HIS 626 – The Practice of Public History
Spring 2017, Tuesdays, 3:30-6:20 p.m.
MHRA 1207

Professor Benjamin Filene
office hours: Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 and by appointment: MHRA 2137
office phone: 336/334-5645
bpfilene@uncg.edu

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’re gonna have to serve somebody,” croaks Bob Dylan sagely in a 1979 song (https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tt7e3fusfr4ajvz2lccbzs6ka?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-songlyrics&u=0#).
Indeed, 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—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, crafting 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;
- **planning** thoughtfully and efficiently, with attentiveness to multiple stakeholders;
- **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 informed 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 launch, collaboratively, a history project that will be practical, relevant, and engaging to real public institutions and audiences. This semester will focus on planning an exhibition that explores and shares the life and legacies of Governor Charles B. Aycock. You will collaborate with each other and with community and professional partners to create an exhibition proposal that will be presented to UNCG’s Board of Trustees and then implemented next fall.

**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, you will submit short, informal reactions to that week’s readings (roughly a couple of paragraphs). These must be posted on our class’s Canvas Discussion Board by 9:00 a.m. each Tuesday.
Information Interview & Reflection Essay—5%: due in class (hard copy); 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.

“Community Relevance Readiness” Assessment—20%: due February 28
(in class, hard copy + email)

Choose a real public history institution and, using the tools we’ve discussed in class, assess its readiness to respond to a community crisis.

Small-group grant application: North Carolina Humanities Council
Grassroots Grants—20%:

Working in pairs, develop plans for an exhibition component
• first full draft due March 24 (via email)
• revised full draft due March 31st (hard copy + email)

Final exhibition proposal—20%
• first full draft due April 22 (by 9:00 a.m., via email)
• revised full draft due April 30 (by 5:00 p.m., via email)
• presentation to UNCG Board of Trustees: May 11 (8:30 a.m.-noon)

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 they themselves) made to the project and to the collaborative process.

Final paper—20%—due May 3, 4:00 p.m. (hard copy + email):

Reflecting on your experiences with the term project, write an essay that connects the theories of key authors to your experience in practice.

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

LATENESS POLICY:
It is important to turn in assignments on time so as to be fair to other students and to ensure timely grading. I am receptive to advance requests for extensions. However, if an assignment is turned in late without an agreed-upon extension, I will deduct 1/3rd of a letter grade per day (e.g., A to A-) unless an appropriate written excuse (e.g., medical, counselor’s, dean’s) is provided.

If things go awry…
…it’s your responsibility to tell me—right away. If your project is dead-ending or your peer collaboration imploding, I need to hear about it so that I can help 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 [http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/](http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/). 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 or other challenges, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services, located within the Elliot University Center (336/334-5440; [https://ods.uncg.edu](https://ods.uncg.edu))! I will be very receptive to any steps to help make your learning experience more healthy and successful!
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

**Introduction**—read before first class

**January 17: Practicing Public History: What, Why, and How?**


*No Canvas posting*

*Audience evaluation surveys due to team leaders by January 20th*

**Reaching Audiences I**

**January 24: Making Public Institutions Matter and mission statements**


 Sevcenko, Liz. “Putting Mission First.” In *The Importance of Mission in


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**Reaching Colleagues I**
**January 31: Working Collaboratively and team dynamics**


Genoways and Ireland, 1-4.

Download and read the application form, guidelines, and instructions for North Carolina Humanities Council Grassroots Grants: [http://www.nchumanities.org/content/grassroots-grants](http://www.nchumanities.org/content/grassroots-grants)

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


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**Reaching Partners I**
**February 7: Collaborating with Communities and civic engagement strategies**

Archibald, Robert. “Common Ground.” In *A Place to Remember: Using History*


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 8 (excerpt): 201-218.

**1-paragraph proposals due**

**Reaching Audiences II**

**February 14: Getting on the Radar Screen**

*and marketing plans/branding*


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 10: 259-281.

*Meet with Design Dimension staff*

**Reaching Partners II**

*February 21: Pursuing Outreach vs. “In-Reach” and diversity hiring plans*


February 28: Work Session

Community Relevance Readiness Essay due

No Canvas posting

March 7: Collaborating with Donors I—Stating Your Case and budgets and grant-writing
Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 4: 61-93.


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

March 14: No class (spring break)

March 21: Collaborating with Donors II—Listening and development plans—
Guest speaker: Glenn Dobrogosz, Director, Greensboro Science Center


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 5: 95-139.

Draft of small-group grant app. due Friday, March 24 (via email)

+March 26-27, NC Museums Council conference in Wilmington

Reaching Colleagues II
March 28: Building a Vision and board management


“AASLH Board Organizer” [**BF will distribute**]

**Optional:** Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 6 (excerpt): 164-176.

**In class: peer critique of grant apps**

**Final small-group grant app. due Friday, March 31st** (hard copy + email)

+ **(April 1st: Piedmont History Day Regional, held at UNCG—extra credit for those who judge!)**

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**April 4: Managing Change and strategic planning**


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 3: 41-59.

**Optional:**


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**April 11: Work Session and sustaining the team process**

Zenger-Miller, Inc. “The Four Phases of Team Development.” In *Building A
Foundation of Trust: 16-17.


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

In lieu of Canvas posting, answer prompt re: team dynamics

Meet with Design Dimension staff

Reaching Audiences III
April 18: “Futurecasting”

and seeing beyond one’s walls


“New Report Reveals….” (February 23, 2016 email): 1 p. [BF will distribute]

Draft of final exhibition proposal due Saturday, April 22, 9:00 a.m. (email)

Reaching Colleagues III
April 25: Leading from Below

and human resources/personnel management and finding your niche


Ackerson, Anne and Joan Baldwin. “Is Negotiating Not a Museum Thing?”
https://leadershipmatters1213.wordpress.com/2015/10/11/is-negotiating-not-a-museum-thing/ (also on e-reserve)


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 6 (excerpt): 141-149.

+ (April 29: North Carolina History Day—State Finals, held at NC Museum of History, Raleigh)

April 30, 5:00 p.m. (email): Final exhibition proposal due

May 3: Final paper due, via email and hard copy by 4:00 p.m. (no final exam)

May 11 (8:30-noon): Presentation to Board of Trustees