

ASSIGNMENT #1: Museum Worksheet (10 points)

Task: View *Polar World* exhibit and provide thoughtful reflection on the presentation of the Inuit people and their culture.

Goal: To carefully consider the role of public exhibition of peoples and cultures. You will consider the dilemmas involved in curating such an exhibit, analyze the choices made in this case, and reflect on the potential implications/repercussions of these and alternative choices.

Deliverable: Instead of holding our normal class session on October 1, you will go to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History (on Forbes Ave., in Oakland, just a couple of blocks from campus), and view the exhibit *Polar World*, located on the 3rd Fl. With your Carnegie Mellon Student ID, you may enter the museum free of charge (NB: the museum generally opens at 10am – you are free to go at the time most convenient for you, as we will not be meeting there as a group). You are to complete this worksheet in relationship to the exhibit. Focus specifically on the representation of Inuit people in this exhibit, and on questions of curatorship and the public display of culture. You should take this worksheet with you to the exhibit, and take notes on the questions/issues it asks you to discuss. However, I strongly recommend that you take time after leaving to museum to reflect on what you saw, before preparing the final version.

Due: The completed assignment will be due in class on the following Tuesday, October 6.

1. Make a sketch of the general layout of the Polar World exhibit, marking the major categories the curators used to organize and present different themes. [Hint: Some of these can be found written along the top of the walls].
2. What do the curators explicitly identify as the central theme of the exhibit? Discuss in detail a) how they say they understand this topic, its causes, etc., and b) how this interest and particular interpretation is reflected in the exhibition (give examples).
3. What specific aspects of Arctic/Inuit life do the curators chose to present/focus on most?
4. What can you know from viewing this exhibit about its origins and that of the pieces/artifacts presented? Where did the information about Inuit life come from? (there are multiple sources, try and identify several)
5. Try and think of what kinds of dilemmas, ethical issues, and practical questions the exhibition curators may have faced in putting together this exhibit. How does the exhibit reflect their solution to these, and to what extent are they successful (or not?) What could have been done differently, and how? [Think of these issues as also discussed in our readings up to this point].
6. Include here any further observations that you have in relation to this exhibit, the presentation of Inuit people in it, and the public exhibition of people and culture in general.