

## Contemporary Topics/Curating in Museums

SPEA Y506/A 450

Monday/Wednesday 9:45 – 11:00 am

TBD/ be sure to check at the last minute, we are trying to have it moved

Instructor: Professor Frank C. Lewis

Instructor email: [fralewis@indiana.edu](mailto:fralewis@indiana.edu)

Frank C. Lewis has been an art critic, an editor of both national and international arts publications, an art museum director and curator, a museum educator, and a college and university level educator in art history, museum studies, and arts management. Presently he holds the position of senior lecturer in arts administration at SPEA, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Office hours: Since I am in the building a great deal, I encourage you to email me, and we can set up a time that is convenient to both of us.

Contact information:

Email: [fralewis@indiana.edu](mailto:fralewis@indiana.edu)

Important note: While I welcome email as a means of communication, please be aware that I do not guarantee a response between 4:30 pm thru 8:30 am on weekdays and from 4:30 pm on Friday until 8:30 am the following Monday. Last minute questions regarding assignments or expectations for upcoming classes that fall within these times may not be answered, thus it is important for students to ask email questions regarding assignments during normal business hours.

### Course Objectives:

Though many upper level museum and managers and administrators may only be involved in curating early in their career or possibly never be directly involved in curating an exhibition, an in-depth understanding of the considerations and processes of curating is invaluable to understanding a museum/collection's mission and role in the cultural fabric of society and its success as an effective and relevant collecting organization.

To this end the course will seek to explore the idea and practice of curating ranging from the display of a single object to the organizing of a complex, multi-object exhibition. We will attempt to analyze and understand the following aspects:

Do objects and experiences “speak?”

What are the ideological constructs of display?

What are some of the ethical concerns in curating?

What are the variety of ways that objects can be entered into a dialogue with both other objects and viewers/spectators/consumers?

What are the values that can be found in “things” and real time experiences?

What is the “fabric” of display and what roles does it serve?

How might we evaluate the effectiveness of a curated display/experience?

How might we come to understand the viewer’s/consumer’s role in experiencing a curated display/experience?

What are the organizational steps that one must undertake to curate?

. . . or to put it more generally: **How** and **why** do we curate?

It is important to note that an understanding of curating is not simply achieved by amassing and remembering facts and figures. The information gleaned from classes, readings, site observations and research should serve as building blocks for consideration, questioning, synthesis, and both real world and theoretical problem solving. This class will strive to not only provide a body of knowledge but to also help the student develop the necessary skill set to both curate and evaluate the role of curating and the display of objects which is essential to effective museum management.

There are a number of student responsibilities that will help you succeed in this course, including the following:

- All readings must be completed before the class period in which the reading is due.
- Students are expected to attend all class sessions.

- Students are expected to participate in class discussions. Active participation in this course is strongly encouraged and required. Ask questions, think critically, challenge our authors, challenge our class discussion, bring in outside sources, start a discussion on Canvas.

## **Readings and Materials**

Textbooks:

*The Curator's Handbook, Museums, Commercial Galleries, Independent Spaces*, by Adrian George

Optional: *The Experience Economy*, by Joseph Pine (this is an interesting take on how the new economy affects organizations that offer live and/or interactive experiences.)

Readings—from journal articles and other sources—are listed in the syllabus below and made available for students on Canvas, or as indicated otherwise. Certain articles will not be reprinted in full in Canvas you may find that you have to electronically check out the article using the library system. Please pay careful attention to this designation in the syllabus.

## **SPECIAL NOTE ON WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

Reading assignments in this class serve a twofold purpose. Often you will find that the readings directly relate to the scheduled discussion topics. In this case students may be asked to respond directly to the readings and the instructor may reference specific aspects of the readings in presentations. Equally important however is that the readings should also serve as a student's introduction to and familiarization with many of the issues and questions within the field. Should a student read an assignment and have questions about particular points raised or its relevance to the topic at hand, it is incumbent upon them to bring their questions to the class.

**Students will be assessed based on the following:**

### **Attendance and participation, 30%**

This includes regular attendance, (with your video feed on) the weekly submission of a media updates (explained below), the completion of all quizzes, and Inquiry sheets written short responses to readings or class lectures, regular (required) participation in the Discussion Forum and **active and productive participation** in breakout sessions, and most importantly active and productive participation in live class sessions.

**You cannot receive an A or even an A- if you do not actively participate in class discussions and responses, regardless of the perfection of all of your other work.**

### **Weekly media reports: 10%**

It is very important for arts managers and administrators to have an awareness of developments both in the fields of the various arts and in public policy in general, including a general economic knowledge, and at least, passing familiarity with broad political issues and discussions, and an overall sense of contemporary culture. To these ends students will be asked to submit a link or a reference to any recent (two week window) article they feel may inform their world view as an arts manager/administrator on a once a week basis throughout the term, and briefly explain how the article may inform our consideration of arts and art management. Students may choose any number of popular news/culture sites on the Internet, local newspapers, national newspapers, magazines, etc. The link/reference is due by the Sunday ending the week and every week thereafter until we have reached 12. Occasionally we may use a particularly interesting or relevant article as a springboard for discussions in class. Please submit your media reports as a link and brief synopsis in the discussion forums. This will count as your first contribution.

### **Mid-term exam**

The mid-term exam is an opportunity for instructor and student alike to measure the student's grasp of the material presented in the first half of the semester. It is required but its score will only average into your final grade if it benefits your final average. Nevertheless the exam is required and failure to take the exam will result in a **10% deduction** of your final grade. **Scheduled: October 11 (5%)**

**Final exam 10%** (15% if it is better than your mid-term)

The final exam will be administered as a take home exam handed out on Wednesday **December 6** and **due on Wednesday December 13**. The format of the exam will be an

extended response to a very broad-based question regarding curating. You will be expected to incorporate all that you have learned in the class.

### **An analysis of a curated exhibition mounted in a public space 20%**

During the term you are expected to attend one art, history, science, or other object-rich exhibition mounted by a local non-profit organization. For many people this will be virtual as I want you to stay safe. You will be asked to write an analysis of this exhibition using the issues covered in the class as a suggestive guide. Your analysis is due by **Friday December 8**. (Guidelines for this analysis will be posted on Canvas.)

### **Virtual Exhibition 25 %**

You will plan, design, and virtually create a curated exhibition/experience, using a subject matter of your choosing (though it should relate to a non-profit arts organization). Your VE is due on **Friday December 8. 25 %** (Guidelines for this analysis will be posted on Canvas.)

All assignments will be assigned on Canvas and each assignment will have more information regarding the details.

### **Assignments and Assessment**

We will approach this material thorough a variety of methods, including outside readings, class lectures and discussion, written responses, and a final paper. Students are expected to come to class prepared, ready to listen and willing to engage in dialogue. Assiduous attention to assignments and the ability to engage in synthetic thinking and creative problem solving will insure that the student has a rewarding and successful class experience.

All assignments must be turned in on the day in which they are due (time and location will be specified in the assignment request). I will accept late assignments, although your grade on an assignment will be reduced by one grade step for each day it is late. (Thus a paper that would normally receive a B, if handed in on time will be a B-.

Every submission should be made on Canvas (not any other drive such as Google, etc.) and follow the following naming conventions. This may seem petty but with online class it is the only way to insure a timely grade and prevent things going to the wrong folder.

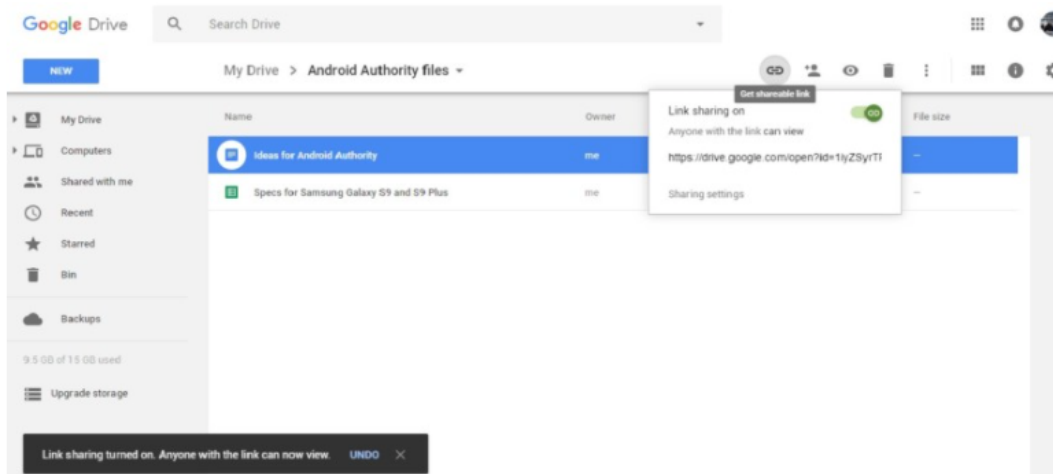
Last name, Assignment title, Class, level, date.

Sample title for a submission should appear as follows:

(Your name)\_curatorial analysis\_Curating\_grad\_2021.

I know this seems particularly precise, but I have found that with online submissions it is the only way to assure that your assignment is received and graded in a timely manner.

If, because your file is too large, you must submit with Google Drive or other 3<sup>rd</sup> party, cloud-based servers, you must include a way for me to access your files. The following is Google's instruction for such access. I will not send an email to request access.



One of the best things about Drive is the ability to share files with others. These can be single documents as well as folders. To share a Google Drive file or folder, select it and click the **Get shareable link** icon, then copy and share the link with the people you want.

Note that you have some control over what people can do with your link. The default **Restricted** mode means only people you explicitly add can see the file. You can change this so that **anyone with the link** can view it. For [Google Docs](#) and [Sheets](#), you can also choose between viewing and editing permissions.

The process is similar for mobile devices. Tap the **More actions** icon (three vertical dots) next to a file and turn on the **Link sharing** option. The link will automatically be copied, so you can go ahead and paste it into a messaging app and send it to a friend. Alternatively, you can tap on **Add people** to send the link to an email address.

Failure to follow the above submission protocols may result in an assignment not being counted or considered late. (I know that this seems overly demanding, but I have found this to be the only solution for assuring that student assignments are received, identified, and fairly graded. Not incidentally this is also a good way to learn to follow specific instructions, which is a needed skill in every occupation.

**Class participation:**

The vast majority of arts managers and administrators and especially curators will be called on to educate stakeholders, articulate missions and goals, and to engage in thoughtful and intelligent (and often unplanned) discussion among a variety of individuals. Because of this, I place a very high value on the student's ability to articulate ideas clearly in both formal speaking and in spontaneous class discussions. To this end **30%** of your final grade will be determined by your active participation in in-class discussions, active and productive participation in break-out groups, and brief presentations of group work. Your participation in the discussion forum and completion of Inquiry Sheets are also a part of your participation grade.

You must have your live video feed on during all synchronous sessions. I understand that there may be technical glitches throughout the term, but if you are having trouble sending a live video, contact IU IT.

Do not be intimidated and do not fear a "wrong" response or answer. Students should also **not try to fathom the response that the instructor may want** but instead respond with their own ideas and opinions based on their existing knowledge. Class discussions are a time to have our notions discussed and sometimes critiqued and honed. All students should be patient and fore-bearing with the ideas and opinions expressed by their peers. Challenges to such ideas should not be attacks but should seek to clarify or offer reasonable alternatives.

The instructor does not place a high value on "cold calls" in class so students must be assiduous in monitoring their participation and working hard to be prepared so that they always have something to offer in in-class discussions.

Because of this, it should be clear that regular attendance is necessary to insure your participation. (Attendance will be recorded by the presence of a live fee video). Your attendance will be monitored and an absence in three or more classes will seriously affect your participation grade. In addition to my assessment of your class participation at the end of the term students will be asked to assess their peer's participation in group work and group presentations. This score will be used to more fairly assess your contribution to Read and be sure to understand the above – **I repeat - you cannot get higher than a B+ if you do not meet all the requirements of category 4**, even if your written and submitted work is excellent.

the class.

What constitutes good classroom participation?



0	1	2	3	4
Seldom or never responds to lecturer's questions, lack of participation in group projects and presentations/ poor attendance	Occasionally responds to lecturer's questions, minimal participation in group projects and presentations/ spotty attendance	Responds to lecturer's questions on a fairly regular basis but seldom offering answers related to readings and other classroom discussions/regular attendance, active participation in group projects and presentations/good attendance	Respond's not only to lecturer's questions with information clearly indicative of careful reading and listening but also responds to other students observations and points/regular attendance, active participation in group projects and presentations/ good attendance	Thinking outside the box with inventive and thoughtful answers and questions that show application of concepts discussed in class and readings and offering information clearly indicative of careful reading and listening and responds to other students observations and points and takes very active role in group projects and presentations/ Excellent attendance

As IU presently records grades using the letter system. I grade all assignments on a twelve-point scale. I can also say that the award of an A+ is a rare occurrence.

#### Final Grading Scale:

12	A+
11	A
10	A-
9	B+
8	B
7	B-
6	C+
5	C
4	C-
3	D+

2	D
1	D-
0	F

Some assignments, such as class participation, media reports, and the inquiry sheets will be graded on an E, (Excellent) S, (Satisfactory) U (Unsatisfactory) scale. These letters will appear in Canvas

**I will try my best to provide weekly grades – though they may appear later than the week being they are submitted. Should students wish to understand and improve their progress in class and forum participation and quizzes, etc. I am more than happy to schedule a session to discuss their performance. Discussions of your progress in class must happen in an Office hours or scheduled in person meeting or in a Zoom session, I will not respond to email queries regarding your grade.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Do not pay any attention to the average of your grades that Canvas provides. You should only pay attention to the individual grades. Due to my grading system Canvas does not average your grades in a way that accurately reflects your performance. However, should you see under your individual discussion forum grades: S, S, E, U, you may personally average those grades and assume at the fourth week that you are doing S level work in the forums. S level work will generally reflect a grade of B- to C. (But remember this is only a small part of your participation grade overall.)**

### **Lecture Schedule and Assigned Readings:**

Note: I reserve the right to modify this schedule with slight tweaks and adjustments depending on students grasp of the material. I may also slightly modify the readings depending on students' responses. Should this be necessary I will be sure to modify the readings at least a week in advance.

I have included a number of articles, some long, some tedious, but all helpful in the files section of Canvas in case you wish to read more or read about a particular aspect that interests you. Should you read these please share some of your observations in class for the rest of your peers. They are in Files/Optional Readings



This is Betrand, one of my dogs.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Out of Class Activities</b>
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<p><b>Week 1</b></p> <p>Aug 21/23</p>	<p><b>What is curating?</b></p> <p>Textbook Pages: 1- 27</p> <p>“Planning for Display,” <i>Manual of Museum Planning</i></p> <p>“The Museum, a Temple or the Forum,” by Duncan F. Cameron in <i>Reinventing the Museum, The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p>Aug 28/30</p>	<p><b>Stuff, Things, Objects</b></p> <p>Textbook Pages 212 – 275</p> <p>“Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion,” by Susan Vogel in <i>Grasping the World</i>.</p> <p>The Reticent Object,” Peter Vergo, in <i>The New Museology</i>.</p>

<p><b>Week 3</b></p> <p>Sep 6</p> <p>(Labor Day is the 4<sup>th</sup>)</p>	<p><b>Speaking Display</b></p> <p>“Performing Identity: The Museal Framing of Nazi Ideology, by Sandra Esslinger, in <i>Grasping the World, The Idea of the Museum</i>.</p> <p>“Museum Collections, Documentation, and Shifting Knowledge Paradigms,” by Fiona Cameron in <i>Reinventing the Museum, The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 4</b></p> <p>Sep 11/13</p>	<p><b>Display as Ideology</b></p> <p>Textbook Pages: 152 -211</p> <p>“Museums as Contested Sites,” by Steven C. Dubin in <i>Displays of Power, Memory and Amnesia in the America Museum</i>.</p> <p>“The Fictions of Factual Representation,” by Hayden White, in <i>Grasping the World, the Idea of the Museum</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 5</b></p> <p>Sep 18/20</p>	<p><b>Themes and Organizational frameworks</b></p> <p>Textbook Pages: 88- 109</p> <p>“Do Museum Exhibitions Have a Future?,” by Kathleen Mclean, in <i>Reinventing the Museum, The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b></p> <p>Sep 25/27</p>	<p><b>Themes and Organizational frameworks</b></p> <p>“Battle Royal, The Final Mission of the Enola Gay,” by Steven C. Dubin in <i>Displays of Power, Memory and Amnesia in the America Museum</i>.</p>

<p><b>Week 7</b> Oct 2/4</p>	<p><b>Themes and Organizational frameworks</b></p> <p>“Mining the Museum,” by Lisa G. Corrin in <i>Reinventing the Museum, The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 8</b> Oct 9/11</p> <p>Mid term due: Oct 11</p>	<p>Discussion of principles covered to date and mid-term due.</p>
<p><b>Week 9</b> Oct 16/18</p>	<p><b>Themes and Organizational frameworks</b></p> <p>“The Exhibitionary Complex,” by Tony Bennett in <i>Thinking About Exhibitions</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 10</b> Oct 23/25</p>	<p><b>What about the viewer?</b></p> <p>Textbook Pages: 124 – 151</p> <p>“Changing Practices of Interpretation,” by Lisa Roberts in <i>Reinventing the Museum, The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift</i>.</p> <p>“Museum Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue,” by Kathleen McLean in <i>Daedalus, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Summer 1999</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 11</b> Oct 30/Nov 1</p>	<p><b>Curating and Ethics</b></p>

	<p>“Memorial museums and the objectification of suffering,” by Paul Williams in <i>The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics, Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum</i>.</p> <p>“Museum Censorship,” by Christopher B. Steiner in <i>The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics, Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 12</b></p> <p>6/8</p>	<p><b>Interpretive materials</b></p> <p><b>Textbook Pages 276 – 315</b></p> <p><b>“A Matter of Perspective, Revisionist History and <i>The West as America</i>, by Steven C. Dubin in <i>Displays of Power, Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum</i>.</b></p>
<p><b>Week 13</b></p> <p>13/15</p>	<p><b>Technologies</b></p> <p>Museum Experience and the “Real Thing,” by Hilde S. Hein, in <i>The Museum in Transition, A Philosophical Perspective</i>.</p>
<p><b>Week 14</b></p> <p>Thanksgiving Break</p>	
<p><b>Week 15</b></p> <p>Nov 27/29</p>	<p><b>Catch-up, summation, questions answered, and sharing the Curator’s secret handshake.</b></p>
<p><b>Week 16</b></p> <p><b>Dec 4/6</b></p> <p><b>Analysis and Virtual</b></p>	<p><b>Inspiration and Caveats</b></p>

<b>Exhibition due: Dec 8</b>	
<b>Exam Week</b>	Final exam will be handed out December 8 and due December 15



## **Special needs**

I am happy to accommodate any special academic needs. Please let me know by the first week of classes if you have any special needs.

### **1. Attendance**

Your attendance directly affects your participation and engagement grade, in addition to assuring that you learn and understand the material and can apply it in real world circumstances. Every class that you miss counts as a zero on that day's participation, so it should be obvious that irregular attendance will drastically affect your final grade. To that end there are no excused absences. Students with a legitimate appeal for an absence must submit in writing: the reason for the request and official documentation – doctors note, flight number and receipts for travel, etc. Request for late arrival or early departure from the class (performance events, sports participation, last minute theater rehearsal and the like, must be in writing prior to the event and documented by a coach, director, conductor, etc.

Students who participate and perform well, should not worry that an absence may drastically affect their grade as their overall class performance will more than counter act an occasional 0 on a day's participation grade.

There will be no extra credit given during the term.

### **2. Make-up Exams**

Due to the above policy, the appeal policy for a make-up exam is the same. The instructor will assess your appeal and if a true emergency is documented then a make-up exam will be arranged within one week of the date the appeal is granted.

### 3. Late Assignments

Late assignments are deducted a full point (out of a 12-point scale) for every day that assignment is late.

### 4. Technology Use

There will be no use of cell phones in class. Only the instructor's phone should be turned on to ring in the case of an emergency. Occasionally the instructor may allow access to cell phones, during group work but this will be stated at the beginning of the project and students will be expected to turn off their phones upon the reconvening of the entire class. Laptops/Tablets may be used for notetaking however if students are observed occupying themselves with their laptop with anything other than notetaking (and group project research) students will be required to switch off their laptops/Tablets for the remainder of the class.

O'Neill School Honor Code which can be found at:

[https://oneill.indiana.edu/doc/undergraduate/uqrd\\_student\\_honorcode.pdf](https://oneill.indiana.edu/doc/undergraduate/uqrd_student_honorcode.pdf)

Please familiarize yourself with Indiana University's policy on academic honesty and integrity:

<http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/>

### **Counseling and Psychological Services**

For information about services offered to students by CAPS:

<http://healthcenter.indiana.edu/counseling/index.shtml>.

### **Religious Observation**

In accordance with the Office of the Dean of Faculties, any student who wishes to receive an excused absence from class must submit a request form available from the Dean of Faculties for each day to be absent. This form must be presented to the course instructor by the end of the second week of this semester. A separate form must be submitted for each day. The instructor will fill in the bottom section of the form and then return the original to the student. Information about the policy on religious observation can be found at the following

website: <http://vpfaa.indiana.edu/policies/bloomington/instructional-responsibilities/religious-observances.shtml>.

### **Disability Services for Students**

Securing accommodations for a student with disabilities is a responsibility shared by the student, the instructor and the DSS Office. For information about support services or accommodations available to students with disabilities, and for the procedures to be followed by students and instructors: <http://studentaffairs.iub.edu/dss/>.

### **Sexual Harassment**

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Title IX and our own Sexual Misconduct policy prohibit sexual misconduct. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help.

If you are seeking help and would like to talk to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with:

- i. The Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) at 812-855-8900
- ii. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 812-855-5711
- iii. Confidential Victim Advocates (CVA) at 812-856-2469
- iv. IU Health Center at 812-855-4011

For more information about available resources:

<http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html>. It is also important to know that federal regulations and University policy require me to promptly convey any information about potential sexual misconduct known to me to our campus' Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. In that event, they will work with a small number of others on campus to ensure that appropriate measures are taken, and resources are made available to the student who may have been harmed. Protecting a student's privacy is of utmost concern, and all involved will only share information with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html> to learn more.

**Commitment to Diversity: Find your home and community at IU**  
**Asian Culture Center**

Address: 807 East Tenth Street, Bloomington, IN 47408

Phone: 812-856-5361

Email: [acc@indiana.edu](mailto:acc@indiana.edu)

Website: <https://asianresource.indiana.edu/index.html>

**First Nations Educational & Cultural Center**

Address: 712 E 8th St., Bloomington, IN 47408

Phone: 812-855-4814

Email: [fnecc@indiana.edu](mailto:fnecc@indiana.edu)

Website: <https://firstnations.indiana.edu/contact/index.html>

**LGBTQ+ Culture Center**

Address: 705 E 7th St., Bloomington, Indiana 47408

Phone: 812-855-4252

Email: [glbtserve@indiana.edu](mailto:glbtserve@indiana.edu)

Website: <https://lgbtq.indiana.edu/contact/index.html>

**La Casa Latino Culture Center**

Address: 715 E 7th St., Bloomington IN, 47408

Phone: 812-855-0174

Email: [lacasa@indiana.edu](mailto:lacasa@indiana.edu)

Website: <https://lacasa.indiana.edu/>

**Neal Marshall Black Culture Center**

Address: 275 N Jordan Ave Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Phone: 812-855-9271

Email: [nmgrad@indiana.edu](mailto:nmgrad@indiana.edu)

Website: <https://blackculture.indiana.edu/index.html>