

HIS/IAR 711—Community History Practicum

Fall 2011

Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:20

MHRA 3209

Professor Benjamin Filene

office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00 and by appointment: MHRA 2137

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Credits: 3 hours

Prerequisites: Restricted to HIS and IAR graduate students who have completed HIS/IAR 626 (The Practice of Public History), unless permission is granted by instructor

Course Description: In this hands-on course, students work collaboratively and engage community partners as they research, design, and complete public projects—previously planned in HIS/IAR 626—that engage audiences in local/regional history. These projects involve original research in both primary and secondary printed sources and, as well, draw on a range of sources that drive public history work, including public records, oral interviews, images, and artifacts. The final products may involve exhibitions, public markers, web-based products, programs (tours, festivals), curricula or other formats that engage public audiences in issues and stories emerging from the past around us. These are not hypothetical, but real projects that reach real audiences.

Student Learning Outcomes:

In completing these projects, the course will hone skills and techniques utilized by public history professionals, including the ability to

- **identify** and **compile** historical sources;
- **analyze** them for meanings and **discover** connections among them;
- **collaborate** with your peers and with community partners as you **plan** how to sequence the work of project development;
- **design** and **construct** a public product that **demonstrates** and **shares** your findings;
- and **discuss**, **reflect** on, and **evaluate** the successes and limitations of your work.

Teaching Methods:

The class will meet regularly as a full group to provide peer support and critique and to help build a sense of community among the collaborators. The bulk of the work for the class, however, will occur outside the classroom. Each week will involve a *substantive* engagement with me about your progress, meaning that you will have to work individually and in your project groups to generate ideas and materials so that we can have sufficient grounds for discussion.

As well you will be expected to arrange meetings to receive feedback and input from both community partners and outside academic advisors.

Assignments and Evaluation:

You will be evaluated on your creative contributions to the projects; your ability to foster a collaborative, supportive, and yet rigorous work environment with your peers; your skill at forging respectful, professional, and fruitful relationships with community partners; and your ability to plan and complete a project that reflects a high degree of interpretive sophistication, adheres to historical accuracy, reflects sustained engagement with community partners, and that creatively engages and rewards public audiences.

You will maintain a **weekly journal entry** charting your progress and reflecting on your process of research, design, and community engagement. As well, you will receive feedback from me and your peers at several key mileposts:

- Preliminary Development Review: **September 26**
- Detailed Development Review: **October 24**
- Production Review: **November 21**
- Final Public Presentation: **Friday, December 2 (First Friday Greensboro)**

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Process Journal: 10%

Class participation—15%:

Preliminary Development Review: 15%

Final project: 40%

Final public presentation: 20%

Grading scale:

A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; F=72 and below

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 peer collaboration imploding, I need to hear about it *before* it's too late to resolve the issues!

LATENESS POLICY:

If a paper or project is turned in late, I will deduct 1/2 a letter grade per day (e.g., A to A-) unless you and I have previously agreed upon an extension *in advance* or unless a dean's excuse is provided.

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!

Required Book

Isenberg, Alison. *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*, 2004.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

In this class, the group will explore the shifting dynamics of project-based public history work. Adaptability and adjustment will be keys to success! With that in mind, the course is structured in phases, described below, that culminate in milestone reviews. Within each phase, tasks and duties will evolve as needed, just as they do in creating projects in museums.

While, the class will meet regularly throughout each phase, traditional reading and discussion will take place primarily in the first phase (see below), during which we will be exploring historical background and group dynamics relevant to our work. Throughout, I will expect significant independent and collaborative work, with constant communication among team-members and with me.

Preliminary Development: August-September

This is an idea-driven phase, in which team-members explore the project's thematic possibilities, conduct research, create a preliminary design approach, do budget estimates, and make a work plan for the duration of the project.

August 22: Introduction

August 24: Group Dynamics

Learning through Serving Chapter 4: 45-65

Isenberg, Alison. *Downtown America*. Introduction, Chapters 1, 2: 1-77.

Seeing Downtowns

August 29:

Isenberg, Alison. Chapters 3-4: 78-165.

Reflection: *Learning through Serving*, Chapter 6: 83-97

August 31: Isenberg, Alison. Chapter 5: 166-202.

September 5: no class (Labor Day)

September 7: Isenberg, Alison. Chapters 6-7 and Conclusion: 203-317

September 9:

Aylworth, Stephanie. "A Multifaceted Approach to Historic District Interpretation in

Georgia." *The Public Historian* 32 (November 2010): 42-50.

Exum, Miriam Farris. "From Citizen to Consumer: A Tour of Two Commercial Landscapes in Greensboro, NC," 2009: 17 pp.

- **September 26: Preliminary Development Review**

Detailed Development

This is a form-driven phase, in which team-members finalize content (conducting targeted research as needed), write full drafts of all text, solidify design decisions, create prototypes; allocate final budgets; and decide production schedule.

- **October 24: Detailed Development Review:**

Production: November-December

This is a product-center phase in which team-members create final edits of text, implement design decisions, and fabricate all physical components as needed.

- **November 21: Production Review**
- **December 2: Public Presentation at First Friday Greensboro**