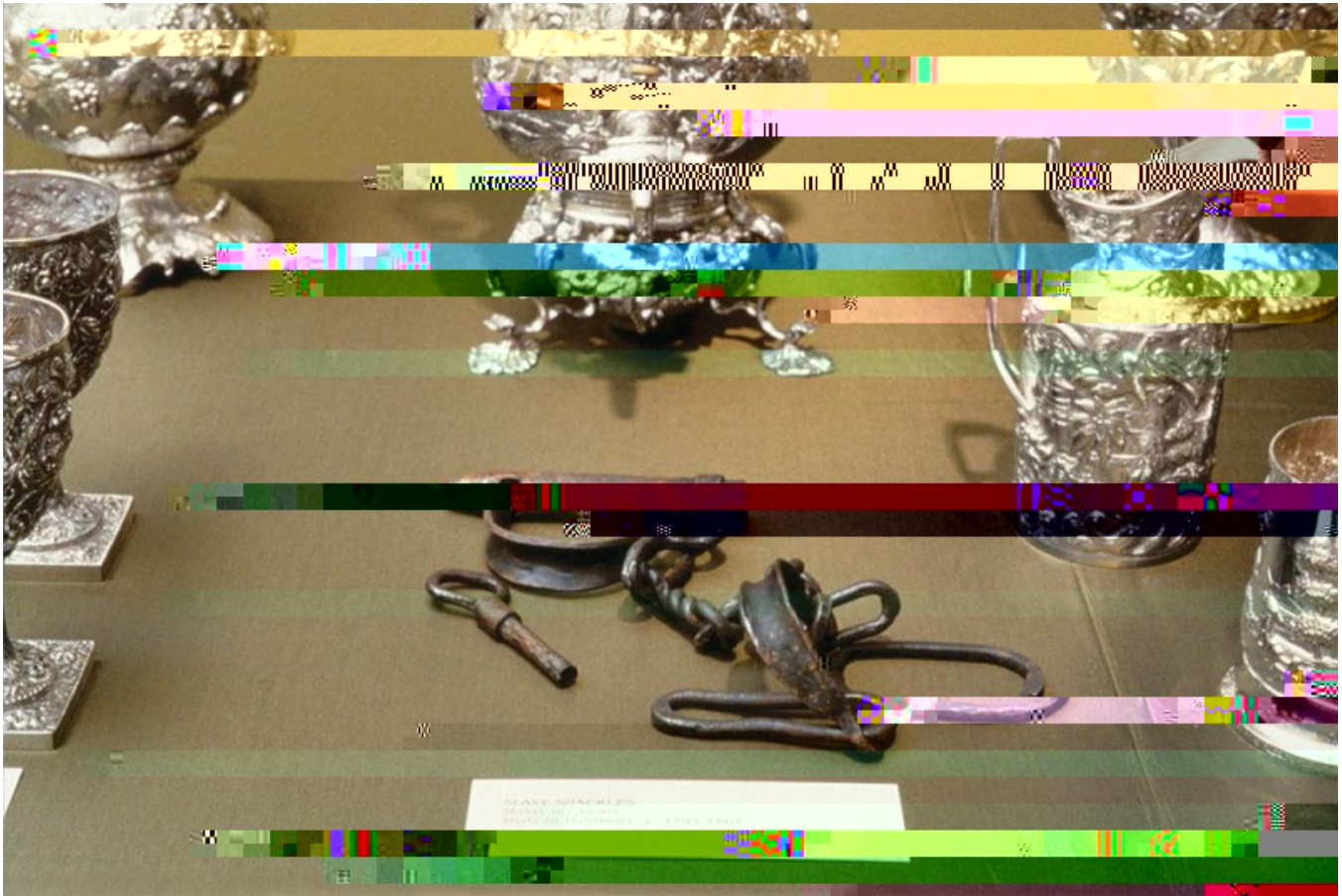


# MCSC 2610F: The Greatest Shows on Earth

The Department of Visual Arts – Museums & Curatorial Studies  
Western University, Fall 2022



Metalwork 1793-1880, silver vessels in Baltimore Repoussé style, 1830-80, maker unknown; salve shackles, ca. 1793-1872, maker unknown, made in Baltimore. From Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson, The Contemporary and Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, 1992-1993. Source: Robert Enright and Meeka Walsh, "[Degrees of Subversion – An Interview with Fred Wilson](#)," Border Crossings, March 2016.

## Course Information

Wednesdays, 9:30 – 12:30

Talbot College (TC) 342

Instructor: Ruth Skinner / [rskinne6@uwo.ca](mailto:rskinne6@uwo.ca)

Virtual office hours: Tuesdays 11:00 – 12:00, drop-in or by appointment

TA: To be announced

TA Office Hours: To be announced

## Course Overview

This class examines landmark exhibitions (both historical and contemporary) that have profoundly altered approaches to curating, exhibition design and display, collecting, archiving, art making, and visitor experience. We will examine key exhibitions from around the world: how have these particular exhibitions triggered profound changes in museum and gallery



students can be debarred from participation in final evaluations and/or assignments.

Note that if a student is consistently absent from a 3-hour class for 1 hour, they will exceed the 15% cutoff and be debarred; assignments may stop being accepted and such assignments will receive a mark of 0 (zero)

#### Late Submission Policy for MCS2610F

If you are unable to submit an assignment on time, please contact me directly before the assignment deadline. This is both a professional courtesy and will enable us to make suitable arrangements for you to meet a reasonable deadline. Any assignment submitted late without prior notification from the student will be deducted by 5% per day, up to 2 weeks, after which the assignment will not be accepted.

Please note that the final assignment for this course is due on the last day of class (Dec 7). Late submissions of this digital essay assignment will be accepted without penalty up to Dec 12 (five days).

#### Learning Outcomes

##### Depth and Breadth of Knowledge

- gain vocabularies pertinent to the field of the Visual Culture: historical, theoretical, and material knowledge, as well as knowledge of research methods;
- develop a greater understanding of the issues and politics that are significant to the museum field;
- broaden your awareness of historical and contemporary exhibitions, and critically attend to how exhibition design (and accompanying programming) informs visitor experience and makes an exhibition impactful;
- develop your historical, conceptual, and aesthetic understandings of exhibitions: their physical infrastructures and their socio-political and cultural impacts;
- formulate your own opinions about controversial subjects in the museum field through personal reflection on, and class discussion about, the readings;
- understand how certain exhibitions profoundly impact art markets, the study of art, and art historical scholarship, and discuss why some exhibitions have extensive impacts while others are lost to his

## Application of Knowledge

- o demonstrate your knowledge through the deployment of course vocabulary in class discussions, digital publications, presentations, and creative workshop activities;
- o formulate and articulate sound arguments regarding particular historical or contemporary developments in exhibition history and design, and be able to defend your arguments with knowledge of scholarly works and through a variety of written media and discursive outputs;
- o receive feedback at multiple stages on the same assignment, and be able to develop your writing and analytic skills;
- o develop individual and collective authorial voices for presentations, reflections, and digital essays;
- o learn about and form opinions on the impacts of the ongoing pandemic on the art world.

## Required Texts

There are no physical textbooks for this course. Weekly course materials are available for download and through external website links provided on OWL/Sakai.

## Notes about our Course Materials

In our present circumstance, it is not always easy to maintain concentration and momentum. I have assigned primary materials for each week, and you are expected to read/watch these materials in advance of class time. If you need to prioritize material in a given week, please focus on the first item listed. Alternatively, aim to read/watch/listen to at least part of each material, carefully and deeply.

This syllabus is modelled on an earlier iteration of the course, designed and taught by Dr. Kirsty Robertson.

## Student Experience and Support

The last two years have been challenging, and it can be difficult to manage our academic workloads and our overall well-being. Familiarize yourself with [Western's Health & Wellness Resources](#), and please don't hesitate to contact me if you need help finding resources on and off campus. If you are having trouble managing your work load for this course, please reach out so we can have a discussion to develop strategies for succeeding in this course.

## Grading

Assignment	Value	Due Date
Attendance, participation & engagement	10%	Ongoing through the semester
Exhibition reflections (2 x 10%)	20%	Due Weeks 3 and 11
Exhibition Case Study	70%	
Case study abstract (5%)		Due Week 4
Progress presentation (15%)		Due Week 6
Peer feedback (2 x 5% = 10%)		Due Week 7
Rough draft of final essay (15%)		Due Week 9
Final essay (25%)		Due Week 13



For our major course assignment, you will choose one landmark exhibition for which you will research and develop an in-depth case study. The final outcome of this assignment will be an in-depth, well-researched and well-designed digital essay. This assignment will hone your academic writing skills and your presentation skills, provide opportunities to give and receive peer feedback, introduce important aspects of publication design, and develop your knowledge of critical themes and topics relevant to the field of museum studies. There are five stages for this project. You will receive feedback at multiple stages on this assignment: this is an important opportunity for you to develop and hone your writing and analytical skills. At the end of the semester, you will emerge from this course with extensive knowledge of one important exhibition. You will, in fact, be an expert on it.

**Case Study Abstract (5%); Due Week 4 (Oct 5)**

Submit 1 -2 paragraphs (approximately 500 words) describing your chosen exhibition and the approach you will take to writing about it. In addition to these paragraphs, provide citations (use Chicago Style format) for three scholarly references that address your chosen exhibition. An example of an abstract can be found in the Assignment tab in OWL.

**Progress Presentation (15%); Presented in class, Week 6 (Oct 19)**

In group breakout sessions, you will give a ten-minute presentation about your chosen exhibition. **Treat this as a formal presentation, and make sure to prepare in advance.** We

I will provide a printed peer review form for this exercise so you can make rough notes during your peers' presentations. You will have one week to refine your feedback form and submit a digital version to me. I will pass your feedback along to your peers.

### Rough draft of final digital essay; Due Week 9 (Nov 9)

You will hand in a draft of your final digital essay. This draft must be at least 1,500 words, not including image captions, bibliography, or footnotes/endnotes. This draft should have a well-developed thesis/argument, an overall organization, and should demonstrate significant research.

The rough draft will also be an opportunity for you to experiment with your digital essay format: developing and designing an accessible layout, choosing fonts and appropriate font sizes, deciding on your headings and subheadings, incorporating images, formatting footnotes/endnotes and your bibliography, incorporating working hypertext links in smooth and intuitive ways, and exporting an accessible document for your reader. We will look at many print and digital examples of exhibition essays in class to develop our understanding of effective text layouts. You are not expected to be a graphic designer for this aspect of the project! We will build our digital essays in word processing programs like Microsoft Word, OpenOffice, Google Docs, etc., and any students who are becoming familiar with design software (InDesign, Scribus, LibreOffice, etc.) are welcome to use these programs for their layouts. You will receive extensive feedback on this rough draft to help you develop your final digital essay assignment.

There are always a lot of questions about how to approach the rough version of an essay. We will discuss approaches to the essay in class, and we will dedicate class time to workshopping ideas and rough outlines. Don't be afraid to ask questions in class or by email, and I will compile all questions and answers into an ongoing resource for everyone. Further details about this rough draft will be distributed in class and posted in the Assignments tab on OWL.

### Final digital essay; Due Week 13 (Dec 7)

The digital essay component of your case study is due on the last day of class. Late submissions of digital essays will be accepted without penalty up to December 12 (five days).

Your final digital essay should be 2,500 – 3,000 words (not including images and image captions, bibliography, footnotes or endnotes). Your essay will be a thoughtful and well-researched exploration of a single exhibition. You will also format your essay into an engaging and accessible digital publication that can be enjoyed by any reader.

With your permission, papers achieving a grade of 80% or higher will be incorporated into an ongoing catalogue of exhibition essays, written by students who take this class over the years. Further details about the final digital essay will be distributed in class and posted in the Assignments tab on OWL.

#### Important Semester Dates

Sept 8, 2022: Classes begin

Sept 16, 2022: Last day to add a course that begins in the Fall; last day to drop a course that begins in the Fall

Oct 10, 2022: Thanksgiving Holiday

Oct 31 – Nov 6, 2022: Fall Reading Break

Nov 12, 2022: Last day to drop first-term half course without academic penalty

Nov 30, 2022: Last day to drop full year course without academic penalty

Dec 8, 2022: Classes end (final due date for all course assignments)

Dec 22, 2022: Fall Term ends





cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean's office (the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration/home Faculty) together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. These documents will be retained in the student's file, and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic accommodation shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”)

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

Documentation from Family Physicians/Nurse Practitioners and Walk-In Clinics A Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is required where a student is seeking academic accommodation. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. An SMC can be downloaded at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

At the time of illness, students should make an appointment with a physician/nurse practitioner at Student Health Services. During this appointment, request a Student Medical Certificate from the Physician/Nurse Practitioner.

Students should request that an SMC be filled out. Students may bring this form with them, or request alternative Emergency Department documentation. Documentation should be secured at the time of the initial visit to the Emergency Department. Where it is not possible for a student to have an SMC completed by the attending physician, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that their ability to meet their academic responsibilities was seriously affected.

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In all cases where accommodation is being sought for work totalling 10% or more of the final grade in a course, students will be directed to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office.

Students who have been denied accommodation by an instructor may appeal this decision to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office but will be required to present appropriate documentation.

**Attendance:**

Under university regulations, if someone misses more than 15% of their classes (15% is equivalent to missing 8 hours of Lecture and/or Studio Lab, due to absence or lateness, or a combination of both, per semester) without written corroboration for health or bereavement, students can be debarred from participation in final evaluations and/or assignments.

Note that if a student is consistently absent from a 3-hour class for 1 hour, they will exceed the 15% cutoff and be debarred; assignments may stop being accepted and such assignments will receive a mark of 0 (zero)

**Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

**Electronic Devices:**

**During Exams:** Unless you have medical accommodations that require you to do so, or explicit permission from the instructor of the course, you may not use any electronic devices during any tests, quizzes, midterms, examinations, or other in-class evaluations.

**During Lectures and Tutorials:** Although you are welcome to use a computer during lecture and tutorial periods, you are expected to use the computer for scholastic purposes only, and

Department of Visual Arts website, flickr, Twitter, Instagram etc.). Students wishing to not have their work photographed should not exhibit it in the Visual Arts Centre, Artlab Gallery or Cohen Commons. As the area is open to the public, students, faculty, staff and other visitors will not be prohibited from photographing your artwork while on exhibit at the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre.

You otherwise retain all ownership in your artwork.

#### Artwork Installation Liability Release:

You understand that the area where your artwork will be hanging or displayed is unsupervised and is in a part of the building that may be open to the public, day and evening, whether or not the building is open. Western University accepts no responsibility for damage to, or loss of, artwork at any time while on display or while being transported to or from the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre. By displaying your artwork in the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre, you accept all risk of loss or damage to your artwork. Western University does not provide insurance for the artwork on exhibition. If you wish to insure artwork, it is your responsibility to do so.

#### Removal :

Western University reserves the right to dispose of artwork not picked up by April 15th of each year.

#### Support Services :

There are various support services around campus and these include, but are not limited to:

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

#### Health and Wellness:

Western offers a variety of counselling services and several mental health resources for students. If you or a friend are feeling overwhelmed, confused or unsure of your mental health state, please don't ignore it. There are steps you can take to help yourself or help others. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help engage in healthy living while pursuing your degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Further information regarding health and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>.

If you are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at Western

## ART HISTORY/MUSEUM AND CURATORIAL STUDIES GRADE DESCRIPTORS

90-100 (Outstanding, A+) The writing shows significant originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the background research is exemplary. Regarding research, all major secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted and proper citation has been used.

80-89 (Excellent, A) The writing shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Writing is probing through the use of comments and/or questions, and is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing immediately engages the reader. Mastery of complex materials and ideas is demonstrated. The writing is of appropriate length, and demonstrates mastery of techniques so that results are meaningful and not simplistic. Regarding research, a majority of the secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted and proper citation has been used.

75-79 (Very Good, B+) The writing shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Written claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The work is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. Written analysis is organized around focal points and the development of the argument is easily followed. The writer demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material. Regarding research, a representative selection of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted and proper citation has been used.

70-74 (Good, B) The writing shows a satisfactory attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Written claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The work is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. Written analysis is organized around focal points. The text is generally well written and well argued. Regarding research, a somewhat limited selection of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted and proper citation has been used.

60-69 (Competent, C) The writing demonstrates adequate engagement with the topic. The writing is on topic and is a reasonable response to material covered in the course, but goes no further. Written facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the text. Regarding research, an insufficient number of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted but proper citation has been used.

50-59 (Marginal, D) The writing shows less than adequate engagement with the topic and with the material covered by the course. The writing is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Written facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the text. Regarding research, few secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted; proper citation may or may not have been used.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)