HIS 626 – The Practice of Public History
Fall 2008, Tuesdays, 3:30-6:20 p.m.
Classroom: MHRA 2207

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 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, relevant, and engaging to real local institutions and public audiences. This semester will involve planning projects that will focus on the mill villages that sustained the Cone Mills factories in Greensboro. Next semester (HIS627) we’ll implement those plans and 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 (see below), 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:** After reading in Museum Careers (Schlatter) conduct an interview with a museum professional and then give a 10-minute in-class presentation about it to the class: students sign up for dates—September 9-November 11

Assignment #1—20%: Analytical essay: “Institutional Personality Assessment”: an analysis of the clarity and coherence of a local institution’s mission, brand, marketing, fund-raising, and interpretive program—**due October 7**

Assignment #2—15%: Compilation and analysis of primary sources **Mill Village Brief:** a selection and analysis of materials from the Cone Mills Corporation Records in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC Chapel Hill—**due October 28**

Final Project and Presentation—30%:
**Grant application for mill villages project—due December 2**

*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 they themselves) made to the project and to the collaborative process.

Final paper—20%: reflection essay on the final project—**due December 12**

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 26—Introductions

Before first class:

Read some of the actual Listserv postings about “What Is Public History” from May, June, and July 2007, archived here: http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=lm&list=H-Public.

Come to class with two comments that interested you.


Schlosser, Jim. “‘Lintheads’ and Proud of It.” In The Beat Goes On: A Celebration of Greensboro’s Character and Diversity, Gayle Hicks Fripp, ed. (2008): 3 pp. [BF will hand out]

September 2: Whose History? Who’s History?

Guest speakers: Paul and Judith Sams, former residents of White Oak mill village

Rosenzweig, Roy and David Thelen. The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life (2000): Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, and Afterthoughts (everything except Chapters 2-3).


Review website: “Remember Cliffside” (Cliffside Historical Society)
http://remembercliffside.com/

On your own: Drive through the Greensboro mill villages

**Reaching Colleagues I**
September 9: Working Collaboratively and team dynamics

*Guest speakers:* Lynn and Jim Rumley, directors of the Textile Heritage Center, Cooleemee, NC


**Reaching Audiences**
September 16: Making Public Institutions Matter and mission statements


September 23: 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 (tentative), 4:00-6:00 p.m.: Internship presentations]

September 30: 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.

### Reaching Partners

**October 7: Collaborating with Communities and organizing for civic engagement**

*Assignment #1 (Institutional Personality Assessment) due*


**October 14: Pursuing Outreach vs. “In-Reach” and diversity hiring plans**


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 21—no class (fall break)

October 28: Collaborating with Donors I—Listening and development plans

Assignment #2 (Mill Village Brief) due

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

Guest speaker: Fred Goss, Director, Greensboro Historical Museum


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 6: 121-160.

November 4: Collaborating with Donors II—Stating Your Case and budgets and grant-writing

Draft of slogans/logos and solicitation letters due in class (each person chooses to do one or other)

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


[BF will hand out in class]


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 5: 91-119.

Reaching Colleagues II
November 11: Building a Vision and board management

Draft of all NCHC materials due


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 3 (excerpt): 39-55.
[November 13 (tentative): Resume/Cover-Letter Workshop at Career Planning Office, 1:00-3:00 p.m.]

November 18: Managing Change I—Business Models
and strategic planning
Receive comments on NCHC materials from Harlan Gradin & BF


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 4: 75-90.

November 25: Leading from Below
and human resources/personnel management and finding your niche

Drafts of combined NCHC grant due to BF


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 7: 161-173.
December 2:
  Final projects due
  In class: final project presentations/Celebration!

December 5—final NCHC grant submitted

December 9: no class (“Reading Day”)

December 12: Final papers due (no final exam)