Museum and Historic Site Interpretation: Principles and Practice
HIS 627/IAR627—Fall 2016
Tuesdays, 6:30-9:20
MHRA 1206

Professor Benjamin Filene
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Credits: 3 hours
Prerequisites: none; open only to History and Interior Architecture graduate students pursuing concentrations in Museum Studies (required of Museum Studies concentrators).

Course Description
This seminar explores the relationship between history and public audiences, focusing on the theory and practice of telling stories through museums and historic sites. It introduces you to the tools that public historians use to interpret the past, explores key dilemmas in public interpretation and community collaboration, and examines contemporary models for how to reach audiences in ways that make history resonant and meaningful to them.

Student 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 the skills that you will need to thrive in the workplace:

- **evaluating and analyzing primary and secondary sources** thoughtfully, with attention to argument and point of view,
- **using a finely honed eye and ear to recognize rich stories**—in sound, image, object, or text—and their potential impact on diverse audiences,
- **synthesizing multiple sources** and points of view into compelling, relevant, and historically sound public presentations,
- **speaking** with passion, clarity, and respect,
- **writing** clearly and persuasively,
- **collaborating** with energy, sensitivity, and an awareness of how much you can learn from community members and your peers, and
- **experimenting** fearlessly to build your skills and find the best ways to reach audiences.

Teaching Methods
This seminar depends on active and engaged discussions that allow you and your classmates, individually and collectively, to wrestle with what it means to become a practicing public historian. 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 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.

The course’s core theoretical concepts you will try out in practice. This semester, the class will begin a multifaceted public project focusing on race, commemoration, and campus memory. Working collaboratively and individually, you will complete an online exhibition that explores and seeks to reimagine the historical legacy written into UNCG’s physical landscape. This semester’s project will lay the groundwork for a long-term exhibition installation, opening in spring 2018, in the building formerly known as Ayock Auditorium (named after noted education governor and white supremacist Governor Charles Aycock). Every phase of this project will be shaped by you the students, working with community collaborators, advisors, and audiences.

Assignments, and Evaluation
You will be evaluated on:

Class participation—10%:
attending class, doing the reading assignments, writing thoughtful and on-time weekly responses to the readings (see below), speaking up in discussions, representing the class and the university professionally in the wider community, 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 Canvas Discussion Board by 8:00 a.m. each Tuesday.

Oral Interview Transcription and Reflection—10%:
interview transcriptions, delivered to community partners at the National Folk Festival, and a reflection on what the interview experience has taught you about the promise and limits of oral history as a source and about interviewing projects as public programs—due Thursday, September 22

Aycock Source Brief—20%:
an assessment of themes, threads, opportunities, traps and dead-ends that you see after having immersed yourself in a set of primary and secondary sources relating to Governor Charles Aycock—due 9:00 a.m., Thursday, October 6

New Views of Charles Aycock—10%:
an imaginative proposal for how to use the arts to dramatically, publicly, and effectively commemorate and interpret Governor Aycock’s legacy in or around the space formerly known as Aycock Auditorium. This proposal will be created collaboratively (working in pairs), depicted in a poster, and shared in a poster session at the Historical Society of North Carolina’s quarterly meeting—due 1:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 12th

Exhibition Review—20%:
an analytical assessment of a public exhibition—due November 22
Term Project—30%:
an online exhibition that explores commemoration and historical memory at UNC Greensboro, as seen through campus buildings. Aspects of this project are collaborative (participating in working groups, contributing to a shared portion of the site that gives a composite digital representation of the campus, presenting the project to audiences, etc.). Other parts will be completed individually, as each student completes a online interpretive entry for a single campus building.

Project Mileposts:
- source scan due September 13
- full outline of website components due November 8
- full complete “final” draft due December 1st
- launch December 7

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 your project is dead-ending or peer collaboration imploding, or you’re struggling to advance your work, please don’t hesitate. It’s always easier to address such issues earlier on, and I’m happy to help.

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 1/3 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.

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/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/. 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 or other challenges, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services, located within the Elliot University Center (334-5440; http://ods.uncg.edu)! I will be very receptive to any steps to help make your learning experience more healthy and successful!

Required Books


All other readings are available on electronic reserve, unless otherwise specified.
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

BIG PICTURES 1
August 23: Introductions—Histories, Stories, Publics

Before first class:

What is public history?


b) 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=lx&list=H-Public&month=0705&user=&pw (the discussion began on May 22)

Assignment: Come to class with two comments that interested you.

c) Compare the 2007 discussion with the current incarnation on NCPH’s website at http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history.


No Canvas posting this week

August 30: Whose History? Who’s History?—Guest speaker Erin Lawrimore, University Archivist


Rose, Julia. Foreword, Preface, “Difficult Knowledge” (Chapter 1), and “Defining Difficult History” (Chapter 2), In Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites (2016): ix-xiv, 1-68.


In preparation for meeting with Erin Lawrimore,
- look at http://library.uncg.edu/map/; to see a full list of campus buildings, choose “list view.”
- read “UNCG’s African American History on Display through Google Cultural Institute.” UNCG Now (February 2016)—http://ure.uncg.edu/prod/cweekly/2016/02/23/uncgs-african-american-history-on-display-through-google-cultural-institute/—and follow the link within the article to peruse the online exhibit.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE 1  
September 6: Oral History  
Training session with Katy Clune, National Folk Festival  
Tour of Aycock Auditorium with Brian Fuller  

Introduction (xi-xv), Chapters 1-4 (1-136), 227-233, Chapter 8 (234-272), and Appendix 1 (273-276).


**BIG PICTURES 2**
**September 13: Making it Matter: Museums, Representation, and Identity**
*Training Session with Danny Nanez and Richard Cox, Electronic Resources & Information Technology University Libraries, UNCG*


http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. “Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?” *The Atlantic*.
(December 5, 2011): http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/02/why-do-so-few-blacks-study-the-civil-war/308831/ [not on e-reserve]


**Source Scan for final project due**

**September 20: Memory, Memorializing, and the South**


View four photographs Diversity Thrift, gallery Richmond, showing artists’ re-imaginings of monuments on Richmond’s Monument Avenue [*BF will send images*].

**Group 1:**

Klosterman, Chuck. *But What If We're Wrong?: Thinking about the Present as If It Were the Past* (2016) (excerpts): pp. 1-30, page 58, and as many (or few) pp. as you want in between!
and

**Group 2:**

**Group 3:**
and

**Group 4:**

**Group 5:**
http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/-confederate-monuments-flags-south-carolina/396836/ [not on e-reserve]
and
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2015/06/confederate_flag_it_doesn_t_belong_at_the_south_carolina_capitol_it_doesn.html [not on e-reserve]
and

*Oral history package due Thursday, September 22*

**TOOLS OF THE TRADE 2**
**September 27: Audience Evaluation**


**Group 1:**


**Group 2:**


**Group 3:**

Ruff, Corinne. “Many Colleges Profited from Slavery: What Can They Do about It Now?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 19, 2016): http://chronicle.com/article/Many-Colleges-Profited-From/236158?key=Bd7u2l1Lkzdgy-pkkGoBYKZfTlduUerWW3xTISnMD5JNidFRvcjc5X1FNZkZJOERKNEdCS3RmaT V6TjE4ZV4eVNfSnBLSm1vVIz3 [not on e-reserve]


**Group 4:**


**Group 5:**


Optional *(required of evaluation work group)*:


October 4: Objects


Share Object Story in Class

Aycock Source Brief due 9:00 a.m., Thursday, October 6

October 11: Images


Sandweiss, Martha A. “Artifacts as Pixels, Pixels as Artifacts: Working with

Franco, Barbara and Laura Roberts. “The Change Cycle”: 2 pp

*New Views of Charles Aycock due 1:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 12th*

October 14: Historical Society of North Carolina conference and poster session, UNCG

October 18: No class (fall break)

**TELLING THE STORY**

**Monday October 24, 4:00 p.m.: Extra credit opportunity** (2 points to final class participation grade): Attend student-run campus teach-in on the history of voting rights: Alumni House (404 College Ave.), Virginia Dare Room, and write a paragraph or two of reflection, assessing its effectiveness as a public program.

October 25: Learning in the Museum


November 1: Exhibiting History


November 8: Work Session—Election Day--WILL NEED TO RE-SCHEDULE THIS CLASS MEETING

Outline of individual website components due

November 15: Exhibition Design

McLean, Kathleen. Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions: 92-114; 115-149.


November 22: Digital History


Schwarzer, Marjorie “An Afterword from the Author,” In Riches, Rivals, and Radicals: 219-223.


Assignment: Instead of a Canvas posting this week, identify a digital project that has attempted to tell a story about history. One source of NCPH’s “Project Showcase”: http://ncph.org/history-at-work/tag/digital-history/. Come prepared to share, in light of this week’s readings, the strengths and weaknesses of this site. Does it offer us any clues about what makes a history-based website work (or not)?

Exhibition Review due
November 29: Visitors as Co-Creators


Tuesday, December 6th: extra class (TBD)?/work session, if needed;

Wednesday, December 7th: Final project completed

Friday December 9th—UNCG Board of Trustees Meeting