

American Scriptures (HIST 389 / RELI 376): Popup Museum Assignment

Our main work for the course will be creating a “popup museum.” Our popup museum will be a digital exhibit built in Omeka. It will feature **items** that each of you will select. These items could be anything that you think is significant and interesting for the study of scriptures and scripturalization. For example, you could select excerpts from a sacred text, such as the Book of Mormon, or examples of a sacred text in use, such as a small collection of newspaper pages. It could also be an artifact related to scriptures, such as a photograph or model of a Torah scroll or of a stereotype press. You will each write **item descriptions** of approximately 600 to 1,000 words, quite likely broken up into several chunks as appropriate to the topic you have selected. These item descriptions will identify the item, set it in historical context, analyze or describe it, and compare it to other texts or artifacts. And you will all make collaborative contributions to an overall **exhibit description**, which sets all of the items and their descriptions in context. For example, this exhibit description should explain what scripturalization is, make a convincing claim for why scriptures are important, and so on.

This assignment has several steps along the way, designed to help you accomplish the project in small, manageable steps with my feedback along the way. Here is a description of what you need to do by when. This is primarily a guideline: feel free to be creative!

- Pick a subject (due in class, October 11; participation grade): Choose a text or artifact, and write one paragraph about why it is a good choice. You should do some preliminary research to be sure that there is enough information so that you can write about your chosen text or artifact, as well as make sure that you have the rights to include your item. We will discuss these in class and coordinate the overall structure of the exhibit.
- Bibliography and outline (due in class, November 8; 5 points): Prepare a bibliography in Chicago Manual of Style notes/bibliography format of four to eight secondary sources about your chosen text. Draft an outline for your item description, which indicates the main sections, the main subjects to be discussed under each section written as topic sentences, and a budget of the approximate word length.
- Exhibit text draft (due in class, November 29; participation grade): Produce a complete draft of your exhibit text and a rough cut of either your edited text or your facsimile object. Bring these to class in hard copy. We will go over these collaboratively in class, and we will divvy up responsibilities for the overall exhibit text.
- Final version of individual contributions to the assignment (due by noon on December 10): First, you should have a finalized version of the text you are editing or the artifact facsimile you are creating (15 points). Second, you should have a complete draft of your individual item description, also in Omeka, including the bibliography (15 points).
- Contribution to group exhibit. Bring a copy of your contribution in hard copy to class on December 6, when you will have time to work on it as a group. The final version of the group exhibit is due on Thursday, December 13 at 10:30 a.m. (the time our exam would have been scheduled for.) Your contribution to the group assignment is worth 10 points.

While the visit to the Museum of the Bible and the short essays that you write about other texts are separate assignments, you should think of them as preparation for this assignment. They are a chance to write clearly and engagingly about the subject of American scriptures.