HIS 626 – The Practice of Public History
Fall 2007, Tuesdays, 3:30-6:20 p.m.
Classroom: MHRA 1207

Professor Benjamin Filene
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What you’re getting yourself into:
This course is not an instructional in how to claw your way to the top; rather it’s an
introduction to what it is like to work to within a public history institution and what it
takes to thrive in one.

“You gotta serve somebody,” croaks Bob Dylan. Everyone at every level of every
organization is simultaneously a leader and a follower. This course is about
understanding both sides of that relationship and how to do productive and fulfilling
work from both ends.

The course starts from a few key premises:
• The day-to-day, nuts-and-bolts parts of an institution’s work take on life only
  when you understand the goals these practices were created to achieve. The
  policies, procedures, and programs that fill professional manuals and “how to”
  books exist to achieve big-picture goals for institutions.

• Fundamentally, these goals involve relationships—relationships between
  o an institution and its constituencies (“Reaching Audiences”)
  o an institution and other institutions (“Reaching Partners”)
  o an institution and its employees (“Reaching Colleagues”)

The course is structured around the theory and practice involved in building these
three kinds of relationships. Throughout, the course links practical skill—writing a
mission statement, creating a marketing plan, writing a budget—with discussion of
the broader purposes these tools are intended to accomplish.

How we’ll go about it
The course doesn’t pretend that public history is either rocket science (specialized and
really complicated) or theoretical physics (fascinating to talk about but tough to try out in
practice). The best way to learn about public history work is to do some. So, in this
course you will not only have regular readings, discussions, and writings but you will
also each be involved in designing, collaboratively, a history project that will be practical,
useful, and enticing to a real, local public institution—the Senior Center at the
Greensboro-based Senior Resources of Guilford. Next semester (HIS627) we’ll create
these projects!
**How you’ll be evaluated**

The skills that you need to succeed in this course are ones that you will need to thrive in the workplace:

- **reading and analyzing** thoughtfully and with an eye for new ideas
- **speaking** with passion, clarity, and respect
- **writing** clearly and persuasively
- **collaborating** with energy, sensitivity, and an awareness of how much you can learn from your peers

**You will be graded on**

**Class participation—15%**: attending class, doing the reading, completing the Information Interview assignment, writing thoughtful and on-time weekly responses to the reading (see below), speaking up in discussions, and helping to foster a sense of shared exploration within the classroom

*Weekly responses*: Each week, short, informal reactions to that week's readings (roughly a couple of paragraphs) will be due. These must be posted on our class’s Blackboard Discussion Board by 8:00 a.m. each Tuesday.

**Information interview (ungraded): 10-minute in-class presentation based on interview with museum professional**: students sign up for due dates—*August 28-November 13*

**Essay #1—15%**: Analytical essay #1: history, the public, and public history—*due October 9*

**Essay #2—20%**: Analytical essay #2: institutional “personality assessment,” assessing the clarity and coherence of a local institution’s mission, brand, marketing, fund-raising, and interpretive program—*due October 30*

**Final Project and Presentation—30%**: project plan for Senior Resources of Guilford—*due November 29*

*Note*: Each student’s grade for the collaborative final project will be determined by the quality of the product and presentation and, as well, by each individual’s contributions to the project. Each student will be asked to assess the contributions that each team member (including themselves) made to the project and to the collaborative process.

**Final paper—20%**: reflection essay on the final project—*due December 6*

**Grading scale:**

- A=93-100
- A-=90-92
- B+=87-89
- B=83-86
- B-=80-82
- C+=77-79
- C=73-76

**If things go awry…**

…it’s your responsibility to tell me—right away. If papers are late without direct, prior approval from me, I deduct ½ a letter grade per day—no exceptions. If your project is dead-ending or your peer collaboration imploding, I need to hear about it before it’s too late to resolve the issues.
Books to Buy


Academic Integrity Policy
All students have a responsibility to uphold the standards of “Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, and Responsibility” detailed in the Academic Integrity Policy. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, misuse of academic resources, falsification of information, and facilitating of academic dishonesty are treated with utmost seriousness by the history department and dealt with severely by the University administration. The full policy appears in the *Student Calendar/Handbook* and at academicintegrity.uncg.edu.

Per university policy, you will be asked to sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment in this class.

Special Needs
If you require accommodations for special learning needs, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Disability Services, located within the Elliot University Center (334-5770)—and please let me know!
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Whose History?  Who’s History?
August 21—Introductions
Assignment: administer audience survey

August 28: Whose History?  Who’s History?


Kidder, Tracy, Excerpt A. In *Old Friends* (1993): 221-244.


Assignment: Look at “Older Americans 2004: Key Indicators of Well-Being”—an electronic resource available as a .pdf through UNCG library’s catalogue—and bring in a fact or table about elderly populations that interest you.

Reaching Colleagues I
September 4: Working Collaboratively
and team dynamics
CLASS MEETS AT 3:30 AT SENIOR RESOURCES OF GUILFORD (301 East Washington St., Greensboro; 336-373-4816)


Kidder, Tracy, Excerpt B. In Old Friends: 23-53; 61-72.

Assignment: Look at one of these websites (we’ll divide them up in class)
- NC Division of Aging and Adult Services: http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging
- AARP: http://www.aarp.org

Reaching Audiences
September 11: Making Public Institutions Matter and mission statements


September 18: Getting on the Radar Screen and marketing plans/branding
CLASS MEETS AT 3:30 IN WRITING CENTER, MHRA 3110

One-page project proposal due


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 11: 247-272.

September 25: Preserving (and Deserving) the Public’s Trust and ethics and collections management policies


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 10: 223-245.

Optional: Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 8: 175-195.

In class: “Team Self-Evaluation” sheet

Reaching Partners
October 2: Collaborating with Communities and organizing for civic engagement

Revised one-page project proposal due


October 9: Pursuing Outreach vs. “In-Reach”

and diversity hiring plans

Essay #1 due


Bernard, Pamela J. “When Seeking a Diverse Faculty, Watch Out for Legal Minefields.” The Chronicle of Higher Education (September 29, 2006): B28-31. [BF will hand out in class]

“Seek and You Shall Find.” Minneapolis Star-Tribune (February 16, 2005): D1, D6. [BF will hand out in class]

October 16—no class (fall break)
October 23: Collaborating with Donors I—Listening and development plans

In class: 10-second and 1-minute project presentations

Guest speaker: Fred Goss, Director, Greensboro Historical Museum


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 6: 121-160.


October 30: Collaborating with Donors II—Stating Your Case and budgets and grant-writing

Essay #2 due

Guest speaker: Dr. Harlan Gradin, Associate Director/Director of Programs & Community Development, North Carolina Humanities Council


“Five Steps to Easier Proposal Writing”: 2-9. [BF will hand out in class]


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 5: 91-119.
Reaching Colleagues II
November 6: Building a Vision and board management


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 3 (excerpt): 39-55.

[November 8: Resume/Cover-Letter Workshop at Career Planning Office, 1:00-3:00 p.m.]

November 13: Managing Change I—Business Models and strategic planning


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 4: 75-90.
November 20: Managing Change II—New Models for Museums

*Drafts of full project due*

November 27: Leading from Below
*and human resources/personnel management and finding your niche*


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 7: 161-173.

December 4:
*Revised final projects due*

*In class: final project presentations/Celebration!*

December 11: *Final papers due*