

PUBLIC HISTORY CAPSTONE I

FALL 2023

UNCG HIS 720

DR. TORREN L. GATSON

CLASSROOM: MHRA ROOM 1213/ PH LAB

WEDNESDAY, 2:00-4:50

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OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY 1:00PM- 2:00PM

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 begin building a professional project 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 and ultimately creating a tangible public product.

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.

Note*, At the core of the course, is a detailed independent styled project that will offer you the opportunity to thoughtfully practice self-confidence, effectively take part in community engagement, to conquer professional insecurities, and to execute when applicable patience and endurance as you complete a long-term project.

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.

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. 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 (**No blank screen or profile image**) 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)

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.

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.

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 – 5%

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.

Capstone Project Proposal & Contract – 5%

Due: August 30th

Capstone proposals should include an overview of the project, potential community partners, purpose, and logistical questions. Essentially, if your capstone is your “dream home,” then your proposal is the architectural sketch of how to build the structure. For some, you will tweak your proposal and for others you will completely deviate from the originally proposed idea, and that is OK. As long as the project proposal lays out your basic direction and the resources you have to get there. Proposals must be two pages double spaced. I will distribute the contracts on the first day of class.

Capstone Deliverables Work Plan – 10%

Due: September 13th

At the beginning of the course, you will describe what capstone deliverables you plan to accomplish by the end of the semester. Any deliverable should specifically further your progress towards a finished impactful product. The main requirement of this work plan is that you create milestones and deadlines in your work plan that enable you to produce a mid-year review presentation. Deliverable workplans can come in a host of formats including calendar format, Microsoft excel spreadsheet, or Microsoft word document. The main purpose is to build a timeline and guide that keeps you attentive on the larger project while facilitating the completion of research, interviews, mockups etc... Each deliverable must have a due date set directly by you. I will hold each student accountable for their workplan.

Essay on Primary and Secondary Research 20%

Due: October 4th

While the capstone project produces a tangible public history product, it also must encompass combined aspects of primary, secondary source materials. It is important that as public historians you begin to document and record the use of that information. For this reason, you will have a methodological style research paper. Below see the details of crafting that paper:

- 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 framework and foundation for the product. Moreover, this essay should incorporate the vignettes of the actual primary and secondary sources you envision using. For students who are not completing “traditional” capstone projects such as working with digital media or development you should include how utilizing primary documents (whether objects, images, oral histories etc....) help situate that foundation.

Historiographical Essay – 20%

Due: November 1st

Students will produce a historiographical essay that encompasses the written scholarship on the major field(s) surrounding their capstone project. This essay must be at least 7 pages in length and no more than 10 pages in length. **PLEASE NOTE** **The main purpose of this paper is to examine the history and trends of what has been written on your perspective topic as it relates to your capstone project. Examples of this include reviewing the historiography of museum curation and exhibition design for someone designing or installing a museum. Another example for someone interested in museum operations and administration is to review the history of the establishment of the historical enterprise itself.

Capstone Project Review Presentations and Portfolio review – 30%

Due November 15th

Students will present their progress and highlight milestones and successfully completion of deliverables. This presentation is to only show the progress you have made to that point in your capstone. You will also be handing in your Portfolio (Binder) which will hold all notes, physical copies of deliverables. You will receive your binder back after I have reviewed and accessed your progress.

Professional Mentorship Conversations 10%

Each student will be paired with a professional mentor in the field of Public history. Students must hold a minimum of one meeting per month with their mentor in which you ask pertinent questions regarding their career decisions, current employment and your pending job hunt.

NOTE

Your capstone is executed over two semesters (concurrent). It is understandable that you will not have a finished product by the end of the semester. However, 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 week. It is also your responsibility to communicate with your community partner and to meet with them at the agreed-upon times.

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? In providing evidence of adequate project matriculation... “Everything is fair game.” 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, emails and any other tangible evidence of your hard work.

Example: If you were tasked by your community partner to create a video script by December. Your capstone binder could 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

August 16th Introduction to course and thorough review of syllabus. Please bring a binder to class that will become your capstone binder. Upon the end of class each student will meet with me individually in (5 min intervals)

August 30th Project Proposal

Each student will discuss their project or ideals of potential projects with the class. In return the class will ask question, pose any comments, concerns, or constructive criticism. Be prepared discuss your proposal with your classmates.

September 13th Capstone Deliverables Work Plan Due and Contract Due from your respective community partners.

Each student will present their deliverable workplan with the class.

September 27th Class Meeting

October 4th Essay on Primary and Secondary Research Due

October 18th Understanding “Visitors” in the Age of the 21st Century Museum
Class Meeting (Discuss how to prepare **Capstone Project Review Presentations**)

November 1st **Historiographical Essay Due in class (Hardcopy)**

November 15th **Capstone Project Review Presentations**

End of the first half of capstone debriefing meetings

Each student will meet with me individually (via zoom) in (15min intervals) to discuss next steps on your capstone.

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 week. 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 in any manner at any time at the full discretion of the professor of record. ****

If UNCG has any planned or unforeseen change in semester schedule, I will monitor and adjust this course schedule accordingly.