

**HIS 317**  
**Creating a Public Past: History beyond the University**  
**Fall 2017**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00-12:15**

Classroom: **Moore Humanities Building (MHRA) 1215**

**Professor Benjamin Filene**

office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 3:30-4:30 and by appointment

office location: MHRA room 2137 (second floor)

office phone: 336/334-5645

[bpfilene@uncg.edu](mailto:bpfilene@uncg.edu)

History Department Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/>

History Department Website: <https://his.uncg.edu/>

*Credit structure:* 3:3

*Prerequisites:* None

*For Whom Planned:* This course is open to all undergraduate students.

*Catalog Description:* Explores the place of the past in contemporary life and introduces the field of public history: the effort to make history for and with audiences beyond the university.

**Course Description:**

This course invites students to explore history's place in contemporary life, to discover the power of the past in unexpected places. We will pursue this theme by following two strands. The first traces the history of the popular past in America since the nineteenth century, looking at moments when history was defined, shared, and, often, fought over in public settings beyond the university. Topics include:

world's fairs, historic pageants, the Smithsonian, Mount Vernon, slave narratives, Colonial Williamsburg, the American bicentennial celebration, and the musical *Hamilton*.

Running through these examples will be a central question: How does popular history shape a collective identity? Or, to put it another way: Do we have a shared past or many individual ones? Is American heritage—and America itself—singular or plural, an “is” or an “are”?

The second strand focuses on the work of public history professionals today and the tools they use to save and share the past. Topics include:

artifacts, oral history, exhibitions, living history and, via *field trips*\*, historic sites, art installations, museums, and archives.

Through these examples, you will learn about the field of public history and the work of its practitioners. Then you'll be ready to try *your* hand at making public history: through our Unearthing Tate Street Stories project. See below!

\**Note:* Through a UNCG “Strategic Seed Grant” and the generosity of our public history sites, all field trips this semester will be *free*!

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. **interpret primary sources** (including material culture, visual images, 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, and monuments—with attention to argument, point of view, and historical context;
4. **create original interpretations of the past that engage public audiences;**
5. **write** clearly and persuasively; and
6. **speak** with passion, clarity, and respect.

### **Teaching Methods:**

This is a lecture course with regular opportunities for discussion and collective exploration. In addition to learning a body of historical content, we will be exploring how to “read” a variety of cultural texts to glean historical insights. In every class period, time will be reserved for group consideration of historical documents, photographic images, music, or video. Frequently, students will form smaller groups in the classroom to consider a question, an article excerpt, or a primary source.

### **Assignments and Evaluation:**

- **Reader responses:** 10%  
Each week, I will ask you to write a short response to the most recent readings, to assess reading comprehension and to ensure that each student is prepared to participate fully in our in-class discussions. For each student, I will drop the term’s lowest reader-response grade. (learning outcomes #1, 2, and 5)
- **Midterm exam (October 5):** 20%  
This in-class exam will include short-answer identifications and an in-class essay. (learning outcomes #1, 3, and 5)
- **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum “History Unfolded” project (due October 24):** 10%  
What did Americans know about the Holocaust as it happened? What was invisible to them, what did they fail to see, and what did they choose to forget? We will investigate through an extended group work session—a “History Sprint”—held 11:00 am.-2:00 p.m. on October 19<sup>th</sup>. Afterwards, you will upload your findings to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s website and reflect on your foray into archive-building (due October 24<sup>th</sup>). (learning outcome #1)
- **Review essay: The Public Past (due November 9):** 20%  
Choose a single public history product—an exhibition, historic site tour, memorial, commemoration, television episode, film, digital history product, etc. —and analyze and assess its form, content, and public impact: about 5 pages. (learning outcomes #s 3, 6)

- **Final project: “Unearthing Tate Street Stories”** (*presented publicly on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 12:00-2:00*): 25%

Take history to the streets! Choose a single address on Tate Street, and then use public records, archives, and, perhaps, oral history, to uncover the layers of history hidden there. Then devise creative ways to “bring to the surface” the stories you’ve uncovered, sharing them at a public, open-air history celebration up and down the street. (learning outcomes #1, 4, 5, 6)

**Note:** Thanks to a UNCG “Strategic Seed Grant,” each project can submit a mini-budget that the instructor will use to purchase essential supplies.

- **Informal essay: Reflection on final project** (*due December 7 by 11:00 a.m.*): 5%  
Responding to prompts, reflect on lessons learned from your Tate Street experience. (learning outcome #5)

- **class attendance:** 5%

I will take attendance each class period. You will earn an attendance grade on the following scale:

0 absences:	A+=100
1 absence:	A=97
2 absences:	A-=92
3 absences:	B+=89
4 absences:	B=86
5 absences:	B-=82
6 absences:	C+=79
7 absences:	C=76
8 absences:	C-=76
9 absences:	D+=73
10 absences:	D=70
11 or more:	F

**Note:** This scale applies even in the case of minor illnesses, outside activities, or conflicts with other classes, because **one cannot succeed in this course without attending the lectures and taking notes. The only exceptions will be illnesses or absences documented with a doctor’s note or a dean’s excuse.**

- **class participation: 5%** (outcomes 1, 2, 3, 6)

Full participation involves advance completion of the required readings; attentiveness; engagement with in-class discussions; a willingness to ask questions and venture opinions; and collaboration and generosity with your “Course Partner”:

- A Course Partner is a fellow student, assigned to you in the first week of class, who will be your initial contact if you need to acquire notes from a missed lecture, to clarify deadlines, or to address confusion about a course assignment or content. Beyond these minimal mutual services, you and your partner may be in as much or little contact as you like. For instance, you might choose to serve as study partners or peer reviewers of each other’s essays.

**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. Please give me a chance 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<sup>rd</sup> 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 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 Texts:**

Available at the UNCG bookstore:

Lyon, Cherstin M., Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum. *Introduction to Public History*, 2017.

**E-reserves:** In addition to the textbook, discussions for each class session will also draw on required primary source readings and articles. All of these materials are on electronic reserve on Canvas.

*Note:* To access the eReserves, navigate to “MODULES” within the course’s Canvas site. The *first* time you do, you’ll need to log in to Box by clicking <http://box.uncg.edu>. Once you log in to Box, the eReserves will be accessible from within Canvas for the rest of the course.

**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/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.

## Outline/Calendar

### *Week 1:*

**August 15: Making History, Making Publics (and Taking Pledges)**

**August 17: Cabinets of Curiosities and a Popular Past  
+ What Is Public History?**

***Secondary Source:***

Lyon, Cherstin M., Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum, In “Introducing Public History” and “Thinking Historically,” *Introduction to Public History* (2017), Chapters 1 & 2: 1-32.

**Reader Prompt (not due on Canvas): Thinking about the authors’ definitions of public history, come prepared to share an experience you have had as a consumer of public history.**

### *Week 2:*

**August 22: *Field trip:* Elsewhere Gallery: 606 Elm Street, Greensboro**

**August 24: The U.S. on Display: World’s Fairs and Period rooms**

***Primary and Secondary Source:***

“Tour” of 1876 Centennial Exposition, with images: Free Library of Philadelphia:  
<https://libwww.freelibrary.org/collections/centennial/tours>.

### *Week 3:*

**August 29: Finding a Home in History: Mount Vernon and the Historic House Movement**

**August 31: Imagining a Universal Museum: The Smithsonian**

***Primary Source:***

Goode, George Brown. “Introduction,” “The Museums and Its Relationships,” “The Responsibilities and Requirements of Museums,” and “The Five Cardinal Necessities in Museum Administration” (excerpt), In *Principles of Museum Administration* (1895): 195-202.

### *Week 4:*

**September 5: *Field trip:* Blandwood Mansion, 447 West Washington St., Greensboro**

**September 7: *Tools of the Trade:* Objects**

***Secondary Sources:***

Lubar Steven. “In the Field,” In *Inside the Lost Museum: Curating, Past and Present* (2017): 1-4, 60-74.

Lyon, Nix, and Shrum. "Collecting History," In *Introduction to Public History*, Chapter 4: 57-81.

**Week 5:**

**September 12: Pageantry and the Progressive Era**

**Primary Source:**

Davol, Ralph. *A Handbook of Pageantry* (1914): 136-145.

**Secondary Source:**

"Adapting to America." Lower East Side Tenement Museum (March 5, 2013): 3 pp.  
<http://tenement.org/blog/adapting-to-america/> [also on e-reserve]

**September 14: Field trip: Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, UNCG Jackson Library, 222B**  
**Finding UNCG's Commemorative Landscape in the Archives,**

**Week 6:**

**September 19: Ideals of Race Etched in Stone: 1920s Memorial Mania**

**September 21: Colonial Williamsburg, Greenfield Village, and Living History**

**Secondary Sources:**

Gable, Eric and Richard Handler. "Public History, Private Memory: Notes from the Ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S.A.," In *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities* (2007): 47-62.

Lyon, Nix, and Shrum. "Engaging Audiences," In *Introduction to Public History*, Chapter 6: 113-140.

**Week 7:**

**September 26:**

**Guest Speaker: Frank Vagnone**

**Secondary Source:**

Carson, Cary. "The End of History Museums: What is Plan B?" *Public Historian* 30 (November 2008): 9-27.

**September 28: Seeing (and Hearing) the "Common Person" in History: 1930s Slave Narratives, Historical Murals, and the "Discovery" of Folk Cultures**

**Primary Source:**

Slave narrative—paper copies distributed in advance.

**Week 8:****October 3: *Tools of the Trade*: Oral history*****Primary Sources:***

Listen to/watch this 3-minute conversation between StoryCorps founder Dave Isay and his nephew (3 minutes): <https://storycorps.org/about/>.

Listen to a StoryCorps story of your choice (see Reader Response assignment for details): <https://storycorps.org/listen/>.

**October 5: *Midterm exam* (in class)****Week 9:****October 10: No class (fall break)****October 12: Forgetting and Remembering the Holocaust*****Meet in UNCG videoconference room for Skype conversation with United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Citizen History Community Manager Eric Schmalz,***

Familiarize yourself with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

<https://www.ushmm.org>.

Read about examples of "citizen history" projects here: <http://blogs.aaslh.org/5-citizen-history-projects-you-should-know-about-part-2/>.

Read about a project that *we* will be participating in here: "History Unfolded: U.S. Newspapers and the Holocaust":

<https://newspapers.ushmm.org/about/project?from=global-nav>.

**Week 10:****October 17: Cold War Visions**

***Primary Source: On reserve at Jackson Library. See Reader Response assignment for details.***

Steichen, Edward. *The Family of Man: The Greatest Photographic Exhibition of All Time* (1955).

**October 19: *History Sprint* for History Unfolded: U.S. Newspapers and the Holocaust  
Extended class session (scheduling to be discussed): tentatively 11:00-2:00 p.m.**

***Meet at Jackson Library***

**Week 11:****October 24: Taking History to the Street: Introducing Our Tate Street Final Project + Local History Strategies**

***Guest Speaker: Lynda Kellam, UNCG Librarian for Data Services & Government Information***

**Secondary Sources:**

Yank, Sue Bell. "This House Is Every House: The Journey of *Funeral for a Home*," In *Funeral for a Home*, Robert Blackson ed. (2014): 59-85.

Visser, Jasper. "The National Vending Machine: Building a Community of Objects."

The Museum of the Future [blog] (2010):

<http://themuseumofthefuture.com/2010/05/27/the-national-vending-machine-building-a-community-of-objects/>

**Due in class *and* via email: History Sprint materials + reflection [no reader response this week]**

**October 26: Civil Rights Struggles in Public History:****Secondary Source:**

Lubar, Steven. "Explanations and Encounters" (*excerpt*), In *Inside the Last Museum: Curating Past and Present* (2017): 196-203.

**NOTE: Before November 2<sup>nd</sup>, on your own, visit the International Civil Rights Center and Museum, 134 South Elm Street, Greensboro**

**Week 12:****October 31: Tools of the Trade: Exhibitions****Secondary Sources:**

Lyon, Nix, and Shrum, "Interpreting and Exhibiting History," *Introduction to Public History*, Chapter 5 (*excerpt*): 89-96.

Lubar, Steven. "Objects, Stories, and Visitors" *and* "Organizations and Juxtapositions," In *Inside the Last Museum: Curating Past and Present* (2017): 149-163 *and* 176-191.

**November 2: In-Class Debrief/Discussion of On-Your-Own Visit to the International Civil Rights Center and Museum****Week 13:****November 7: Bicentennial Celebrations: New Roots****Primary Sources:**

Follow this link to the 3 articles listed below, all of which appear in *Ebony* magazine (August 1975): 35-42:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=znUIZTIWfrEC&lpg=PA6&pg=PA37#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Jackson, Joseph H. "Should Blacks Celebrate the Bicentennial? A Resounding 'YES!'" (35-36).

Jordan, Vernon E., Jr. "A Qualified 'Maybe'" (37-38).



Bennett, Lerone. "An Adamant 'No'" (38, 40, 42).

**November 9: Work Session for Final Project**

**Due in class *and* via email: The Public Past review essay**

**Week 14:**

**November 14: Culture Wars, Identity Museums, and the *Enola Gay***

**Primary Sources:**

Correll, John T. "War Stories at Air and Space." *Air Force Magazine* (April 1994): 6 pp.

Harwit, Martin. "The Enola Gay: A Nation's, and a Museum's, Dilemma." *Washington Post* (Aug. 7, 1994): 3 pp.

"Documents" [including Senate resolution (September 19, 1994) and excerpts from hearings of Senate Committee on Rules and Administration (May 11, 1995)]. *Journal of American History* 82 (December 1995): 1136-1144.

**November 16: Public History As a Profession**

**Guest speakers: UNCG Museum Studies graduate students**

**Secondary Sources:**

Lyon, Nix, and Shrum. "Putting Public History to Work in Your World," In *Introduction to Public History*, Chapter 8: 1-19.

Sturtevant, Paul B. "History Is Not a Useless Major." *Perspectives on History* (April 2017): 25-28.

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.

**Reader Prompt (*not* due on Canvas): Drawing on this week's readings, come in with some questions about the field of public history for our graduate student guests.**

**Week 15:**

**November 21: "Who Lives Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?": History around Us**

**Primary Sources:**

Chernow, Ron. "Prologue: The Oldest Revolution War Widow." *Alexander Hamilton* (2005): 1-6.

Miranda, Lin-Manual and Jeremy McCarter. “What Is a Legacy?” (excerpts), In *Hamilton: The Revolution* (2016): 276-277, 280-281, 284-285.

Listen to the finale of the musical *Hamilton*, “Who Lives Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jyg3Lo\\_-Ep8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jyg3Lo_-Ep8) [see *lyrics* in Miranda and McCarter, 280-281, above].

*Optional:* For an introduction to the musical and a run-through of other *Hamilton* songs, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhww5-tFUJM>.

“Mitch Landrieu’s Speech on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans” *New York Times* (May 23, 2017): 8 pp.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/opinion/mitch-landrieu-speech-transcript.html>  
 [also on e-reserve]

**November 23: No class (Thanksgiving)**

**Week 16:**

**November 28: [last class] Logistics Preparation and Run-Through of Public Presentations**

**November 30: Reading Day**

**Tuesday, December 5 (during our final exam period), 12:00-2:00 p.m.: Public Presentation of Tate St. Final Project**

**Due via email, Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, by 11:00 a.m.: Reflections on Tate St. project**

**[no final exam]**