

Public History
HIS 512
Fall 2014

Wednesdays, 3:30-6:20

Classroom: **MHRA 1207** (Moore Humanities and Research Administration Building)

Professor Benjamin Filene

office hours: Tuesdays: 2:00-3:00 and by appointment,

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Credit structure: 3:3

Prerequisites: None (undergraduates need to have completed the history department's requirements necessary to enroll in 500-level courses).

For Whom Planned: This course is designed for upper-level undergraduate students and for graduate students.

Catalog Description: History of the preservation of America's past through museums (indoor and outdoor); collections and their interpretation; exhibitions and park and wilderness areas.

Course Description:

Where do we find history in public? Who shapes how we remember the past, and how do those decisions have power? From museums to monuments to public memory, this course traces the presence of the past in the world beyond the university. Together we will explore the tools that public historians use to interpret the past and the presentation strategies they deploy to engage audiences. Along the way, you will be introduced to the some of the career positions that sustain the professional practice of public history. This course aims to build on your historical training and encourage you to look outwards to see how you may use those skills to engage with contemporary public life.

Teaching Methods

This seminar depends on active and engaged discussions in which you and your classmates, individually and collectively, wrestle with the ideas and issues at hand. The classroom will be a setting for engagement with multiple voices—not only the professor's but those of the students, community partners, and historical "informants" revealed through a range of sources. You are expected to complete reading assignments before every class meeting and to arrive ready to share personal opinions on the material. Class sessions will regularly involve informal full-group discussions, oral presentations, small-group conversations, and on-the-spot analyses of primary sources. As detailed below, class participation is a significant part of your grade. In addition, you will engage with the course content through formal and informal writing assignments that invite you to apply the approaches we are discussing to original material in your own voice.

Student Learning Outcomes:

In successful completing this course, you will build skills that you enable you to

1. **interpret primary sources** (including material culture, visual images, and oral history, landscapes and others) for cultural and historical meanings;
2. **analyze written secondary sources** thoughtfully, with attention to argument and point of view;
3. **analyze public interpretations** of the past—including exhibitions, historic sites, monuments and online sites—with attention to argument, point of view, and historical context;
4. **create original interpretations of the past** that engage public audiences through multiple presentation strategies;
5. **write** clearly and persuasively;
6. **speak** with passion, clarity, and respect; and
7. **experiment** fearlessly to build your skills and find the best ways to reach solutions to interpretive challenges.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Class participation—10% (5% for graduate students)

attending class, doing the reading assignments, speaking up in discussions, giving class presentations as required, and helping to foster a sense of shared exploration within the classroom. (learning outcomes #s 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7)

Weekly responses—5%:

Each week, each student will write short, informal reactions to that week's readings (roughly a couple of paragraphs) will be due. Responses will be assessed for breadth and depth of engagement with the readings, originality, and thoughtfulness of engagement. These must be posted on our class's Blackboard Discussion Board **by 8:00 a.m. each Wednesday**. For each student, I will drop the term's lowest reader-response grade. (learning outcomes #s 1, 2, 3, 5)

The Past Today: History in the News—5%

Read the newspaper!

History gains power when we use it to understand the present. It is regularly deployed (or mis-deployed) to that end every day by a range of media commentators and creators. At the beginning of each class period, one student will give a short presentation (6-8 minutes) that introduces and analyzes one instance of the past that she or he has taken note of in a recent newspaper or magazine article, television show, movie, website, etc. We're looking for instances where history surfaces in "a-historical" places—i.e., *beyond* the usual public history realms of historical novels, history museums, historical films, etc. (learning outcomes #s 1, 3, 6, 7)

Oral Interview Archival Package (due October 8th)—20% (10% for grad. students)

Each student will record an oral interview with a UNCG employee who has worked at the University for at least ten years. Then each will create an indexed

transcription of the interview; provide cds, digital audio, and permission forms, ready to be delivered to the interviewee and the archives; and write a reflection essay about what the interview offers as a source for public history. (learning outcomes #s 1, 3, 4)

The Public Past (due October 22nd)—25% (20% for grad. students)

Choose a site, exhibition, memorial, commemoration, or digital history product and analyze and assess its form, content, and public impact: 5-7 pages. (learning outcomes #s 3, 6)

Project Prospectus for (Re-)Making Public Memory (due November 5th)—5% including

- a biographical sketch,
- issue summary,
- resource assessment, and
- visitor study (incl. media scan and on-the-street interviews)

(Re-)Making Public Memory (due Thursday, December 4th)—30% (25% for grad. students)

How UNCG should commemorate (or, perhaps, exorcise) the memory of the people after whom its campus buildings have named? Each student will choose one UNCG building; conduct original research on its namesake; and create an original and detailed plan, backed by historical and contemporary justifications, for how this person's legacy should be marked, interpreted, and presented to the contemporary campus community. Projects will be shared in end-of-term presentations. (learning outcomes #s 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7)

Graduate students only: Research Paper in the History of Public Memory (due December 9th)—25% (grad. students)

Choose an public history product—a single monument, holiday celebration, parade, festival, museum installation; conduct primary- and secondary-source research into its genesis and reception; and write an interpretive essay analyzing what this piece of public history suggests about the social, cultural, and economic forces that were tied up in the history-making process of the period: approximately 20 pages. (learning outcomes #s 1, 2, 3, 5, 7)

Grading scale:

A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D+=67-69; D=63-66; D-=60-62; F=59 and below

If things go awry...

...it's your responsibility to tell me—right away.

Lateness Policy:

It is important to turn in assignments on time so as to be fair to other students and to ensure timely grading. I am receptive to *advance* requests for extensions. However, if an assignment is turned in late without an agreed-upon extension, I will deduct 1/3rd of a letter grade per day (e.g., A to A-) unless an appropriate written excuse (e.g., medical, counselor's, dean's) is provided.

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 Texts:

None

E-reserves: The discussion for each class session will draw on required readings, listed below. All of these materials are available on electronic reserve on Blackboard.

Attendance policy: Students need to attend all class meetings and are encouraged to meet individually with the instructor as needed. See “Class attendance,” above.

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 <http://sa.uncg.edu/dean/academic-integrity/pledg/>. Per university policy, you will be asked to sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment in this class.

Class Schedule

Setting the Stage: Publics and Histories

August 20: Public Memory/Public History

In class: video—*An American Story* (The Lower East Side Tenement Museum)

August 27: History in Public

Glassberg, David. "Sense of History," In *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (2001): 1-22.

Becker, Carl. "Everyman His Own Historian" (Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered December 29, 1931). *American Historical Review* 37, No. 2: 221-236.

Rosenzweig, Roy and David Thelen. "Patterns of Popular Historymaking," In *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (1998): 15-36.

Page, Max. "Radical Public History in the City," *Radical History Review* 79 (winter 2001) 114-116.

In-Class Presentation: The Past is Personal

How do *you* connect to the past? Choose an object, place, person, book, film, or song that you feel illuminates your own personal history. Explain how it links your present to the past; why, how, and when it matters to you; and what it suggests about your place in time. You might consider: has its meaning changed over time?

September 3: Using the Past/Why Remember?

Edwards, R.A.R. "Chasing Aleck: The Story of a Dorm." *The Public Historian* (2007): 87-104.

Weyeneth, Robert. "History, He Wrote: Murder, Politics, and Challenges of Public History in a Community with a Secret." *The Public Historian* 16 (Spring 1994): 51-73.

Brown University Confronts Its Past Ties to Slavery. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 53 (Autumn, 2006): 33-34.

Clarke, Max and Gary Alan Fine. "A" for Apology: Slavery and the Collegiate Discourses of Remembrance—the Cases of Brown University and the University of Alabama." *History and Memory* 22 (Spring/Summer 2010): 81-112.

Schumann, Marguerite and Virginia Terrell Lathrop. *Bricks and People: A Walking Guide to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro* (1973): 1-24.

Lepore, Jill. "The Disruption Machine." *The New Yorker* (June 23, 2014): 30-36.

Syre, Stephen. "Harvard Professors Clash over Business Theory." *Boston Globe* (July 8, 2014): 4 pp.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2014/07/07/disruption-harvard-over-article-business-innovation-theory/gkOoijR9Ue6qCeUnD2I0gN/story.html>

[also on e-reserve]

Stancill, Jane. "Group Wants UNC-CH to Rename Saunders Hall." *Raleigh News and Observer* (May 21, 2014):

<http://www.newsobserver.com/2014/05/21/3878528/group-wants-unc-ch-to-rename-saunders.html> [not on e-reserve]

Reaching Back: Public History Tools and Approaches

September 10: Oral history, Alternative Voices, and Shared Authority

Filene, Benjamin. "Make Yourself at Home—Welcoming Voices in *Open House: If These Walls Could Talk*," In *Letting Go? Historical Authority in a User-Generated World* (Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds., 2011): 138-155.

Yalowitz, Billy. "The Black Bottom: Making Community-Based Performance in West Philadelphia." In *Letting Go? Historical Authority in a User-Generated World* (2011): 157-173.

Davidson, James West and Mark Hamilton Lytle. "The View from the Bottom Rail: Oral History and the Freedmen's Point of View." In *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (2005 [fifth edition]): 177-209.

Ritchie, Donald. "Introduction," "An Oral History of Our Time," "Conducting Interviews," and "Presenting Oral History," In *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (2003): 10-19, 20-46, 84-108, and 222-251.

September 17: Objects

Riello, Giorgio. "Things that Shape History: Material Culture and Historical Narratives." In *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (2009): 24-46.

Berger, Arthur Asa. "Cultural Theory and Material Culture," In *What Objects Mean: An Introduction to Material Culture* (2009): 81-92.

In class: video—*Objects and Memory*

September 24: Images

Davidson, James West and Mark Hamilton Lytle. "The Mirror with a Memory: Photographic Evidence and the Urban Scene." In *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (2005 [fifth edition]): 210-233.

Bashforth, Martin. "Absent Father, Present Histories, In Hilda Kean and Paul Ashton, *People and Their Pasts: Public History Today*; 203-222.

Schumann and Lathrop. *Bricks and People*: 25-56.

Explore "Buildings and Places on the UNCG Campus: An Archival Research Guide on Buildings and Places on the UNCG Campus":
<http://uncg.libguides.com/content.php?pid=319757&sid=2616916>

Assignment for in-class discussion: Explore the "Teachers, Troops, and Textiles" website (<http://library.uncg.edu/dp/ttt/>) and select *two* images that you feel can be juxtaposed to convey meaning without words—i.e., to suggest an historical tension, conversation, question, a gap.

Field Trip: UNCG Special Collections and University Archives

Presenting the Past: Public History Products

October 1: Monuments

Glassberg, David. "Remembering a War," In *Sense of History*: 24-57.

Savage, Kirk. "Inventing Public Space" and "The Monument Transformed," In *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., The National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (2009): 147-248.

Field Trip: Guilford Courthouse

October 8: Exhibitions

Walker, William S. "Introduction: The Changing Universal Museum" and "Finding National Unity through Cultural Diversity: The Smithsonian and the Bicentennial," In *A Living Exhibition: The Smithsonian and the Transformation of the Universal Museum* (2013): 1-9; 153-195.

Tilden, Freeman. "The Principles of Interpretation," In *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1977 [1957]): 3-10.

Beverly Serrell, Part I, In *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*: 1-36.

Field trip: International Civil Rights Center and Museum

Oral history package due

October 15: Historic Sites

Loewen, James W. *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* [excerpts] (1999): 15-50 and 288-290.

West, Patricia. "Inventing a House Undivided: Antebellum Cultural Politics and the Enshrinement of Mount Vernon," In *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (1999): 1-37.

Gable, Eric and Richard Handler, "Colonialist Anthropology at Colonial Williamsburg." *Museum Anthropology* 17 (October 1993): 26-31.

West, Patricia. "Of Babies and Bathwater: Birthplace 'Shrines' and the Future of the Historic House Museum," In *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, ed. Seth C. Bruggeman (2012): 258-266.

Flores, Richard R. "The Alamo: Myth, Public History, and the Politics of Inclusion," In *Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race, Nation*, eds. , Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer (2009): 122-135.

Watch at least three episodes of the online series *Ask a Slave*: <http://www.askaslave.com>

October 22: Field Trip: Blandwood Mansion

The Public Past essay due
(no readings)

October 29: Commemoration and Controversy

Engelhardt, Tom and Edward T. Linenthal. "History Under Siege." In *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (1996): 1-7.

Linenthal, Edward T. "Anatomy of Controversy," In *History Wars*: 10-62.

Seltz, Daniel. "Remembering the War and the Atomic Bombs: New Museums, New Approaches. In *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, eds. Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer (2004): 128-145.

Thelen, David. "History After the Enola Gay Controversy: An Introduction." *Journal of American History* 82 (December 1995): 1029-1035,

Gopnik, Adam. "Stones and Bones: Visiting the 9/11 Memorial and Museum." *The New Yorker* (July 7 & 14, 2014): 38-44.

Savage, Kirk. "Trauma, Healing, and the Therapeutic Monument." In *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11*, ed. Daniel Sherman and Terry Nardin: 103-120.

Rothstein, Edward. "A Memorial to Personal Memory: Recalling Sept. 11 by Inverting a Museum's Usual Role." *The New York Times* (May 22, 2014): 18.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/arts/design/recalling-sept-11-by-inverting-a-museums-usual-role.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw%2C%7B%221%22%3A%22RI%3A7%22%7D> [also on e-reserve]

November 5: Work Session on Final Project

Project prospectus due
 (no readings)

November 12: Digital History

Simon, Nina. "Participatory Design and the Future of Museums." In *Letting Go?* (2011): 18-33.

Cronon, William. "Scholarly Authority in a Wikified World." *Perspectives on History* (February 2012): 4 pp.

Seefeldt, Douglas and William G. Thomas. "What Is Digital History? A Look at Some Exemplar Projects." *Perspectives on History* (May 2009):
<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2009/0905/0905for8.cfm>.

Assignment for in-class discussion (no Blackboard postings this week):

Examine Pinterest's "History" section: <http://www.pinterest.com/all/history/>. What do these posts, comments, and "repins" suggest about the public's tastes and appetites for history online? Can you categorize your findings to make a set of assertions about popular views of "history?" What might public historians learn from these findings?

AND Prepare for Fishbowl discussion (see prompts handed out in class).

November 19: Public History As a Profession

On the History@Work website of the National Council on Public History (<http://publichistorycommons.org>), read that day's lead post and then at least one entry from each of the "Interest Sections," found via the tab at the top of the page ("In the Academy," "Consultants Corner," "Exhibits & Projects," etc.).

Stevens, Greg and Wendy Luke, eds. Chapters 1-3, In *A Life in Museums: Managing Your Museum Career*, (2012): 1-21.

Bingmann, Melissa. "Advising Undergraduates About Careers in Public History,"

Perspectives on History (March 2009): 9 pp.

In-Class Presentation (no Blackboard postings this week):

: Give a 5-minute presentation sharing the highlights of your “information interview” with a current Museum Studies graduate student.

Extra class session: Tuesday, December 2nd, 11:00-1:00 (TBD)? Hodges Reading Room

Final presentations: (Re-)Making Public Memory projects

Thursday, December 4th—(Re-)Making Public Memory Projects due

(no final exam)