HIS 512: Public History
Doing History with Things

COURSE GUIDE

History 512                    Spring 2019
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Course Overview and Learning Outcomes

Why study things? Some parts of the human past are only documented by the tools they used or other objects they left behind. This human experience is literally understood as PRE-historic because early humans did not leave behind a written record. The writing of history begins with the analysis of texts. Yet even in our modern era, an object as small and ordinary as a paper clip can be studied to understand something about the society that created and used it—the technology to mass-produce bent wires, why such a clip might be in demand, the purposes of such a clip. A 1958 study, for example, discovered that only one in ten was ever used to hold papers together. Other uses included cleaning finger nails, picking teeth, fastening clothing,
game tokens, and making decorative chains or even weapons. This course will focus on strategies for interpreting objects as evidence that must be understood in particular historical contexts.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate the following knowledge, skills, and habits of mind:

- Evaluate the purposes of public history, the importance of audience, and the difference between history and memory.
- Apply a variety of methods for using objects as historical evidence.
- Interpret objects as both material and social constructions.
- Analyze the ways that objects are used to represent and construct power relationships.
- Restate concisely and substantively central arguments of each reading assignment and evaluate major points of agreement or disagreement among particular authors.
- Apply specific arguments and methodologies in assigned readings to your own original evaluation of particular objects appropriate to the content of each unit.

Readings

Books: (available at UNCG Bookstore and on reserve in Jackson Library)


Journal Articles and Book Chapters: (available in the Reserve Room of Jackson Library, on electronic reserves, and/or electronically on JSTOR or other databases.)


Assignments

Unit 1: Object analysis                      25%
Unit 2: Exhibit analysis                    25%
Unit 3: Spatial analysis                    25%
Units 1-3: Discussion Board Assignments    25%

These assignments will vary in length and format. They will require application of assigned readings rather than additional research.

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance Policy

1. Consistent attendance—Attendance is mandatory. This is a seminar, not a traditional lecture course. We will be critically evaluating the content of the readings and practicing the application of analytical skills during each class period. You will not be able to make up for your absences by copying someone else's notes. For this reason, consistent attendance is essential to your learning in this course. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. You must attend at least one hour of the class period to be counted for full attendance for the class. If the University is closed for inclement weather you will not, of course, be counted absent. If it snows and the University is open, class will be held as scheduled and attendance counts. If I am unable to attend class due to unforeseen circumstances, I will distribute an email message and post an announcement to Canvas at least two hours (if possible) before class is scheduled to begin. Documentation for absences will not be collected except in cases where an extended absence may be necessary (for example, hospitalization). There will be a 3% reduction of the student's final grade for each absence after the first 3. Beyond even this penalty, a student who seriously neglects attendance and class preparation risks failing the course. If you are experiencing a personal crisis that requires you to miss more than 2 classes, please let me know at that time (not afterwards). Practice the kind of responsible communication and professional behavior you will be expected to demonstrate as a teacher.

2. Thorough preparation for class—readings must be completed before class and assignments must be turned in on time, including Discussion Board postings. Postings must be complete and must fully address the question for credit. Discussion Board assignments are typically due before class because they will form the basis for class discussion and peer review. For this reason, late Discussion Board assignments cannot be accepted for credit.
3. Regular contributions to class discussions—participation is not formally graded as a specific percentage of the final grade but the success of this course for your learning depends on active intellectual engagement with your peers. Peer review will be integral to development of your archive project.

**Academic Integrity**

UNCG considers academic dishonesty to be a serious offense. Dishonest behavior in any form, including cheating, plagiarism, deception of effort, and unauthorized assistance, may result in such sanctions as a failing grade on an assignment or failure in the course depending on the nature of the offense. Students must follow the guidelines of the University Policy on Academic Integrity: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0rFGGhJvbDHUEExSZmFFaWFmb00/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0rFGGhJvbDHUEExSZmFFaWFmb00/view)

**Electronic Communication**

Students are responsible for checking UNCG email on a regular basis to keep up with communications sent outside of class time. Students are encouraged to utilize email and other forms of digital communication when interacting with the instructor (lctolber@uncg.edu). When using email, students are to be professional and courteous. Students should also remember email is an asynchronous form of communication. Thus, while a prompt response may be desired, it may not always be possible (especially late at night and on weekends). Students should allow at least 24 hours (48 hours on weekends) for a response. That said, the instructor answers emails in the timeliest fashion possible.

**Late Assignment Penalty**

Meeting deadlines is an essential element of professional behavior. Please note that unless arrangements have been made well in advance of due dates, graded assignments will be penalized by a 3% reduction in the final assignment grade for every day the assignment is late. Graded assignments later than one week will not be accepted for credit without an extremely impressive explanation. Using effective quantitative reasoning, your grade average can recover from an F on an individual assignment more successfully than it can recover from a “0”. It is better to turn in an incomplete assignment on time than to turn in nothing at all. As explained in the participation policy above, late Discussion Board assignments will not receive credit.

**Academic Accommodations**

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. If you feel you will encounter any barriers to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS). The OARS staff can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can learn more about OARS by visiting their website at [https://ods.uncg.edu/](https://ods.uncg.edu/) or by calling 336-334-5440 or visiting them in Suite 215, EUC.
Health and Wellness
Your health impacts your learning. Throughout your time in college, you may experience a range of health issues that can cause barriers to your learning. These might include physical ailments, illnesses, strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. Student Health Services and The Counseling Center can help with these or other issues you may be experiencing. You can learn about the free, confidential mental health services available on campus by calling 336-334-5874, visiting the website at [https://shs.uncg.edu/](https://shs.uncg.edu/) or visiting the Anna M. Gove Student Health Center at 107 Gray Drive. Help is always available.

Course Schedule

14 January Introductions

16 January What is History? What is Public History
Read:


21 January MLK Holiday, No Class

Unit 1: Analyzing Objects

23 January Things that Shape History
Read:

28 January No Class
30 January  Using Objects as Historical Evidence: Indian Baskets
Read:

4 February  Using Objects as Historical Evidence: Indian Baskets
Read:

Discussion Board Assignment. Essay draft due by 5:00 p.m. on Feb. 5. The difference between the history of objects and objects as history.

6 February  Writing Workshop: Reading Like a Material Culture Historian
Read:

11 February  Reading Objects/ Object Analysis Workshop, Part I
Read:

13 February  Technology Matters
Read:
Petroski, The Evolution of Useful Things, chapters 1-7

18 February  Technology Matters
Read:

20 February  Object Analysis Workshop II
Discussion Board Assignment due 19 Feb. by 5:00 p.m.
25 February  Contextualizing the Object
Read:
Seth Bruggeman chapters, “Birthing Washington” and “A Contest of Relics”

27 February  Object Analysis Workshop III
Discussion Board Assignment due 26 Feb. by 5:00 p.m.

Object Analysis due March 1

4/6 March  Spring Break

Unit 2: Assemblages and Exhibits: Telling Stories with Objects

11 March  Introduction to the Case Study: The W.E.B. DuBois Exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition
Read:

African American Photographs Assembled for 1900 Paris Exposition

https://books.google.com/books?id=hTIlg_nfB3YC&pg=PA575&as_brr=1#v=onepage&q&f=false

http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/exhibits-and-collections/
13 March The Role of the data charts in the exhibit
Read:

18 March Exhibiting Other Cultures
Read:

20 March The Spectacle of the ‘Other’
Read:

25 March Exhibit Analysis Workshop
Discussion Board Assignment due 24 March by 5:00 p.m.

27 March Exhibit Analysis due.

Unit 3: Objects and Spaces of Consumption

1 April Introduction to the spatial history of shopping
Read: TBD

3 April Tupperware Parties
Read:
8 April  
**Shopping Carts: New Technology for Shopping**

**Read:**

10 April  
**Spatial Analysis Workshop**

15 April  
**Geographers study shopping**

**Read:**

17 April  
**Geographers study shopping**

**Read:**

21 April  
**Discussion Board Assignment**—Draft due by 5:00 p.m.

22 April  
**Writing Workshop I**

24 April  
**Writing Workshop II**

29 April  
**Spatial Analysis Workshop**

1 May  
**Last Day of Classes. Course Evaluations**

**Spatial Analysis due.**