



MUSEUM AND HISTORIC SITE INTERPRETATION: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

FALL 2018 - UNCG HIS/IAR 627 – 81991
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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 on disability history in Greensboro. The project will culminate in a final project in November 2019 (a year and a half from now) in which you as a class will bring the traveling exhibition *Patient No More* to the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro. The exhibition explores the history of disability rights activism in the Bay Area and is a model of an accessible exhibition. In addition to bringing this exhibition to Greensboro, the class will create its own public history project (or cluster of projects) that unearths a local history of disability and which we will launch alongside the *Patient No More* exhibition.

In the first semester of this sequence, the HIS 627 class will focus on the practices and theories of interpreting history for the public. Throughout the class, you will immerse yourself in core questions about public history, such as the history of museums, shared authority, power and memory, historic trauma, and community engagement. Then, beginning in September, you will begin work on the public project by learning about disability history and disability studies, conducting an oral history that relates to disability history, and making connections to local people and community groups.

Next semester, in HIS 626: The Practice of Public History, 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. By this time, you will have identified and articulated the full scope of the final project and you will work on that throughout the semester. The sequence culminates with HIS 633: Community History Practicum in Fall 2019, when you will curate your own project on disability history and plan for the shipment and installation of the *Patient No More* exhibition.

HIS 627 Core Concepts

The Museum 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;
- How to practice inclusivity and shared authority with a diverse range of community partners and audience members;
- 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. These skills include:

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

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+ 97-100 / A 93-96 / 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.

Beginning August 28, please write brief responses to the weekly readings. Write about 150-250 words and post them to the discussion threads on Canvas no later than 11 AM on the Monday before class. In the posts, present and comment on the core issues the authors raise and please use clear and concise prose. 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 – 15% – 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 the readings 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 ten minutes and the discussion approximately forty-five minutes and submit your discussion questions to me via email no later than Friday at noon the week before class. Finally, be sure to review the students' responses on the Canvas discussion board and incorporate their comments into your discussion plan.

Paper #1 – 20% – Due September 4

For your first HIS 627 paper assignment, please write a paper that charts how public history has changed over the course of the twentieth century. Please identify the two or three turning points that made modern history museums and historical sites what they are today. Be sure to give specific examples about the changes that occurred and explain why you consider them important. Also, remember to include discussions of major historical events—such as periods of war, economic change, and social activism—that contextualizes these changes.

Use the readings and discussions from the class in the paper and cite them with footnotes, using the Chicago citation style. To cite the class discussions, write "HIS 627 Class Discussion, [DATE]." The paper should run at least five pages double-spaced. Please upload a copy to Canvas and turn in a hardcopy at the beginning of class. I am happy to read rough drafts in advance if I receive them no later than three business days before the deadline and if you choose to revise the paper after you receive a grade, please submit it to me no later than November 27. This paper is due on September 4 and is worth 20% of your grade.

Paper #2 – 20% – Due October 9

Please visit an exhibition at a museum or historic site this semester, and write a review of it (at least five 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 big questions raised in the class, such as the question of history, memory, and power, and the development of museums

over time. The review should not merely describe the exhibition, it should have an over-arching main point that you prove with specific examples. Please read pp. 109-110 in *Introduction to Public History* for suggestions on writing an exhibition review. If you choose to re-write or revise the piece, submit it to me no later than Nov. 27.

Final Public Project – 25% – November 27

Over the course of the semester, you will identify someone whose life story teaches us something about local disability history. You will conduct an oral history with this person and then we will deposit it in a library or archive. Finally, you will present your findings on November 27 to the rest of the class and other members of the Museum Studies Program and the community. I will pass out a detailed description of this assignment on September 4.

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.

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 Elliott 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, on Amazon.com and through other booksellers, and they are on reserve at the library. You may purchase or use an e-book – just be sure that you have an e-reader that you can bring to class to use (you may not refer to the book on your phone). Also, if you use an e-book, be prepared to use specific examples from the text and have a method of retrieving them from the e-book.

Required

Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds. *Letting Go?* Taylor, 2011.

Horton, James and Lois, eds. *Slavery and Public History*. Longleaf: 2009.

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

Lyon, Cherstin, Elizabeth Nix, and Rebecca Shrum. *An Introduction to Public History*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

Nielsen, Kim. *A Disability History of the United States*. Penguin, 2013.

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

Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*. Oxford: 2014.

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

Ryan, Deborah, and Vagnone, Frank, *An Anarchists' Guide to Historic Houses*. Taylor, 2016.

Recommended (Excerpts Provided on Canvas)

Perks, Robert, and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*. Routledge, 2004.

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

Young, James E., *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces In Between*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Aug. 14 **What is Public History?**

GENEALOGIES OF PUBLIC HISTORY

Aug. 21 **Getting on the Same Page: An Introduction to Public History**
Read Cherstin Lyon, Elizabeth Nix, and Rebecca Shrum. *An Introduction to Public History*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

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

Sept. 4 **Museums Today and in the Future: Visiting a “New” Museum**
Meet at the International Civil Rights Center and Museum, 134 South Elm Street

Paper #1 due in hardcopy and on Canvas.

Final Project assignment handed out.

HISTORY, MEMORY, AND POWER

Sept. 11 **Power and History**
Read Michel Rolph-Trouillot. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 1995.

Sept. 18 **Traumatic History ~ Guest Lecturer Dr. Gatson**
Read excerpts from James and Lois Horton, eds. *Slavery and Public History*. Longleaf: 2009.

Read Excerpts from James Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces in Between*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2016. Excerpts posted on Canvas.

Sept. 25 **Complicating Sharing Authority**
Read Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Oct. 2 **History and Memory: Sharing Authority**
Read Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds. *Letting Go?* Taylor, 2011.

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

PUTTING PRINCIPLE INTO PRACTICE

Oct. 16 **Doing Oral History**
Read through Donald Ritchie. *Doing Oral History*. Oxford: 2014. Focus in on areas that are most useful to you as you prepare for your oral history as this is a reference guide.

Read selections from Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*. Routledge, 2004. Posted on Canvas.

Oct. 23 **An Introduction to Disability History**
Read Kim Nielsen. *A Disability History of the United States*. Penguin, 2013.

Oct. 30 **The History of Polio**
Read David Oshinsky. *Polio: An American Story*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

- Nov. 6** **Merging Disability History and Public History**
Katherine Ott's "[Disability and the Practice of Public History: An Introduction](#)" (*The Public Historian* 27, no. 2 (2005): 9–24).

["Making Public History Accessible: Exploring Best Practices for Disability Access—2016 Working Group"](#).

Katherine Kudlick, "[Subversive Access: Disability Goes Public in the United States](#)" (2016).
- Nov. 13** **Historic Houses and Accessibility**
Read Deborah Ryan and Frank Vagnone, *An Anarchists' Guide to Historic Houses*. Taylor, 2015.
- Nov. 20** **Putting the Visitor First**
Read the following pieces on Canvas:
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.
- Nov. 27** **Last Class – Final Project Presentations**
Final in-class presentations and submit oral histories to Dr. Parsons electronically.

Thank you for an awesome semester!