

Public History Capstone I

HIS 720—Fall 2016

Wednesdays 3:30-6:20, MHRA 2208

Professor Benjamin Filene

office hours: Tuesdays 4:00-5:00 and by appointment: MHRA 2137

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Credits: 3 hours

Prerequisites: Restricted to graduate students in the history department's Museum Studies program who have completed at least 15 hours of graduate-level course work.

Course Description:

This hands-on course is part of a two-semester sequence in which you create original public history projects. That might mean creating an exhibition, educational program, digital product, or curriculum (individually or perhaps in a pair) for an area museum or site.

What makes it a capstone is that this process brings together so many of the public historian skills you have built during your time in the program: your skills in reading and historiography analysis, your ability to do original primary source research, your reflectiveness and sensitivity in collaborating with community partners, your attention to learning styles and audience needs, the can-do attitude and adaptability that you honed through your internship and other projects. Now is your chance to draw on these experiences and apply them toward an original project that you care about personally, one that you can lead in an fruitful, creative, original direction and that you enrich through partnerships and collaborations that you sustain.

In the first half of the capstone sequence, you will solidify the goals and contours of the project, complete project research, and finish preliminary development. Preliminary development is an idea-driven phase, in which you explore the project's goals, identify thematic possibilities, conduct research, create a preliminary design approach, assess resource needs, and make a work plan for the duration of the project.

Student Learning Outcomes:

In planning these capstone projects, you will hone skills and techniques utilized by public history professionals, including the ability to:

1. **identify** and **compile** historical sources;
2. **analyze** them for meanings and **discover** connections among them;
3. **analyze** what different interpretive products and public history practices can best meet your intended audience's needs
4. **communicate** and **collaborate** with community partners as needed to understand and meet their needs
5. **create** plans for how best to create a meaningful public product and **articulate** how your project will make an impact
6. **plan** how to sequence the work of project development;

Teaching Methods:

The bulk of the work for the course will occur outside the classroom and will be completed independently by you the student in collaboration, as needed, with institutional and community partners. Several times per semester, the students in the course will meet as a full group to discuss models, provide peer support, and offer constructive critique. In these moments, the course will function like a workshop. As well, you and I will meet individually several times to discuss your progress and work through any obstacles you may be encountering. Finally, throughout the semester, you will advance the project by completing several development mileposts, detailed below.

All of the above is designed to provide you with a structure to succeed in your work and to help teach you how one builds a framework to ensure steady progress on large projects. That said, it is ultimately **your responsibility** to contact me if you feel your project is not progressing effectively or drifting into trouble. Please do not hesitate! It's always easier to fix things 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 1/3rd 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.

Attendance policy: Students need to attend all required meetings and meet individually with the instructor as needed.

Final Exam: There is no final exam for this course.

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!

Assignments and Evaluation:

For all of the written assignments below, students' work will be assessed for clear writing style, understanding of secondary literature and depth of research, strongly developed sense of audience, imaginative yet practical sense of public history formats, and evidence of collaboration. More detailed descriptions for each assignment will be distributed.

- **Project proposal** (approximately 4 pages): 10%
You and I discussed your project last spring and contacted area public institutions to serve as potential partners, but this semester begins with fleshing out a full proposal, to be shared with your project partner(s).
—*due Friday September 9th, 9:00 a.m.*
(learning outcomes #4, 5, 6)
- **Historiographical essay/field review** relating to proposed topic (8-10 pages): 20%—*due Friday, October 7, 9:00 a.m.*
(learning outcomes #1, 2)
- **Statement of audience and learning**, including approach to learning theory (approximately 2-3 pages): 10%—*due Friday, October 14, 9:00 a.m.*
(learning outcome #3)
- **Preliminary development plan** (7-10 pages): 50%
Statement of interpretive message, audience, method and approach (including plans for collaboration), illustrative examples—*due December 6th, 5:00 p.m.*
(learning outcomes #4, 5, 6)
- **Participation**, including your ability to contribute to a collaborative, respectful, professional, and fruitful relationships with community partners and your peers; and your dedication, adaptability, and open-mindedness in pursuing this project work: 10%
(learning outcome #4)

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

Required text:

Norris, Linda and Rainey Tisdale. *Creativity in Museum Practice* (2014)

All other readings are on e-reserve

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: August 24: First class session: Greetings, plans, processes

Week 2: Prepare project proposals;

Wednesday August 31st, by 5:00 p.m.: Send BF email update

[no class]

Week 3: Monday, September 5th, 9:00 a.m.: Turn in draft of project proposal to BF

In class September 7th: Discuss project proposals

Friday September 9th, 9:00 a.m.: Turn in project proposal to partner and to BF

Week 4 [September 8-14]: Begin historiographical work and primary source research [no class]

Week 5: [September 15-21]

In class September 21: Discuss historiography/field review; Share bibliographies; Conferences with BF

Week 6: [September 22-28]: Continue historiography and primary source research [no class]

Wednesday, September 28: Send BF update on partners/collaborators and research

Week 7: [September 29-October 5]

In class October 5: Discuss Learning in the Museum (readings required) and audience/learning statement assignment

Excerpts: Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *The Museum Experience Revisited* (2012)—BF will distribute

Hein, George. "The Constructivist Museum." *GEM News* [Group for Education in Museums] 1995: 6 pp.

Witcomb, Andrea. "Interactivity: Thinking Beyond." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Sharon Macdonald, ed. (2006): 352-361.

Rounds, Jay. "Doing Identity Work in Museums," *Curator* 49 (April 2006): 133-150.

Friday, October 7, 9:00 a.m.: Turn in historiographical essay

Week 8: [October 6-12]

October 12 class meeting TBD—discuss historiography and audience statement? Conferences with BF?

Friday, October 14, by 9:00 a.m.: Turn in statement of audience and learning

Week 9: [October 13-19]

No class [fall break]

Week 10: [October 20-26]

October 24, 4:00 p.m. (optional but encouraged!): Attend student-run campus teach-in on the history of voting rights: Alumni House (404 College Ave.), Virginia Dare Room.

In class October 26: Discuss Linda Norris and Rainey Tisdale's *Creativity in Museum Practice* (2014)—reading required and *posting on Canvas discussion board by 8:30 a.m., Wednesday*—and discuss Preliminary Development Plan assignment

Week 11: [October 27-November 2]

Preliminary development

[No class]

Week 12: [November 3-November 9]

Preliminary development

Tuesday November 8, by 9:00 a.m.: Send BF email update

[No class]

Week 13: [November 10-16]

Preliminary development

November 16 class meeting TBD: in-class conferences with BF?

Week 14: [November 17-23]

Preliminary development

[No class: Thanksgiving]

Week 15: [November 24-30]

Preliminary development

[TBD: email updates to BF?]

[No class]

Week 16: [No class]

December 6th, by 5:00 p.m.: Turn in Preliminary Development Plan to BF and partner(s)