

# THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC HISTORY

## SPRING 2015

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UNCG HIS/IAR 626  
ANNE E. PARSONS  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course comprises the second semester of the museum studies track. The first class, HIS 627, focused on historic interpretation and the final class, HIS 633, will center on a community history practicum project. This seminar introduces students to the various ways people work and thrive within public history institutions. It revolves around the theories and practices of building relationships with funders and community partners, connecting with audiences, and creating a sustainable team and institutional environment. The class will study how these relationships and practices shape the trajectory of public history institutions and the projects that they create. At the same time, students will build their skills in writing, fundraising, working with colleagues, and creating sustainable institutions and will consider the relevance of public history to today's cultural landscape.

In the spirit of public history practice, students will learn by doing. The readings include texts on best practices in museum and non-profit settings and students will visit a historic site and/or museum of his/her choosing. After the visit, the students will conduct an in-depth analysis of the place, and will present it as a case study during class to bring to life the issues raised in the readings. The course will also continue the collaborative work begun in Fall 2014 to plan an history center at Revolution Mill. Over the course of the semester, students will learn more about the site and project, will write a mock fundraising letter for it, and will work on developing the exhibit – culminating in a project definition document.

### **Learning Objectives –Concepts for Understanding**

The Practice of Public History seminar will enable students to understand and engage with the following core concepts:

- the ways in which the practical aspects of history shape how history gets made, whether in the funding of museums, creation of public history projects, interaction with audiences, or collaboration with communities,
- best practices in connecting and collaborating with partners and donors, including identifying community needs and interests, fostering civic engagement and the principles of fundraising. Students will also work to understand the dynamics in these relationships and how they shape public history projects,
- strategies to reach audiences and articulate how public institutions matter, make plans, increase participatory practices, evaluate audiences and work to preserve

the public trust. Students will consider the potential conflicts embedded in serving the general public and multiple audiences, and,

- how to maintain a sustainable team and institution through strategic planning, leadership and management skills and best practices in group work.

### **Learning Objectives – Skills**

This class will train you in the following skills, which are central to the craft of history, including:

- writing concisely, clearly and creatively, particularly in articulating your project to project team and to the general public,
- speaking in a way that engages and activates your audience,
- reading and critically engaging with texts, while placing them in the context of their field,
- working in a team and collaborating with peers and community partners with sensitivity and a stance of listening and learning, and,
- experimenting with fearlessness and an aim for excellence.

### **EXPERIENCES, PROJECTS & EVALUATION**

To build these skills, students 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 – 20%**

Participation makes up a central part of this course, as the classroom is where students grapple with the texts and learn from other points of view. Any small assignments due in class will also comprise part of the participation grade (they will be graded with a check, check minus or check plus). 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.

### **Institutional Case Study Work – 30% Total**

Each student will choose a historical site or museum and will visit it and conduct an informational interview with at least one staff person there. The student will write an 6-8 page paper analyzing the site and will present his/her findings on it during a class session.

#### **In-Class Presentation– 5% – Dates Chosen By Students**

Each student will first give a presentation about the institution during a class of their choosing. Students will then lead a discussion that ties specific examples from that site to the major issues of that class session. Please touch base with me to discuss time-length.

#### **Institutional Assessment – 25% – Due on the Day of Presentation**

Write a 6-8 page analysis of the institution, assessing the clarity and coherence of the organization’s marketing, fundraising, interpretation and outreach programs.

### **Mock Fundraising Letter – 15%**

Students will write a mock fundraising letter for the Revolution Mill project, giving experience in clearly articulating the project, how it meets a community need, and how funders can help.

### **Project Definition Phase of Revolution Mill Project – 35%**

In this semester, the class will work on defining the parameters of the Revolution Mill History Center. Specifically, the class will create a project definition document that outlines the big idea of the center, the major themes and sections, a bubble-diagram with a basic description of the space, and examples of what will be in the exhibit and what visitors will experience. Please note that this plan is a collaborative effort and that Dr. Filene and myself and the Revolution Mill staff will all review the project and will give feedback. This definition will be greatly helpful to the exhibit designer, who will most likely join the project before summer begins, and to all of you for when you start next semester.

Small groups will draft components of this assignment. The quality of the products and the students’ contributions will determine individual grades. To assess each student’s contributions, students will write up what they did with each document.

## **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](http://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. N.B. 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](#) 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, small-group or individual speaking skills.

## READINGS

The following readings are available at the bookstore, on Amazon.com, and on 24-hour reserve at UNCG's Jackson Library. Specific articles and/or chapters will be posted to Blackboard and are indicated with a "BB."

### Required

Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine, *Museum Basics* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Taylor, 2012).  
Elizabeth Bogle, *Museum Exhibition Planning and Design* (RLPG, 2013).  
Salvatore G. Cillela, Jr., *Fundraising for Small Museums* (AltaMira, 2011).  
Hugh Genoways and Lynne Ireland, *Museum Administration: An Introduction* (AltaMira, 2003).  
Neil, Philip and Wendy Kotler, *Museum Strategy and Marketing* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Wiley, 2008).  
Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Museum 2.0, 2010).

### Of Interest

Darian Rodriguez Heyman, ed., *Nonprofit Management 101* (Jossey-Bass, 2011).

## CLASS SCHEDULE

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**Jan. 15**      **Introductions**

*Institutional Case Study Assignment Passed Out*

### CONNECTING TO DONORS

**Jan. 22**      **Museums and Missions**

*Museum Marketing and Strategy*, Chapters 1, 2, and 4

*Museum Basics*, Section 6

*Mock Fundraising Letter Assignment Passed Out*

**Jan. 29**

**Attracting Financial Resources**

*Fundraising for Small Museums*, Chapters 1-4

BB: Heyman, *Non-Profit Management 101*, Chapter 18

**Feb. 6**

**Grant Writing and Development**

*Fundraising for Small Museums*, Chapters 5-8

BB: Heyman, *Non-Profit Management 101*, Chapter 20

Genoway and Ireland, Chapter 5 on Budgets

**Feb. 13**

**Putting Principles into Practice – Visit to Hall House, Salisbury, NC**

The Josephus Hall House in [Historic Salisbury](#), NC, is a small historic site that has been struggling financially. Its director, Brian Davis, has invited us to the site to have a brainstorming session about how to improve the potential of the house.

*Due in Hardcopy at Beginning of Class: Mock Fundraising Letter*

**REACHING AUDIENCES**

**Feb. 20**

**Exhibition Design**

*Museum Exhibition Planning and Design*, Chapters 1-2

*Project Definition Assignment Passed Out*

**Feb. 26**

**Collaborating with Audiences & An Introduction to Budgets**

Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, Chapters 5-8, 10 and 11

*Museum Administration*, Chapter 5

**Mar. 6**

**In-Class Work Session on Revolution Mill Project – Dr. Parsons out of Town**

*Museum Basics*, Sections 3 and 4

**Mar. 13**

**No Class – Spring Break**

**Mar. 20**      **Marketing Strategies**  
*Museum Marketing and Strategy*, Chapters 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 14

**Mar. 27**      **Inclusive and Accessible Museums**  
*Museum Basics*, Section 2: Units 7, 8, and 12 and Review Section 6: Unit 76

BB: Angela Thorpe's History@Work Posts on Museum Inclusivity

BB: Excerpts from *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*

BB: Excerpts from *The Multisensory Museum*

**Apr. 3**      **Preserving the Public Trust**  
Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 10.

BB: Carr, David. "Museums and Public Trust," in *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* (2003): 109-131.

At least 3 news articles on the recent dispute around the International Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro

*Due: Outline of Project Definition Document*

### **CREATING SUSTAINABLE TEAMS AND INSTITUTIONS**

**Apr. 10**      **Leadership and Creativity in Cultural Institutions**

BB: Fisher, Roger and Alan Sharp. "Lateral Leadership." In *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge* (1998): 14-34.

BB: Groups are Fun, Groups are Not Fun, *Learning through Serving* Ch. 4

BB: Schrage, Michael. "Collaboration and Creativity." *Museum News* (March/April 2004): 3 pp.

BB: Ayan, Jordan. "Tapping into the Creative Process." *Your Creative Spirit and Find Your Great Ideas* (1996): 40-44.

**Apr. 17**      **Leading from Below and Personnel Management**

BB: Heyman, *Nonprofit Management 101*, Chapters 9, 30, 32-33

BB: Fisher, Roger and Alan Sharp. "Engagement" and "Choose to Help" in *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge* (1998): 136-57; 200-4.

BB: Lundin, Stephen C. Harry Paul, and John Christensen, *Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*, 2000.

**Apr. 24**

**Strategic Planning in the Face of Change**

BB: Falk, John H. and Beverly K. Sheppard. "Preface," "A World in Transition," and "Creating a New Business Model," In *Thriving in the Knowledge Age* (2006): vii-xi and 3-25.

*Museum Administration*, ch. 4.

*Museum Basics*, Section 7: Units 84-90

*Due: Rough Draft of Project Definition Document*

**May 4**

**Final Project Definition Document Due by 5:00 PM**

N.B. This syllabus is subject to change.