

## **Museum Practicum Information for Undergraduate Students**

With Details on ANTH-X 476 Museum Practicum and  
FOLK-X 476 Museum Practicum in Folklore

### **What is a practicum?**

A practicum is a course in which students get hands-on work experience in their field for course credit. Think about it as an internship, but carrying course credit that counts towards your degree goals.

### **What is a museum practicum?**

A museum practicum is a practicum course undertaken within a museum or other research collection. Indiana University (IU) students can arrange to do museum practicum during fall, spring or summer semesters at a number of campus and community museums and collections.

### **What kinds of activities would I be doing if I did a museum practicum?**

Practicum students working in museums get to experience the kinds of work that museum professionals do day-to-day because students are working side-by-side with them, helping their host museum thrive. In smaller museums and collections, a student might arrange to get a very diverse set of experiences, from working with museum visitors to conducting basic research to helping out with fundraising. Larger museums often provide students with a chance to do a deep dive, working more intensively on a more focused project—planning a public program, installing an exhibition, producing media, or documenting a new collection. A vast range of majors, from anthropology to zoology, from social work to informatics, are relevant to the everyday work of museums. Museums and collections are distinctive for the wide range of disciplines that museum workers put to use working in and for them.

### **What course is the right one to sign up for if I want to take a museum practicum?**

#### **Where do I start?**

Many IU schools and departments have courses that can be enrolled in to do a museum practicum. The rest of this guide will focus on steps to take if you want to enroll in a museum practicum course in either the Department of Anthropology or the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology. If you want to do a practicum through another course, confer with your academic advisor for help. With the two courses discussed below or with any other, it is important to note that you will work out practicum arrangements in two parts. You will make plans with a host museum on the one hand and with a faculty member or advisor in an IU school or department on the other. It may be helpful to enroll in a relevant course in your major or minor field, but this is not required. Information on enrolling in ANTH-X 476 Museum Practicum or FOLK-X 476 Museum Practicum in Folklore is given below. You do not need to be an Anthropology or Folklore and Ethnomusicology student to enroll in one of these courses.

### **I want to sign up for ANTH-X 476 Museum Practicum or FOLK-X 476 Museum Practicum in Folklore. What should I do?**

First, find a museum or collection that is of special interest to you. If you need help learning about what the choices might be, you can ask a faculty member or advisor for ideas. Ideally you

have already visited some campus or community museums and have ideas about the kind of work that they do. If not, now is a good time to start your investigations in person and online. Some museums and collections are pretty well-known on campus while others are hidden gems.

You can find more information about IU museums and collections on the Collections @ IU website: <https://collections.iu.edu/museums-galleries/index.html>

You can find information on some Bloomington community museums on the website of the Alliance of Bloomington Museum (a group that includes some campus museums also). <https://www.visitbloomington.com/museums/members/>

When you identify a museum or collection of special interest to you, check first to see if the museum has practicum or internship information on its website. Some may publish detailed student practicum and internship guides while others will just provide contact information that you can use to get in touch with staff. In either case, your goal is to find the right museum professional with whom you might work in your practicum. In any given semester, not every staff member at every campus or community museum or collection will be able to host you for a practicum, but they usually will help you negotiate your quest to find a good museum or collections practicum placement. Have a resume ready in case your potential host asks for one.

When you have a preliminary plan worked out with a practicum host, it is time to check in with the faculty member who will help you with arrangements on the academic side. For ANTH-X 476 and FOLK-F 476, this person will be Jason Baird Jackson, a professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology who coordinates enrollments for these two courses and who works with practicum students and their supervisors. You or your practicum supervisor can reach him by email at [bjb@indiana.edu](mailto:bjb@indiana.edu).

### **What questions do I need to sort out with my practicum host before enrolling?**

With your museum or collections-based host, you should determine how many credit hours you will be enrolling in. For ANTH-X 476 and FOLK-X 476, 1 credit hour is based on 45 hours of practicum work for a semester. This means three hours per week for 15 weeks (fall and spring) or 7.5 hours per week for 6 weeks of the summer term. Three credits would involve 135 hours of work for a semester and 9 hours per week for fifteen weeks in fall and spring. The table at the end of this guide provides more detail for practicum ranging from 1 to 6 credit hours. Spread over multiple enrollments, a student can earn a maximum of 8 credits in ANTH-X 476 or a maximum of 6 credits in FOLK-X 476. How many credits to enroll in and whether to split them over multiple practicum and semesters will depend on your academic and career goals. Such questions will relate to the work of your host institution, but you should also discuss them with an academic advisor or a faculty mentor.

Most host museums will expect you to work on a fixed schedule that has been arranged to accommodate your other courses and the work schedules of the museum. The IU Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, for instance, typically asks its practicum students to work in blocks of three hours or more.

In addition to agreeing to a certain number of contact hours for a certain number of credits, it is best to also agree in writing, usually via email or a memorandum, about what your practicum duties will involve. You and your host should be on the same page about what you will be doing and when that work will take place. Usually practicum work has to take place during the host organization's business hours. There may be special security or safety rules that you may be

asked to abide by. Make sure you know the expectations of your host. Some, for instance, may ask that you present on your practicum work at a special event, such as an end-of-semester symposium.

To enroll in ANTH-X 476 or FOLK-X 476, you will need to get authorization first. With your basic plan worked out, you will write to Professor Jackson ([jbj@indiana.edu](mailto:jbj@indiana.edu)) to secure this authorization. When you write, cc your supervisor and briefly explain your practicum plan. Be sure to provide your IU username. Professor Jackson will follow-up with questions and will help you get permission from the Department of Anthropology or the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology to enroll. While practicum are sometimes arranged at the last minute, right before the start of a semester, it is best to make arrangements prior to the start of registration for a given term. Practicum hosts will be much better prepared to help you if you give them plenty of time to make plans with you. Early fall is a great time to plan a spring practicum. Early spring is the best time to plan a summer or fall one.

### **Do I have to do a museum practicum in Bloomington?**

No. You can make arrangements for a museum practicum with a supervisor at any professionally staffed museum or research collection. It could be a museum in your hometown or a museum elsewhere. Students do practicum in non-Bloomington museums most frequently during the summer. The term practicum is not as widely used as the term internship. In large non-Bloomington museums there is often an internship coordinator who can help you find a placement. While summer is often a quiet season for museum practicum in Bloomington, it is often the busy time of year for internships and practicum at large museums elsewhere. The Smithsonian Institution, for instance, hosts more than 1500 interns each year, most during the summer. You are permitted to enroll in a museum practicum for credit at IU even if your host organization classifies you as a paid or unpaid intern.

### **Separate from my practicum work in at the museum or collection, will I have assignments?**

It is common for practicum students to be given orientation readings by a practicum supervisor—items that will help you get going in your new role on the museum or collection's team. Practicum students in ANTH-X 476 or FOLK-X 476 will also be given a small number of readings that will be discussed with Professor Jackson during the semester. The purpose of those discussions will be to help deepen links between the practicum experience and the student's home discipline.

### **How will I get a grade for my practicum course?**

At the end of your practicum semester, Professor Jackson will confer with your practicum supervisor, who will recommend a grade for you based on the completion all of your assigned practicum hours, the quality of your work, and your adherence to organizational rules and expectations.

**Below, on the next page, find the credit hours/work hours table for ANTH-X 476 and FOLK-F 476**

| Credit Hours | Fall or Spring                 | Summer 1 or Summer 2            | Total                  |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1            | 3 hours per week for 15 weeks  | 7.5 hours per week for 6 weeks  | 45 hours per semester  |
| 2            | 6 hours per week for 15 weeks  | 15 hours per week for 6 weeks   | 90 hours per semester  |
| 3            | 9 hours per week for 15 weeks  | 22.5 hours per week for 6 weeks | 135 hours per semester |
| 4            | 12 hours per week for 15 weeks | 30 hours per week for 6 weeks   | 180 hours per semester |
| 5            | 15 hours per week for 15 weeks | 37.5 hours per week for 6 weeks | 225 hours per semester |
| 6            | 18 hours per week for 15 weeks | 45 hours per week for 6 weeks   | 270 hours per semester |

This table is adapted from the practicum guide of the Indiana University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology for summer/fall 2020.

**For more information, contact:**

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