

Exhibition Catalogue Assignment

(Individual essays)

Exhibition curators have a multifaceted job. In addition to researching topics and spending countless hours looking through materials, crafting a narrative and designing a visually and intellectually stimulating space, writing label copy and giving tours, curators also develop exhibition catalogues. These catalogues can take various forms. In some cases, they simply list the materials on display. In other cases, they are more descriptive of the materials, with the intention not only of giving information about the displays, but also seek to offer valuable scholarly information that will simultaneously be appropriate for a general audience. While some curators choose to write the catalogue themselves, others solicit catalogue essays from other scholars.

For this assignment, you will imagine that you have been asked to contribute an essay for publication in the exhibition catalogue. After looking at several exhibition catalogue essays, we will spend one class session at the exhibition having a curatorial tour, which will give you insight into how the exhibition was developed and designed, the significance of some materials, and the general tone of the exhibition. Then you will select an aspect of the exhibition (such as an item, a case, or another grouping of materials) about which to write your catalogue essay.

As you write your essay, you will consider who the primary audience of the catalogue is, what genre conventions you need to adhere to, and what research you need to do to develop your essay appropriately. Should you include images of the object(s) you are writing about? What other details do you need to include in the essay?

Your essay will be approximately 1,000 words in length.