

PUBLIC HISTORY CAPSTONE I

FALL 2018

UNCG HIS 720
DR. TORREN L. GATSON
CLASSROOM: MHRA ROOM 1304

THURSDAY, 3:30-6:20
EMAIL: TLGATSON@UNCG.EDU
OFFICE HOURS: BY APPOINTMENT MHRA 2112

OVERVIEW OF COURSE

In both your classes and internships with the Museum Studies program, you have studied major principles and best practices of public history, strengthened your historical research skills, expanded your knowledge of the historiography of United States history and improved your skills in writing, public presentation, and project planning. The Museum Studies capstone classes HIS 720 and 721 offer you the opportunity to bring together all of what you have learned and apply it toward a public history project of your own creation.

In the first semester of the capstone, HIS 720, you will begin work on your community project focusing on conducting primary research, reviewing the secondary literature, identifying how the project contributes to the community and to other bodies of historical work, and modeling best practices in public history. Finally, you will draft a portfolio with deliverables that you agree upon with the professor and that document this work. In HIS 721, you will continue your capstone work, continuing to implement the plans begun in HIS 720.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

During HIS 720, you will strengthen your historical skills in the following ways:

- **by communicating with your community partner** to identify the needs of the institution and the audience,
- **by choosing to model best practices in public history**, particularly in preliminary design work,
- **by identifying and evaluating bodies of academic and public history work** that tell the history of your subject,
- **by articulating in writing how your project will build upon and contribute** to the community and bodies of academic and public history work already done on your topic,
- **by identifying and analyzing relevant primary sources** that inform your narrative and that you can use in your project, and,

- **by creating a portfolio of deliverables** that documents how you wove together the interests of your community partner and audience, your historical contributions, and the primary source research you conducted.

Finally, the independent nature of this project will offer you the opportunity to compassionately practice self-confidence in the face of doubt and uncertainty, and patience and endurance as you complete a long-term project.

TEACHING METHODS

In the capstone course, you as students have as much, if not more, influence over what you learn and the skills that you build as the professor does. As the instructor of the course, I facilitate the research and writing process by establishing the basic deadlines and goals, facilitating class discussions and peer reviews. I will also offer comments on the drafts created throughout the semester and am available to offer any other edits you request. Beyond that, the majority of the work will occur outside of the classroom setting where you will control how you conduct your research, writing, collaboration with community partners, and project planning. The primary purpose of this capstone project lies not just in an end product that serves the community. The other major purpose of this class is that you hone your skills as a public historian by taking steps outside of your comfort zone and trying new things to learn from them. As a result, class sessions will include not just time for peer review on the content of the work but also time for reflection on your experiences as you do long-term research-driven public history projects.

EXPERIENCES, ASSIGNMENTS & 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 Blackboard, 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 – 10%

Participation makes up a central part of this course, as the classroom is the primary place for grappling with the research process and the challenges that arise with developing a preliminary plan. I base the participation grade on your engagement with group discussions about both content and the capstone project process. 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.

Participation also relies on the quality of the peer review that you provide to your fellow students. Remember: “It takes a village to create a capstone project.” As you embark upon this

creative project, you do not work alone, you have the people in this class to support you and offer ideas along the way. Your participation grade will also rely on the quality of the constructive feedback that you give to other students.

Monthly Journal (Blog) – 10%

Due: Last class of each month

Students should keep a digital record of their experience and their professional development as they work with their respected institution or community partner. These blogs entries are only to be done once a month and will be shared in the Last class of each month starting in September.

Capstone Project Proposal – 10%

Due: August 21st

This document includes an overview of the project, potential community partners, purpose, and logistical questions to get you started. If your capstone project is like a cross-country road trip, then the proposal is your road map. You may deviate from this proposal –change the route slightly or take a few detours. Still, the project proposal lays out your basic direction and the resources you have to get there.

An electronic copy of your capstone proposal form must be uploaded to Canvas by August 21st at 5:00 PM. Then, bring a hard copy of the capstone project proposal to the first physical class meeting on August 23rd.

Capstone Deliverables Work Plan – 20%

Due: September 6th

At the beginning of the course, you will describe what portfolio deliverables you will submit at the end of the class and the semester work plan that will enable you to finish those products. The main requirement of this work plan is that you create milestones and deadlines in your work plan that enable you to produce drafts of your portfolio materials along the way.

Essay on Primary and Secondary Research 30%

November 8th

While the capstone project provides a deliverable public history product to the general public it also must encompass combined aspects of primary, secondary, and when applicable original source materials. It is important that as public historians you begin to document, record the use of that information. For this reason, students have two options:

- 1) Write a brief 5 to 7 page paper detailing the methodology of the project and how the primary and secondary source material will help build the frame work and foundation for the product. Moreover, this essay should incorporate the vignettes of the actual primary and secondary sources you envision using. For students are not completing “traditional” capstone projects such as working with digital media or development should include how utilizing primary documents (whether objects, images, oral histories etc....) help situate that foundation.

Presentation on Current State of Capstone Project – 30%
Due November 29th

NOTE

Your capstone is executed over two semesters. Some of you will not have finished product by the end of the semester. For those individuals, you are assessed based on the progress you have made up to the end of the Fall 2018 semester.

In order to document the state of your project by the end of this semester, use the following as a guideline to build your end of the semester report. Keeping in mind the following learning objectives of the course:

- communicating with your community partner to identify the needs of the institution and the audience,
- modeling best practices in public history, particularly in preliminary design work (identifying an audience, articulating a main idea and purpose, and crafting an interpretation and design plan that engages your audience),
- identifying and evaluating bodies of academic and public history work that tell the history of your subject (does your project fill a gap, build upon a well-documented or burgeoning field, make an intervention, take up a hotly debated topic, etc.),
- articulating how your project builds upon and contributes to bodies of academic and public history work already done on your topic,
- identifying and analyzing relevant primary sources that inform your narrative and that you can use in your project, and,
- how you wove together the interests of your community partner and audience, your historical contributions, and the primary source research you conducted.

How will you document these things? I suggest that you document them in ways that make the most sense for your project. Specific ideas include: research memos, preliminary design plans, annotated bibliographies, grant narratives, a walk-through of an exhibit or public program, draft docent training guides, and/or a collections review.

Example: Your community partner would like a video script by December. Your portfolio due to me might include: 1) a footnoted video script, 2) a statement of how your project addresses the need of a community, models best practices in public history, and fits with other historical works, and 3) an annotated bibliography.

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, 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 your requests. N.B. You do not need to disclose details about your disability to me 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](#) and the [Digital ACT Studio](#) in Jackson Library provide help with multimedia projects and UNCG's [Speaking Center](#) offers a great resource for building public speaking skills.

CLASS SCHEDULE

August 23rd – Class Meeting

Project Proposal Due in Hardcopy (E-Copy Due August 21st at 5:00 PM)

Students will talk about their projects with the class. Please read your classmates' proposals in time for class on the 23rd in preparation for this discussion.

August 30th – Individual Meetings with Dr. Gatson in MHRA (2112) (20 minutes each)

September 6th – Class Meeting

Capstone Deliverables Work Plan Due in Hardcopy and via Canvas

Contracts with institutions due

September 27th – Class Meeting

October 11th – Class Meeting

November 1st – Class Meeting

November 8th – Essay on Primary and Secondary Research Due

November 15th – Individual Meetings with Dr. Gatson in MHRA 2112 (~20 minutes each)

November 29th – Class Meeting

Final Presentations and Report Due in Hardcopy and Via Canvas

In order to successfully complete your capstone project, it is your responsibility to setup and/or attend meetings via phone or in person with your community partner at least once every 4 weeks. It is also your responsibility to communicate with your community partner and to meet with them at the agreed-upon times.

****Please note, this syllabus is subject to change at any time at the discretion of the professor. ****