

COMMUNITY HISTORY PRACTICUM

FALL 2014

UNCG HIS/IAR 633
ANNE E. PARSONS
OFFICE: MHRA, #1211

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS, 2:00-3:15
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this hands-on course, you will work collaboratively with each other and with community partners as you research, design, and complete a public exhibition titled *Pieces of the Past: The Art of Gwendolyn Magee*, which will go up at the High Point Museum from December 5, 2014, to February 21, 2015, and will include at the least an opening reception program. Over the course of the semester, you will work to connect local audiences with primary sources and recent scholarship, drawing on archival materials, oral interviews, images, and artifacts to teach the public about the connections between art, history, and social change. At the same time, you will learn as much if not more than your audience members by embarking on the project as you consider the connections between your graduate level readings and how they relate to this community work and as you strengthen your public historical skills.

Learning Outcomes

Some of you have worked on projects like this one before and almost all of you will work on a history exhibition in the future. So what is different about this Community History Practicum? How does this project stand apart from your other classes or your other jobs (past or future)?

What makes this project different is that its primary purpose lies in teaching you about public history theory and practice and to help you learn about the process of designing, developing and implementing a public history project. I have designed this class so that you will work on the following learning objectives and will evaluate what you learn along the way in reflection pieces. The learning objectives include:

- considering the connections between public history theory and practice,
- crafting an engaging and sophisticated exhibition narrative that builds upon and contributes to bodies of academic and public history work,
- identifying, evaluating and incorporating primary sources and artifacts to use in a historically accurate way in the exhibit,
- designing and fabricating the exhibition in a way that engages both the community and audience,

- building relationships with scholarly advisors and community partners (including friends/family of Gwen Magee, the High Point Museum staff, quilting organizations, and members of the UNCG community),
- collaborating with and supporting your fellow team members and listening to their feedback with an open mind, and,
- project planning and administration (budgeting, rights/reproductions/loans, outreach, task management, and collections handling).

Teaching Methods and Service Learning

Studies show that service learning classes such as the Community History Practicum succeed because they: 1) offer a chance for students to assess how theories play out in real-world settings, 2) improve job skills such as empathy, project planning, and working in a team, and 3) provides more student ownership of the learning process. Service learning is multi-directional and comes from students' own initiatives and reflections, facilitation by the professor, and interactions with peers and community partners. To make this process successful, each person involved in the service learning class has certain responsibilities to uphold.

As students, you have the responsibility of taking charge of your own learning. You will identify areas to strengthen and then will put effort into improving those areas. In particular, I encourage you to understand the tasks you do in this course as *learning opportunities* rather than merely task items on a checklist. Whether things go right or wrong, the main purpose lies in learning and serving the community. To that end, you will write reflection pieces throughout the class in order to consciously evaluate how and what you are learning. Finally, as students you will build a supportive environment with your classmates.

The primary responsibility of the instructor in this class lies in facilitating learning by designing and implementing the service experience (directing the project, crafting the schedule and syllabus, and evaluating student work). The instructor will also give feedback on students' efforts in designing the exhibit, working with community partners, and collaborating with peers at the project reviews throughout the class. Finally, the instructor will respond to any major issues that arise among students or with community partners to work toward a positive experience for everyone involved.

The community partners (in this case the High Point Museum staff, members of the local community and scholarly advisors) will offer constructive feedback and support over the course of the project, modeling the approaches of professionals and experts in their fields.

EXPERIENCES, PROJECTS & EVALUATION

You must hand in each assignment on time and I will deduct a third of a grade for each 24 hours past the deadline. Unless you have a specific accommodation from the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#), I will only grant extensions in advance of the due date. That said,

contact me if you sense that you will not meet the deadline. I will post the grades to Blackboard, and if you see a discrepancy, please contact me immediately.

Grade 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.

Class Participation – 15%

Participation makes up a central part of this practicum course, particularly as it requires the active involvement of all students. This grade will assess your participation in the project planning sessions and the ways that you create a supportive and positive work environment. Attendance in class is mandatory and if you have any conflicts because of religious holidays, family emergencies or health issues, please contact me as soon as possible and no later than the day of class to request an excused absence and arrange for making up work as needed.

Reflection Pieces – 25%

Each Tuesday, you will submit a hardcopy 1-2 page reflection paper about your experiences with the project over the past week. These reflection pieces offer you the chance to step back and think about what you have learned from any successes or breakthroughs in research or design, collaborations with peers or community partners, and responses to challenging situations. Please tie your writing responses to one or more of the learning objectives in each project phase. Also, these papers offer you the chance to reflect on the connections between what you have read in HIS 627, 626 and your other Museum Studies classes, and your “on-the-ground” experiences in the project. Please include your thoughts about these connections as they arise in your reflections as well.

Project Grades – 60%

At the end of each phase, the class will present its work and each student will indicate what he/she contributed to during that phase. The review session offers a chance for your peers and I to give feedback on the project and the individual grades I give will assess the quality of each student’s work based upon the learning objectives of that phase.

Please note that the review grades have equal weight, signaling the importance of your work and efforts throughout the course. The quality of a project does not lie in only the final project, but in the creativity, thoughtfulness and rigor that you put into each step along the way.

- Preliminary Design Review – 15%
- Detailed Design Review – 15%
- Production Review – 15%
- Final Project Assessment Post-Exhibition Opening – 15%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro greatly values integrity in the work of its students. You must appropriately cite any information that you use from your sources and you must submit work that you yourself have written or created. Copying the work of others and passing it off as your own (known as plagiarizing) is taken very seriously and will be handled by

the university administration. You can read more about the policy at: academicintegrity.uncg.edu, and per university policy, you will sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment.

ACCESSIBILITY & RESOURCES

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Should you have any needs or questions related to disability issues, please contact the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) (OARS), located in the Elliot University Center, #215. As an instructor, I am committed to making this course accessible to all of the students in it, and will work with OARS to accommodate students' requests. N.B. You do not need to disclose details about your disability to the instructor in order to receive accommodations.

For assistance with writing assignments, contact the [UNCG Writing Center](#), where staff members hold appointments both in person and via instant-messaging. [The Digital Media Commons](#) and the [Digital ACT Studio](#) in Jackson Library provide help with multimedia projects and UNCG's [Speaking Center](#) offers a great resource for building public, small-group or individual speaking skills.

READINGS

Over the course of the semester, I may suggest readings to help you as you draft the text, lay out the exhibition, plan your schedule, and other tasks. I will put the materials on reserve/e-reserve as needed, and they may include the following texts from previous classes:

Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*.

Kathy McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*.

Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*.

Simon, *The Participatory Museum*.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The schedule is broken into three phases: preliminary development, detailed development and production – with one deadline for completing the work in the first two phases and two deadlines in the final phase. Within this framework, you as the project team will decide upon your work schedule together, creating a shared set of dates and deadlines.

Preliminary Development Phase (August 19th – September 18th)

In this first phase, you will create a preliminary development document that identifies the project's goals, themes, a walkthrough of the exhibit with a preliminary list of source materials,

budget estimates and a work plan for the project. You have begun some of this work in HIS 626 and I encourage you to rely on that work to create your preliminary development document.

The most important learning objectives of this phase include:

- 1) considering the connections between public history theory and practice,
- 2) crafting an engaging and sophisticated exhibition narrative that builds upon and contributes to bodies of academic and public history work,
- 3) identifying, evaluating and incorporating primary sources and artifacts to use in a historically accurate way in the exhibit,
- 4) building relationships with community partners, and,
- 5) collaborating with and supporting your fellow team members and listening to their feedback with an open mind.

Early September – Hear from North Carolina Humanities Council about grant decision

September 11th – Opening of Gatewood Gallery Exhibition *Lift Every Voice & Sing*

September 18th – Preliminary Development Review and Academic Integrity Pledge

Detailed Development Phase (September 19th – October 28th)

During the detailed development phase, you will create a detailed plan of the gallery, finalize the loans and reproductions, draft needed text sections, create prototypes, allocate the budget and make a schedule for the production phase. The advising scholars and community partners will be offering feedback on this detailed development phase, with the meeting date to be announced. This phase will culminate in a detailed development review on October 28th.

The key learning objectives of this phase include:

- 1) considering the connections between public history theory and practice,
- 2) identifying, evaluating and incorporating primary sources and artifacts to use in a historically accurate way in the exhibit,
- 3) designing and fabricating the exhibition in a way that engages both the community and audience,
- 4) building relationships with scholarly advisors and community partners,
- 5) collaborating with and supporting your fellow team members and listening to their feedback with an open mind, and,
- 6) project planning and administration (budgeting, rights/reproductions/loans, outreach, task management, collections handling, etc.).

October 28th – Detailed Development Review and Academic Integrity Pledge

Production Phase (October 29th – December 5th)

In this phase, you will conduct the final edits to the layout of the gallery, texts, and components, implement your design decisions and fabricate and install the exhibit. You will also conduct outreach to publicize the exhibit and at the least will organize an opening reception.

The learning objectives of the production phase include:

- 1) considering the connections between public history theory and practice,
- 2) designing and fabricating the exhibition in a way that engages both the community and audience,
- 3) building relationships with community partners,
- 4) collaborating with and supporting your fellow team members and listening to their feedback with an open mind, and,
- 5) project planning and administration (budgeting, rights/reproductions/loans, outreach, task management, collections handling, etc.).

November 18th –Production Review with Mockups and Text Drafts and Academic Integrity Pledge

Week of December 1st – Install Exhibition

December 5th – Opening of Exhibition – Congratulations!

N.B. This syllabus is subject to change.