

# GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism  
PRLS/TOUR 362—Cultural and Environmental Interpretation  
Spring 2011

<b>DAY/TIME:</b>	Tuesdays 1:30 – 4:15 p.m.	<b>LOCATION:</b>	247 Bull Run Hall
<b>PROFESSOR:</b>	Susan L. Johnson	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	sjohnsoi@gmu.edu
<b>OFFICE LOCATION:</b>	249 Bull Run Hall	<b>PHONE NUMBER:</b>	703-993-3761
<b>OFFICE HOURS:</b>	Mondays 11:00 am – 1:00 p.m. and by appointment	<b>FAX NUMBER:</b>	703-993-8478

**PREREQUISITES:** PRLS 300 or PRLS 328 or TOUR 352 or permission of instructor

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Focuses on communication processes and practices used to explain and interpret special characteristics of cultural and environmental resource sites for visitors. Conceptual principles for planning interpretive programs and multi-media delivery techniques are discussed. Methods for programming interpretive services, addressing multi-audience accessibility, and administration and evaluation of interpretive services used at recreation and tourism sites are also examined.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain how interpretation is important to the management of tourism, event and recreation resource sites;
2. Discuss principles of interpretation and communication;
3. Analyze interpretive materials and presentations; and,
4. Prepare several types of effective spoken and written interpretive messages.

Further, upon completion of this course, students will meet the following professional accreditation standard for the *Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Related Professions*:

7B.03	Understanding the principles and practices of stewardship and use of natural resources and the ability to interpret them to the general public, particularly as related to the public's role in stewardship.
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**COURSE OVERVIEW:** In this course, we will examine, discuss, develop, and critique multiple examples of interpretive projects developed by you, your colleagues, and professionals. Because your contributions are so important to this course, you will be expected to attend all class meetings scheduled, actively participate in class discussions on-line and in-person, complete in-class exercises as distributed, and fulfill all assignments according to the due dates noted.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** GMU is an Honor Code University; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? First, it means that when you are responsible for a task, you will be the one to perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives and traditions. When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification.

**COMMUNICATION:** Communication is an important part of this course, therefore, I ask that you check our website, **using Blackboard 9.1 each morning for course communications.** To do this, you'll need to go to "MyMason" (found at the top of our gmue.edu webpage), log in with your username & password, click on the "Courses" tab along the top right of the page, and go to the "9.1 Course List" to find our course. This is important since we're using Blackboard 9.1 (not the old CE Blackboard version).

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

Knudson, D.M., Cable, T.T., and Beck, L. (2003). *Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc.

Additional readings as indicated on the course syllabus.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Unless otherwise notes, **our papers will be submitted to a SafeAssign folder on our course Blackboard.** This allows for an “originality check” and you can also view your own originality report. Assignments will be due at the beginning of class on the specific due date. All written papers are to submitted in WORD (.doc or .docx). **Papers received after the beginning of class will be considered late and receive a 20% deduction in points per 24-hour period.** If you encounter extreme emergencies or are participating in a pre-approved university-sponsored function, exceptions may be made; however, these must be discussed with me to determine if they fall in this category. I strongly encourage you to make a back-up copy of any work submitted since computers have been known to crash at the most inopportune times.

**Assignment Summaries**

**Interpretive Talk**

For this assignment, you will choose a topic, with a specific theme. Then, following the steps for planning, preparing, and delivering a thematic interpretation, you will give a short interpretive talk (without using PowerPoint!). Your peers and I will be evaluating the success of your team’s talk, and you will evaluate your peers’ talks as well.

**Brochure Analysis**

For this assignment, you will collect an interpretive brochure from the tourism, park, and recreation field and analyze it for its effectiveness at communicating its intended message, as well as for its effectiveness in following interpretive brochure design and communication strategies. You will write a short (approximately 3-4 page) report detailing your assessment of the brochure using criteria identified in our course.

**Interpretive Trail at The EDGE**

This is a culminating project for our course and will require you to develop an interpretive program for a specific age group in an assigned (or chosen) category for Mason’s Center for Team and Organizational Learning - The EDGE. You will work in small groups to design and implement your program which will be presented during the last two weeks of the course to your peers. In the course of this project, your team will be required to identify a team leader, engage in an initial client meeting (and follow through with that plan), collaboratively prepare a program, engage in a final client meeting, and deliver the program.

**EVALUATION**

This course will be graded on a percent basis.

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Percentage of final grade</b>
Mid-term Exam (based on text & class readings)	25
Assignments	
<i>Interpretive Talk (pairs)</i>	10
<i>Brochure Analysis (individual)</i>	10
<i>Interpretive Program (teams)</i>	35
CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE (includes field trips)	<u>20</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**Grading Scale**

A+ = 98 – 100	B+ = 88 – 89	C+ = 78 – 79	D = 60 – 69
A = 94 – 97	B = 84 – 87	C = 74 – 77	F = 0 – 59
A- = 90 – 93	B- = 80 – 83	C- = 70 – 73	



- ❖ Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- ❖ Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- ❖ Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- ❖ Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- ❖ Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- ❖ Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.
- ❖ The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- ❖ The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- ❖ For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, please visit our website [See <http://rht.gmu.edu>].

**COURSE SCHEDULE** (Last revised on January 10, 2011)

WEEK	TOPIC	READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS
1 (Jan.25)	Principles of Interpretation In-class: Artifact Interpretation	Chap. 1 & 2 (all of Section I) Introduce Interpretive Talk Assignment
2 (Feb. 1)	Themes (Meanings & Relevance and Facilitating a Connection – Larsen)	Chap. 3,4 & 5 (all of Section II)
3 (Feb.8)	CLASS VISIT to Ellanor C. Lawrence Park (Chantilly, VA) ( <b>MEET THERE by 1:30 p.m. today!</b> )	Chap. 6,7 & 8 <a href="http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ecl/site_history.htm">http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ecl/site_history.htm</a>
4 (Feb.15)	Interpretive Talks by students	Interpretive Talks DUE
5 (Feb.22)	Interpretive Writing and Publications <b>OUT OF CLASS EXPERIENCE VISIT Mason Neck State Park</b> (w/participation guide)	Chap. 9 <a href="http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/mas.shtml">http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/mas.shtml</a>
6 (March 1)	Guided and Self-guided Tours & Walks (Care about...care for – Larsen)	Chap. 12 & 13 Introduce Interpretive Program Assignment
7 (March 8)	Museums & Exhibits (Linking a tangible to an intangible – Larsen)	Chap. 10 & 11 Introduce Brochure Analysis Assignment
8 (March 15)	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS
9 (March 22)	Historical & Cultural Interpretation CLASS VISIT to Manassas Battlefield National Park ( <b>MEET THERE by 1:30 p.m. today!</b> )	Chap. 14 <a href="http://www.nps.gov/mana/index.htm">http://www.nps.gov/mana/index.htm</a>
10 (March 29)	Art Interpretation (More relevant to more people – Larsen) Guest Speaker – Julie Kutruff (TBD) Exam Review	Chap. 15 Brochure Analysis DUE
11 (April 5)	EXAM Interpretive Planning	Chap. 16
12 (April 12)	Evaluating Interpretation (Something significant – Larsen)	Chap. 19
13 (April 19)	Interpretation for the Future	Chap. 20
14 (April 26)	STUDENT INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS	
15 (May 3)	STUDENT INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS	
Finals Week (May 11 – 18)	Submit Final Interpretation Program Materials	

*Note: Faculty reserves the right to revise the course schedule.*