

**Museum and Historic Site Interpretation: Principles and Practice
Fall 2015**

Tuesday, 6:30-9:20
MHRA 2210

Christopher Graham
cagraham@uncg.edu
Office: MHRA 2110
Hours W 9-12, Th. 12-1

ABOUT THIS CLASS

This seminar explores the relationship between history and public audiences, focusing on the theory and practice of telling stories through museums and other public venues. At its core are two assumptions that are essential to understanding public history. First, public historians need to acknowledge and embrace the variety of ways publics think about and utilize the past. Second, program development is a messy, creative, and collaborative effort that must incorporate a variety of factors— theoretical and mundane—beyond simple historical interpretation.

In this seminar you will gain hands-on experience in devising interpretive tools, discerning and developing historical stories with contemporary resonance, navigating institutional needs, and encountering the audience, all in the creation of an exhibit component for the Global Dialogues on Mass Incarceration national travelling exhibit, produced by the Humanities Action Lab (HAL).

This class will be conducted in a seminar style. This means you will do most of the talking. To ensure your own success and that of the class as a whole, you will be expected to read all materials, make thoughtful and timely contributions to online and in-class conversations, apply the larger public history concepts you are learning to your work on the HAL exhibit, respectfully encounter a variety of voices and perspectives both in the profession and among audiences, and develop your own professional skills in discussion, and in large and small assignments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through a mix of classroom and project based work, you will gain a richer understanding of the role of history in public life and of how museums and historic sites interpret the past for—and with—public audiences. Successfully completing this course will build skills that you will need to thrive in the workplace, viz.:

- **An understanding of the central dynamic of public history**—the tension between disciplinary history and the way publics understand and utilize the past
- **The organic nature of program development** that includes an unpredictable balance between primary source material, audience needs, institutional and administrative logistics, and curatorial and collaborative voices.

Also, you will

- **Use a finely honed eye and ear to recognize rich stories**—in sound, image, object, or text—and their potential impact on diverse audiences
- **Synthesize multiple sources and points of view** into compelling, relevant, and historically sound public presentations
- **Speak and write** with passion, clarity, and respect
- **Collaborate** with energy, sensitivity, and in awareness of how much you can learn from community members and your peers
- **Experiment** fearlessly to build your skills and find the best way to reach audiences.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Participation (40%): Full engagement with this class is expected. This includes completing all readings, active—unprompted—participation in classroom discussions, prompt submissions of assignments, and general interest in the larger professional and intellectual endeavors of this class.

National exchange posts (20%): These reflections will be available to the HAL network and published on the Tenlegs platform. They will be thoughtful, honest, analytical reflections about you and your group's work on the HAL project. Due September 15, October 20, and November 10.

Review (%10): You will compose an 800-1000 word scholarly review of a museum exhibit, educational program, digital project, public commemoration, or other public history project that you encounter on your own. You will write as if you are submitting to *The Public Historian*, so use their exhibit reviews as models. Your review will engage the program, its objectives, methods, and use of objects and memory. You will contextualize the product in public history theory and practice that we discuss in class. Due November 10.

HAL Project (30%) You will substantially contribute to an original, historically accurate, thought-provoking, visually attractive, professional-quality exhibit component that helps public audiences see historical roots of a modern problem. You will also collaborate with community partners to develop programming devoted to generating dialog on an issue of contemporary significance.

BOOKS

Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds., *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World* (Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011)

Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012)

Diamond, Judy, Jessica J. Luke, and David H. Uttal, *Practical Evaluation Guide: Tools for Museums and Other Informal Educational Settings*, 2nd edition (Walnut Creek, Ca.: Alta Mira Press, 2009)

Falk, John H. *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (Walnut Creek, Ca.: Left Coast Press, 2009)

Ritchie, Donald R. *Doing Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, 2014)

Rosenzweig, Roy and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)

Serrell, Beverly. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 2nd edition (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015)

Additional reading material will be available via Canvas, e-reserves, and as journal articles and e-books through the Jackson Library catalog.

LATENESS, INTEGRITY, ATTENDANCE, AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Late submissions will not be accepted. If you anticipate an unavoidable problem with assignments, reading, attendance, let me know as soon as possible.

Attendance will not be kept as the expectation is that you will be present at every class. A few excused absences will be ok, but frequent unexcused absences will be reflected in the participation grade.

If friction is developing between you and your peers, I need to hear about it *before* it's too late to resolve the issues.

Familiarize yourself with the University's Academic Integrity Policy at academicintegrity.uncg.edu

If you require accommodations for special learning needs, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Disability Services, located in the Elliot University Center (334-5770).

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

(subject to change)

A note on e-books in the library: Some publishers restrict viewings of e-books to one patron at a time. So, if everyone is trying to access a reading at 4:00 on Tuesday, some of you will encounter a problem. Plan ahead. Check early in the week, select the print option when possible, and log out of your viewing if you step away so others have a chance to log in.

August 18 Introductions

Before the first class, read the following, and come with two comments that interest you.

National Council on Public History debate about “What Is Public History” (including summary) at: <http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history>

AASLH posts on Education/Work Balance: about.aaslh.org/balance-between-education-and-experience/

Schlatter, N. Elizabeth, “Introduction: Why Work in a Museum,” in *Museum Careers: A Practical Guide for Students and Novices*. [.pdf on Canvas]

Schwarzer, Marjorie, “Introduction.” In *Riches, Rivals, and Radicals*, 1-27. [.pdf on Canvas]

HAL Packet

>Schedule viewing of the PBSVideo episode: *Slavery By Another Name*

>Schedule visit to Guilford County prison farm

August 25 History and the Past

Rosenzweig and Thelen. *The Presence of the Past*.

McLean, Kathleen, “Whose Questions, Whose Conversations?” In *Letting Go?*

Archibald, Robert. “Common Ground.” In *A Place To Remember* [.pdf on Canvas]

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?"
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/02/why-do-so-few-blacks-study-the-civil-war/308831/>

_____. *Between the World and Me*, pp. 99-108. [.pdf on Canvas]

Readings on Confederate flags and monuments [Links on Canvas]

Sept. 1 Primary Documents and Chain Gangs

HAL GSO Primary Documents in Google shared folder. [Link on Canvas]

Robert E. Ireland, "Prison Reform, Road Building, and Southern Progressivism: Joseph Hyde Pratt and the Campaign for 'Good Roads and Good Men,'" *North Carolina Historical Review* vol. 68, no. 2 (April 1991). [Access via Jackson Library catalog]

Alex Lichtenstein, "Good Roads and Chain Gangs in the Progressive South: 'The Negro Convict is a Slave'," *Journal of Southern History* 59(February 1993):85-110. [Access via Jackson Library catalog]

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, Introduction and Chapter 1

>Review guidelines for National Exchange with SVL discussion leader

Sept. 15 History of the Carceral State

*Sketch out notes for Curatorial Step 1. Bring to class.
Submit National Exchange 1*

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, Chapters 2-6

Thompson, Heather Ann. "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *The Journal of American History* 97 (2010): 703-734. [Access via Jackson Library catalog]

Hernandez, Kelly Lytle, et. al., "Introduction: Constructing the Carceral State." *The Journal of American History* 102 (2015): 18-24 [Access via Jackson Library catalog]

Lynch, Bernadette. "Challenging Ourselves: Uncomfortable Histories and Current Museum Practices." In Jenny Kidd, et. al, eds., *Challenging*

History in the Museum: International Perspectives [e-book, Jackson Library]

Sept. 22 The Power of Interpretation; Interpretation as Power

Finalize Curatorial Step 1. Submit.

Wallace, Mike. "Mickey Mouse History: Portraying the Past at Disney World." In *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, 133-157 [e-reserves]

Stanton, Cathy. "Performing the Postindustrial: The Limits of Radical History in Lowell, MA." *Radical History Review* 98 (Spring 2007): 81-96. [e-book, Jackson Library]

Kingsolver, Barbara. "The Spaces Between." In *High Tide in Tucson: Essays from Now or Never*, 146-157. [e-reserves]

Loewen, James W. "In What Ways Were We Warped?" In *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*, 1-10 [e-reserves]

Sept. 29 Audience Research

Diamond, Judy. *Practical Guide to Evaluation*

Serrell, Beverly. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, Chapter 13

Satwicz, Tom and Kris Morrissey "Public Curation: From Trend to Research-Based Practice." In *Letting Go?*

>Develop a specific evaluation tool to answer a specific question about the HAL exhibit component

Oct. 6 Learning in Museums

Bring results of informal audience surveys

Falk, John H. *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*

Ansbacher, Ted. "What Are We Learning? Outcomes of the Museum Experience," *The Informal Learning Review* 53 (March-April 2002): 1, 4-7. [e-reserves]

Witcomb, Andrea. "Interactivity: Thinking Beyond." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Sharon McDonald, ed., (2006): 352-361. [e-book, Jackson Library]

>Review guidelines for National Exchange with SVL discussion leader

Oct. 13 **FALL BREAK, NO CLASS**

Oct 20 **Exhibit Design**

*Finalize Curatorial Step 2. Submit
Submit National Exchange 2*

McLean, Kathy. *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*, Chapters 7-11 [e-reserves]

Serrell, Beverly. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, Chapters 1-2, 7, and 14

Lindauer, Margaret. "The Critical Museum Visitor." In *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction* [e-book, Jackson Library]

Lonetree, Amy, *Decolonizing the Museum*, Chapter 3 [e-reserves]

Oct 27 **Exhibit Evaluation**

Yellis, Ken. "Cueing the Visitor: The Museum Theater and the Visitor Performance." *Curator* 53 (January 2010): 87-103
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.libproxy.uncg.edu/doi/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2009.00010.x/full>

Serrell, Beverly. *Judging Exhibitions: A Framework for Assessing Excellence* (2006): 3-6, 17-29, 41-46, 52-60, 91-109. [e-reserves]

McLean, Kathy. *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*, Chapter 5 and Appendix A [e-reserves]

>Review guidelines for National Exchange with SVL discussion leader

Nov 10 **Objects and Images**

Submit exhibit review

Submit National Exchange 3

Riello, Giorgia. "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. [e-reserves]

Berger, Arthur Asa. "Cultural Theory and Material Culture." In *What Objects Mean: An Introduction to Material Culture* (2009): 24-46. [e-reserves]

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, 5th ed.): 210-233[e-reserves]

Updike, John. "Personal Archaeology." In *My Father's Tears and Other Stories*. [e-reserves]

Macarthur, Matthew. "Get Real! The Role of Objects in the Digital Age." In *Letting Go?*

Nov 17 **Oral History**

Finalize Curatorial Step 3. Submit.

Portelli, Alessandro. "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event." In *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (1991): 1-26. [e-book, Jackson Library]

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. [e-reserves]

Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (2003): Introduction and Chapters 1-4, 8, and Appendix 1.

McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." In *Gender Basics: Feminist Perspectives on Women and Men*, Anne Minos, ed., 2000, 30-38. [e-reserves]

Nov 24 WORK WEEK

December 8 No class meeting. *Finalize Curatorial Step 4. Submit*