



## MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITE INTERPRETATION: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

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UNCG HIS/IAR 627 – 84977  
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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course comprises the first of a three-semester sequence that introduces you to the practices and scholarship of public history and skills that will help you thrive in the profession. Over the course of three semesters, the sequence will merge theory and practice through a public history project to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary (on October 11, 2018) of the opening of the Central Carolina Convalescent Hospital (CCCH), a hospital for children with polio. In the 1940s, polio ravaged the country and North Carolina was particularly hit hard. Greensboro responded by building an entire hospital in only three months, a facility that then held about 250 children, often separated from their family and friends. To commemorate this anniversary, the History Department's Museum Studies Program is embarking on a three-year project to commemorate this forgotten site, which served not only as a polio hospital, but also as a home for indigent people, a military installation, and a detention facility. Your class will begin the work on this project—gathering materials about the site, experimenting with participatory public history practices, and making connections to local people and community groups tied to the site.

In the first semester of this sequence, the HIS 627 class will focus on the practices and theories of interpreting history while conducting initial research on the history of the longue duree of the site. You will break into small groups and each group will research one of the iterations of the polio hospital. That research is critical for us as we begin the project, as right now we are starting from scratch. You are also encouraged to reach out to community members and organizations connected to the site at this time in order to begin building relationships and momentum for the project. Finally, we will host a gathering at the end of the semester in order to share your findings with Museum Studies folks and community members. In HIS 626, you will explore the policies and practices of museums and historic sites and you will work on the nuts and bolts of developing funding and community partnerships. In particular, you will conduct oral histories with people associated with the former CCCH land and will create a preliminary plan for the commemorative activities in fall 2018. The sequence culminates with HIS 633 in fall 2018, when you will plan and implement participatory public programming and/or installations about the

history of the place throughout the semester. The intention of the fall 2018 project will be to experiment with participatory approaches as we work to commemorate the site. Dr. Filene and the cohort after you will then continue working on the project and seek to build on and extend your work.

### **HIS 627 Core Concepts**

The Museums and Historic Site Interpretation class will encourage you to learn about and engage with the following core concepts:

- How the interpretation of museums and historic sites has changed over time, and how historical moments have shaped how those places presented the past;
- The dilemmas of historic interpretation, which include ownership and authority, the role of the curator, silences and omissions, and the history of marginalized communities; and,
- Contemporary practices and models of making history meaningful to the public by partnering with communities, creating participatory projects and incorporating oral histories, material culture, and new technologies.

### **HIS 627 Core Skills**

This class will train you in skills that historians of all stripes use to interpret the past, and that will serve you well in the public history profession.

- Reading, analyzing and evaluating primary and secondary sources
- Speaking publicly in a way that engages and activates your audience
- Writing concisely, clearly and creatively
- Collaborating with your peers and community partners with sensitivity and a stance of listening and learning
- Conducting archival research

## **EXPERIENCES, PROJECTS & EVALUATION**

To build these skills, you will engage in the experiences and projects listed below. 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 Canvas, 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 – 20%**

Participation makes up a central part of this course, as you will grapple with the texts and learn from each other's point of view in the classroom. Attendance 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 that work.

Each week, after you have finished the readings, please write a brief response (around 150-250 words) to the readings in a discussion thread on Canvas no later than 11 AM on the Monday of class. In the posts, please present and comment on the core issues the authors raise and please work to have focused and clear writing. Feel free to include links to images, maps, video, and/or audio to bring it to life and be sure to read the posts of your fellow students, and comment on at least one per week. These discussion board posts will make up part of your participation grade.

### **In-Class Presentation – 10% – Dates Determined By Students**

Each of you will choose one class session in which you will give an in-class presentation on the reading(s) of that day and lead a discussion on them. In the presentation and discussion, be sure to give background information about it and cover the authors' perspectives and create questions that engage with the core themes of the text. Please plan to make your short presentation no more than 15 minutes and the discussion approximately 45 minutes. Finally, submit your discussion questions to me no later than Friday at noon of the week before class.

### **Paper #1 – 20% – Due September 18**

You will write a paper (4-5 pages double-spaced) on how public history has changed over the course of the twentieth century. The assignment will be handed out on August 28<sup>th</sup>. If you choose to re-write or revise the piece, submit it to me no later than Nov. 27.

### **Paper #2 – 20% – Due October 9**

Please visit an exhibition at a museum or historic site this semester, and write a review of it (4-5 pages double-spaced). The review should include a *brief* overview of the exhibition and the strengths and weaknesses of its over-arching themes, historical content, design and layout, and interactivity. The review should also engage with the questions raised in the "History, Memory, and Power" section of the class. You will also give a five-minute presentation of what you found to the class that day. The full assignment will be handed out on Sept. 18. If you choose to re-write or revise the piece, submit it to me no later than Nov. 27.

### **Final Public Project – 30% – November 27**

You will work in small groups to research one piece of the history of the CCCH site. This final project should rely on archival and secondary source research and should clearly and concisely provide an overview of the place. I encourage you to be creative in finding a way to present your

research, which could take any form (podcast, website, small-scale exhibit, short video, etc.). I will hand out the full assignment on Oct. 16.

## **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](http://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. 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](#) in Jackson Library provides technical help with Prezi, Powerpoint, WordPress, web design, posters/flyers, video and audio and the [Digital ACT Studio](#) helps edit digital projects and make them more visually appealing. Finally, UNCG's [Speaking Center](#) offers a great resource for building public, small-group or individual speaking skills.

## **READINGS**

The following readings are available at the bookstore and on Amazon.com.

### **Required**

Kyvig, David A. and Myron Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Meringolo, Denise. *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*. University of Massachusetts, 2012.

Oshinsky, David. *Polio: An American Story*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Rolph-Trouillot, Michel. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 1995.

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

Simon, Nina. *Participatory Museum*. Museum 2.0, 2010.

**Recommended (Excerpts Provided on Canvas)**

Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, *Letting Go? Sharing Authority in a User-Generated World*. Routledge: 2011.

Schwarzer, Marjorie. *Riches, Rivals and Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America*. American Association of Museums, 2013.

Serrell, Beverly. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

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**Aug. 21      What is Public History?**

### **GENEALOGIES OF PUBLIC HISTORY**

**Aug. 28      The History of Museums**  
*Paper #1 Assignment Handed Out*  
Marjorie Schwarzer, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals*, Excerpts from the Introduction, Ch.'s 3 and 4, and Afterword on Canvas.

**Sept. 4      Labor Day ~ Enjoy the Weekend!**

**Sept. 11      Memorializing Historic Sites**  
Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*

### **HISTORY, MEMORY, AND POWER**

**Sept. 18      The Many Forms of Memory**  
*Paper #2 Assignment Handed Out*  
Rosenzweig and Thelen, *Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*

Paper #1 due in hardcopy and on Canvas

**Sept. 25**      **Power and History**  
Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*

**Oct. 2**        **Sharing Authority**  
Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*.

Excerpts from *Letting Go?*

**Oct. 9**        **Fall Break**  
Paper #2 Due at 3:30 PM on Monday, 10/9 on Canvas

**Oct. 16**      **Complicating Shared Authority**  
*Final Project Assignment Handed Out and Work Plans Developed*

Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*.

**PUTTING PRINCIPLE INTO PRACTICE**

**Oct. 23**      **The History around You**  
*Class held at the former CCCH grounds – meet in the parking lot of 3309  
Burlington Road, Greensboro.*

David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History*.

Work on final projects

**Oct. 30**      **A History of Polio**  
David M. Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*

Submit rough outlines of final projects in hardcopy and via Canvas

**Nov. 6**        **Interpreting History**  
Excerpts from Kathy McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions* on  
Canvas.

Excerpts from Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels* on Canvas.

Work on final projects

**Nov. 13**      **Thinking about Visitor Experience**

Donna Braden, Ellen Rosenthal, and Daniel Spock, “What the Heck is Experience Design?” *Exhibitionist* 24 (Fall 2005) on Canvas.

Excerpts from John Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* on Canvas.

Richard Rabinowitz, “Story Time, Exhibit Time,” *Culturefront* (Summer 1997) on Canvas.

Submit rough draft of final projects in hardcopy and via Canvas

**Nov. 20**      **Work on Final Projects in Class**  
Edit final projects

**Nov. 27**      **Last Class**  
Submit final projects in hardcopy and via Canvas

\*\*End of semester gathering date/time to be determined

Thank you for an awesome semester!