



MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITE INTERPRETATION: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

UNCG HIS 627
TORREN L. GATSON
OFFICE: MHRA, #2119

MONDAY, 2:00-4:50 IN MHRA 2207/ PH LAB
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OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY 1:00PM – 2:00 PM

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 this semester, our readings and engaged work sequence will merge theory and practice through two micro public history projects. This semester, HIS 627 will complete two micro projects. Students will be split into two teams. The first project is a refresh of Grimsley High School's current exhibition dedicated to students who served in World War II (WWII). The original exhibit was done by concerned alumni/ae of the school.

The exhibition currently sits in the Field house (football stadium) and is a featured characteristic of the space. The Second project partners with the Unsung Heroes Project. Unsung Heroes collects, stores, and interprets the often-overshadowed stories of many foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement. Students will be trained and execute a series of oral interviews. Students will add their oral histories to the university sponsored website, http://libresearch.uncg.edu/unsung_heroes/. The History Department's Museum Studies Program, specifically your class will appropriately build these projects—gathering materials, experimenting with participatory public history practices, and making connections to local people and community groups tied to the project.

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 dureé of the narrative. This course will also emphasize the contextual and conceptual realities of race, class, and gender within the field of public history and its indelible footprint left on interpretation at historic sites and museums. Students will be introduced to their community partners (and if applicable see the space). You are also encouraged to reach out to community members and organizations connected to the project to begin building relationships and momentum for the project. Finally, we will gather at the end of the semester in order to showcase your work with Museum Studies folks and community members.

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

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 students' requests. You do not need to disclose details about your disability to the instructor 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.

Guidelines for Virtual Meetings (If necessary)

Virtual learning (i.e., Zoom, WebEx, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams etc.) may be necessary this semester for a host of reasons (among them COVID-19). That being said, below are a few short guidelines for how this class will operate during any distance learning:

- All participants on the call should be in a learning environment ready to engage (i.e. No one should be in the bed, or in a place not associated with classroom learning)
- All students must be visible at their computer ready to engage in class discussion or lecture
- visual disruptions should be brief so that I am able to see as well as hear your participation, you may need to briefly step away or tend to personal matters.
- Unless you are prompted to speak, please keep your microphone muted as to limit interference and disruption for your other colleagues.
- If you lose service or you are dropped from the call, it is your responsibility to immediately rejoin the class or immediately email the professor or record
- Be prompt to class, arriving before the official start of class (i.e., if class starts at 2:00pm please be in the call at least five minutes earlier)

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 letter grade for each 24 hours past the deadline. Unless you have a specific accommodation from the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) (OARS), 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, prior to class beginning, 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 (two pages) on the readings that are due each Sunday by midnight. In your brief reviews, you must present and comment on the core issues the authors raise. You must also critique any shortcomings of the work. Be mindful that all work turned in should reflect that of graduate level writing and research. With that in mind make sure that any written work has focused and clear writing style. These weekly submissions will make up part of your participation grade. **Note: Weekly response papers will receive only a check, check plus, check minus, or the phrase “See me after class.”**

In-Class Presentation – 20% – Dates Determined on First Day

Each of you will be given 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 author and place the work in context for the era. Be sure to 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. **This includes being prepared to ask your colleagues at least five constructive questions from the readings.** Finally, submit your discussion questions to me no later than Friday at noon of the week before class. Specific criteria for presentations are as follows:

- Must be a digital presentation (PowerPoint or keynote only)
- Must be no more than seven slides
- Slides must include: Title slide; About authors or editors slide; a slide covering the 5 W’s (who is audience, what is the book, when was it published, where was it published (publishing info), and why was the book written; slide covering major theme(s) of book; and a slide covering your proposed questions for discussion.

Paper #1 – 15% – Public History in Action (Response Paper) Due Sept. 13th

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.

Paper #2 – 15% – The Evolution of Public History Due October 18th

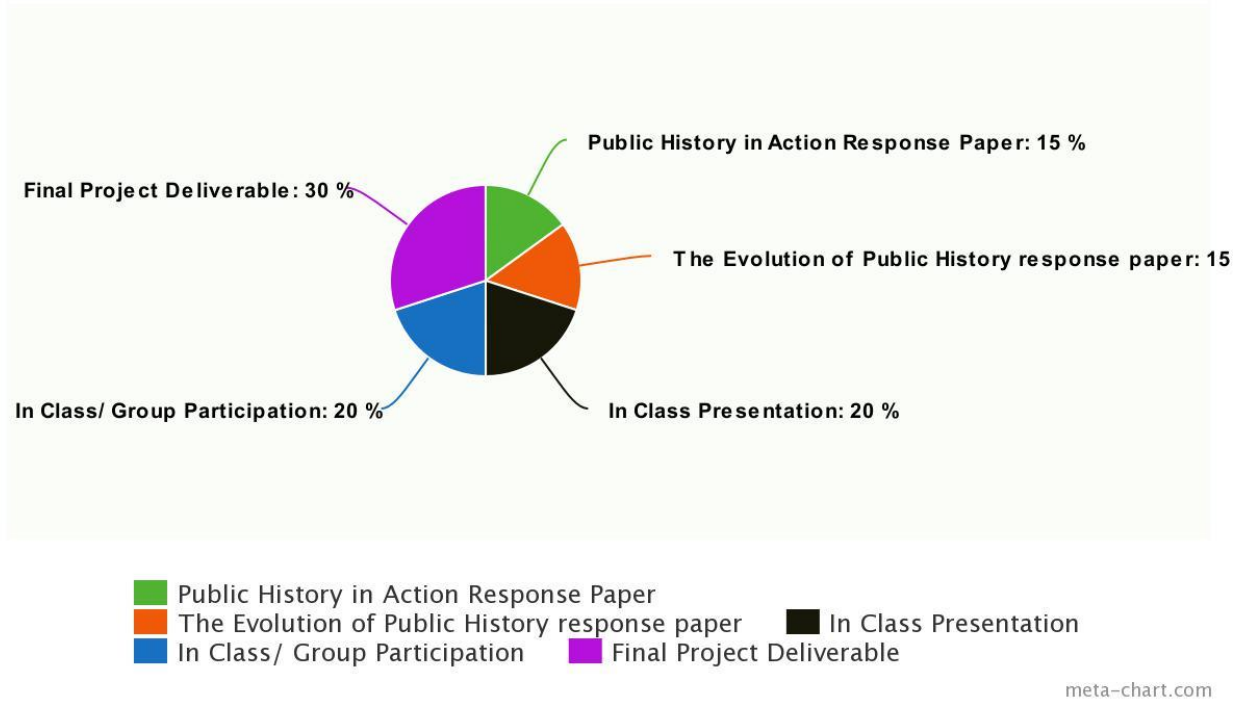
You will write a paper (4-5 pages double-spaced) on how public history has changed over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

Final Public Project – 30% – December 2

You will work in your small assigned groups to research and produce your final history projects. This final project will showcase your conducted research and collaborative ideas and

implementation of ideas in creation of your final products. These presentations will be well researched and clearly and concisely presented providing an overview of that aspect of the project. I encourage you to be creative in finding a way to present research, which must be a visual display of a technological platform i.e., PowerPoint, Adobe Publisher, etc... I will discuss further on Oct. 18th.

Breakdown of Assignments toward Final Grade
courtesy of Dr. Gatson



****Note****

Each week, once we have reviewed the readings there will be time set aside, at least 30 minutes, for break out discussion, brainstorming and work on the overall class projects.

READINGS

Required

Brundage, Fitzhugh. *Where the Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Faulk, John. *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*. Left Coast Press, 2009.

Greenspan, Anders. *Creating Colonial Williamsburg: The Restoration of Americas Eighteenth Century Capital*. University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Horton, James Oliver. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough stuff of American Memory*. The New Press, 2006.

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.

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

Rose, Julia. *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. Roman & Littlefield Press, 2016.

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

Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*, University of North Carolina Press 4th Edition (originally published 1957).

Vagnone, Frank and Deborah Ryan. *Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums*. Routledge Press, 2016.

Recommended

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

Balgooy, Max, *Interpreting African American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites*. Roman & Littlefield Press, 2014.

Burns, Andrea, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.

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

Aug. 23rd What is Public History? Introductions and overview of the course

Origins of Public History

Aug 30th Conceptualizing the Practice of interpretation

Breakout exercise surrounding the history of interpretation

Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*.

Sept. 6th No Class (Labor Day!)

Sept. 13th The Historical Enterprise

Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*

Sept. 20th The Power of Memory & Omission in Public History

W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Where the Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*.
(selected chapters)

-Catherine Bashir, Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and
Wilmington, North Carolina, 1885-1915. pg. 139.

-Stephanie E. Yuhl, Rich and Tender Remembering: Elite White Women and an
Aesthetic Sense of Place in Charleston, 1920s-1930s

-David Blight, Epilogue “Southerners Don’t Lie; They Just Remember Big.”

Sept. 27th Memorializing Historic Sites

Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*

The Tough Stuff of American History

Oct. 4th The Power dynamic of Authority & History

Michel Rolph -Trouillot, *Silencing the Past, Power and the Production of History*

Oct. 11th No Class (Fall Break!)

Oct. 18th Complicating Shared Authority

Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*

Oct. 25th Thinking about the Visitor Experience

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

Nov. 1st “Difficult” History

James Oliver Horton & Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History*

Excerpts from Julia Rose, *Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*

Putting Principle Into Practice

Nov. 8th The History Around You

Class will be held at the (Community Partner/Site) in Greensboro

Nov. 15th Community engaged exhibition and the Radical Future of Museums

Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*.

Frank Vagnone and Deborah Ryan, *Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums*.

Nov. 22 No Class working on final projects

Dec. 2 Final projects and reflections

****Any information (i.e. dates, assignments, or instructions) found within this syllabus is subject to change at any time per the discretion of the professor of record for this course.****