HIS/IAR 626 – The Practice of Public History  
Spring 2013, Wednesdays, 3:30-6:20 p.m.  
MHRA 2209

Professor Benjamin Filene  
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Course Description:  
This course is not an instructional in how to claw your way to the top; rather it’s an introduction to what it is like to work to within a public history institution and what it takes to thrive in one.

“You gotta serve somebody,” croaks Bob Dylan. Everyone at every level of every organization is simultaneously a leader and a follower. This course is about understanding each side of that relationship and how to do productive and fulfilling work from both ends.

The course starts from a few key premises:

- The day-to-day, nuts-and-bolts parts of an institution’s work take on life only when you understand the goals these practices were created to achieve. The policies, procedures, and programs that fill professional manuals and how-to books exist to achieve big-picture goals for institutions.

- Fundamentally, these goals involve relationships—relationships between
  - an institution and its constituencies (“Reaching Audiences”)
  - an institution and other institutions (“Reaching Partners”)
  - an institution and its employees (“Reaching Colleagues”)

The course is structured around the theory and practice involved in building these three kinds of relationships. Throughout, the course links practical skills—writing a mission statement, creating a marketing plan, writing a budget—with discussion of the broader purposes these tools are intended to accomplish.

Student Learning Outcomes  
Through a mix of classroom- and project-based work, you will gain:

- a richer understanding of the role of history in public life;
- a working knowledge of the processes and procedures that sustain public history institutions
- the ability to recognize the values underlying such processes and procedures;
- a richer understanding of how museums and sites establish sustainable niches in their communities; and
- an awareness of the dynamics involved in the interpersonal relationships that drive public work.
As well, you will hone a set of skills that you will need to thrive in the workplace:

- **evaluating and analyzing primary and secondary sources** thoughtfully, with attention to argument and point of view;
- **speaking** with passion, clarity, and respect;
- **writing** clearly and persuasively;
- **collaborating** with energy, sensitivity, and an awareness of how much you can learn from community members and your peers; and
- **experimenting** fearlessly to build your skills and to create rich public products.

**Teaching Methods**

This seminar depends on active and engaged discussions that allow you and your classmates, individually and collectively, to wrestle with what it means to become a practicing public historian. The classroom will be a setting for engagement with multiple voices—not only the professor’s but those of the students, community partners, and historical and professional “informants” revealed through a range of sources. You are expected to complete reading assignments before every class meeting and to arrive ready to share personal opinions on the material. Class sessions will regularly involve informal full-group discussions, oral presentations, small-group conversations, and on-the-spot analyses of sources. As detailed below, class participation is a significant part of your grade. In addition, you will engage with the course content through formal and informal writing assignments that invite you to apply the approaches we are discussing to original work in your own voice.

Beyond regular readings, discussions, and writings, the best way to learn about public history work is to do some. You will be involved in designing, collaboratively, a history project that will be practical, relevant, and engaging to real local institutions and public audiences. This semester will focus on planning a public project that documents, interprets, and shares the history of the Guantánamo naval base for Greensboro residents, in conjunction with the arrival of the Guantánamo Public Memory Project’s traveling exhibit’s opening at the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in December 2013. You will collaborate with each other and with community partners to write a “Mini-Grant” application to the North Carolina Humanities Council. We will submit the application with an eye toward implementing those plans and projects in fall 2013.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

You will be evaluated on

- **Class participation**—15%: attending class, doing the reading, writing thoughtful and on-time weekly responses to the reading (see below), speaking up in discussions, and helping to foster a sense of shared exploration within the classroom

  **Weekly responses**: Each week, short, informal reactions to that week's readings (roughly a couple of paragraphs) will be due. These must be posted on our class’s Blackboard Discussion Board by 8:00 a.m. each Wednesday.
Information Interview & Reflection Essay—5%: due in class; students sign up for presentation dates, one per week
After reading in *Museum Careers* (Schlatter) conduct an interview with a museum professional, by phone or in person. Then write a short reflection piece about the interview and give a 5-8-minute in-class presentation about it to the class.

One-page project proposal—5%: due in class February 6
Write a plan for a project component that extends the class’s work on the history of the Guantanamo Bay naval base. In doing so, pay attention to how to describe the project in a clear, pithy, and yet inspiring way.

“Institutional Integration” Assessment—25%: due in class February 20
Write an analysis of the clarity and coherence of a local institution’s mission, brand, marketing, fund-raising, and interpretive program.

Guantánamo Public Memory Project —25%:
• small-group grant application
  o first full draft due March 6
  o revised full draft due in class, March 27
  o in-class presentation April 3 (tentative)

• whole-class grant application
  o first full draft due via email April 8 (by 9:00 a.m.)
  o revised full draft due in class April 24
  o turned in to North Carolina Humanities Council April 26

Each student’s grade for the collaborative grant application will be determined by the quality of the product and, as well, by each individual’s contributions to the project. Students will be asked to assess the contributions that team members (including themselves) made to the project and to the collaborative process.

Final paper—25%:
Reflection essay on the final project—due May 1, 9:30 a.m.

Grading 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

If things go awry…
…it’s your responsibility to tell me—right away. If papers are late without direct, prior approval from me, I deduct ½ a letter grade per day—no exceptions. If your project is dead-ending or your peer collaboration imploding, please do tell me before it’s too late to resolve the issues.
**Required Books**


**Academic Integrity Policy**

All students have a responsibility to uphold the standards of “Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, and Responsibility” detailed in the Academic Integrity Policy. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, misuse of academic resources, falsification of information, and facilitating of academic dishonesty are treated with utmost seriousness by the history department and dealt with severely by the University administration. The full policy appears in the *Student Calendar/Handbook* and at academicintegrity.uncg.edu.

Per university policy, you will be asked to sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment in this class.

**Special Needs**

If you require accommodations for special learning needs, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Disability Services, located within the Elliot University Center (334-5770)—and please let me know!
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

**Introduction**—read before first class
**January 16: Practicing Public History: What, Why, and How?**


*No Blackboard posting*

**Reaching Audiences I**
**January 23: Making Public Institutions Matter and mission statements**


Hansen, Jonathan M. *Guantánamo: An American History*. Preface and Chapters 1 and 2
**Reaching Partners I**  
**January 30: Collaborating with Communities and civic engagement strategies**


(http://www.participatorymuseum.org/buy/).


**No Blackboard posting. In class: Report on community case studies**

*Before class: Visit the International Civil Rights Center and Museum if you have never been there*

*In class: Meet with representatives of International Civil Rights Center and Museum (tentative)*

**Reaching Colleagues I**  
**February 6: Working Collaboratively and team dynamics**


*Learning through Serving*, Chapter 4: 45-65.

Download and read the application form, guidelines, and instructions for Mini-Grants from the North Carolina Humanities Council:

http://nchumanities.org/content/mini-grants

“The Process: What You Can Expect” [*BF will distribute*]

Hansen, *Guantánamo*, Chapter 4

*One-page project proposals due*

**Reaching Audiences II**

**February 13: Getting on the Radar Screen**

*and marketing plans/branding*


* [BF will distribute]


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 11: 247-272.

Hansen. *Guantánamo*, Chapter 5

**Reaching Partners II**

**February 20: Collaborating with Donors I—Stating Your Case**

*and budgets and grant-writing*

Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 5: 91-119.


*BF will distribute*


*No Blackboard posting*

Institutional Integration essays due

**Reaching Audiences III**
February 27: Preserving (and Deserving) the Public’s Trust and ethics and collections management policies


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 10: 223-245.

Hansen. *Guantánamo*, Chapter 6

**Optional:** Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 8: 175-195.

*Slogans/logos and solicitation letters due in class (each person chooses to do one or the other).*

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**Reaching Partners III**

March 6: Pursuing Outreach vs. “In-Reach”  
*and* diversity hiring plans


Hansen. *Guantánamo*.  Review Chapter 7 (assigned in HIS627); Chapter 8; Epilogue.

*Draft of small-group grant app. due in class*

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March 13: *No class* (spring break)

March 20: Collaborating with Donors II—Listening  
*and* development plans—

*Guest speaker:* Carol Ghiorsi Hart, Director, Greensboro Historical Museum


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 6: 121-160.

*In class: Discuss BF’s comments on small-group grant apps*

+ (March 23: *NC History Day Regional, held at UNCG*—extra credit for those who judge!)

+March 24-25: *NC Museums Council conference in Raleigh*

March 27: Collaborating with Donors III—

and sustaining the team process

*Guest speaker*: Darrell Stover, Program Director, North Carolina Humanities Council


*Learning through Serving*, 105-109, 111.


“ABC’s for Dealing with Stress” (Berkeley Health Services, undated): 1-7.

*In lieu of Blackboard posting, answer prompt re: team dynamics*

*Final small-group grant app. due in class*

April 3: Work Session +

*Present project proposals to community partners [tentative]*
Monday, April 8 (by 9:00 a.m.): Turn in full draft of whole-class grant application

**Reaching Colleagues II**
April 10: Building a Vision
and board management


“AASLH Board Organizer.” [BF will distribute]

Optional: Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 3 (excerpt): 39-55.

In class: Discuss BF’s comments on whole-class grant application

April 17: Managing Change
and strategic planning
CLASS TIME TO BE RESCHEDULED


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 4: 75-90; and 313-326.

**Optional:**


**April 24: Leading from Below**

and human resources/personnel management and finding your niche


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 7: 161-173.

*Finalize whole-class grant application*

**April 26: Deliver grant application to NC Humanities Council**

+ (April 28: North Carolina History Day—State Finals, held at NC Museum of History, Raleigh)

**May 1: Final papers due, via email by 9:30 a.m. (no final exam)**