

# THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC HISTORY

## SPRING 2019

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UNCG HIS/IAR 626  
ANNE E. PARSONS  
OFFICE: MHRA, #2137

MON., 3:30-6:20 – PUBLIC HISTORY LAB  
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OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS, 2:00-3:00 PM

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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 involved in conducting oral histories, building relationships with community partners, connecting with audiences, and creating a sustainable team and institutional environment. The class will also 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 planning for sustainable institutions.

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 discuss and do assignments based on case studies that bring to life the issues raised in the readings. We will take at least two field trips during the semester, will meet with public history professionals, and will attend the North Carolina Museums Council Conference.

Finally, the class will put theory into practice with a major public project that will culminate in Fall 2019. The class will bring the traveling exhibit *Patient No More* to the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Fall 2019 (Estimated Dates: November 10-December 8, 2019). The exhibit explores disability rights activism in the Bay Area in the 1970s and is a model of accessibility for people with physical, cognitive, and developmental disabilities. In Fall 2019, the students will have three main tasks: 1) planning for and installing the *Patient No More* exhibit; 2) designing three additional exhibit elements that connect local visitors to the *Patient No More* content in an accessible way; and 3) conducting community outreach to encourage people to visit the exhibit.

This semester, the class will complete two major assignments that will set you up for success next semester. First, the class will create a project plan for the exhibit *Patient No More* and its community outreach, getting feedback from community partners in the middle of the semester. Second, the class will produce a preliminary draft with annotated bibliographies of the three additional exhibit components.

### **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 public history shape how history gets made: whether in the funding of museums; creation of public 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 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.
- how to cultivate 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 students in the following skills, which are central to the craft of history, including:

- writing concisely, clearly, and creatively,
- speaking publicly 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,
- best practices in exhibition curation that includes how to design the layout of an exhibit, the text and images, and multimedia elements in a way that is accessible to and engages with a range of visitors,
- fundraising skills such as development planning, identifying grants, building membership, budgeting money, 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 think you will not meet the deadline. I will post the grades to Canvas, and if you see a discrepancy, please contact me immediately.

### **Class Participation – 10%**

Participation makes up a central part of this course, as it is where students directly grapple with the texts and learn from other points of view. 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.

### **Regular Homework Assignments – 25%**

This class merges reading and practice and so you will have regular homework assignments to complete by the beginning of class. Please visit the Assignments section on Canvas for instructions on what to do. I will post the assignments at least two weeks before they are due.

### **Informational Interview – 20% Due: April 22**

For this project, think about where you see yourself in ten years. What type of site do you want to work at? What type of job? What will you do in your day-to-day? Then, identify someone who is doing what you dream of doing. Please contact the person and set up an informational interview. Ask them questions about their career path, their experience with their job, and finally, ask about their institution based on what we have discussed (the organization's mission, marketing, fundraising, strategic plan, and so on). You will then give a ten-minute presentation of what you learned to the class on April 22 (no paper required). I will grade you on the quality of the presentation. To that end, I strongly recommend that you get feedback from the Speaking Center and the Digital ACT Studio prior to the presentation.

### **Project Plan – 20% Due: March 25**

The class as a whole will submit a project plan that covers the installation of the *Patient No More* exhibit in the changing gallery of the International Civil Rights Center and Museum. The project plan will at a minimum identify target audiences, the big idea, mission, budget, sources of funding, a Google Sketchup design of the exhibit layout, community outreach plans, and an overview of the three additional exhibit components. We will meet with a group of community partners on February 25 to get feedback on the plan and I will hand out this assignment on January 14.

### **Preliminary Draft of Exhibit Components – 25% Due: May 6**

The class will break up into three groups and each group will work on a rough draft of their exhibit component this semester (possible elements could include: exhibit panels, a video, an interactive, etc.). On May 6, you will submit a preliminary draft of the three exhibit components, along with a brief annotated bibliography. The preliminary draft will include: 1) a rough draft of the component's content (text, images), 2) a brief annotated bibliography to accompany the content section, and, 3) a rough draft of the component's design. I will hand out this assignment on April 1.

## 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).

## 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 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, small-group or individual speaking skills.

## READINGS

The following readings are available on Amazon.com or through Interlibrary Loan. Any articles listed will be posted to Canvas.

### Required

Anne Bergeron and Beth Tuttle, *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement* (AAM, 2013).  
William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights* (Oxford University Press, 1981).  
Samantha Chmelik, *Museum and Historic Site Management* (RLPG, 2015).  
Salvatore G. Cilella, Jr., *Fundraising for Small Museums* (AltaMira, 2011).  
Doris Fleischer and Frieda Zames, *The Disability Rights Movement* (Temple University Press, 2011).  
Hugh Genoways and Lynne Ireland, *Museum Administration: An Introduction* (RLPG, 2016).  
Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums* (RLPG, 2016).

### Recommended (Excerpts Posted on Canvas – Can purchase if you choose)

Kathy McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*  
Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*

# CLASS SCHEDULE

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## DISABILITY RIGHTS AND CIVIL RIGHTS

**Jan. 14**      **Introductions**

*HW Due: Read over entire Patient No More exhibit on website.  
Dr. Parsons will hand out Project Plan Assignment*

**Jan. 21**      **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – No Class**

**Jan. 28**      **Disability Rights and the Civil Rights Movement**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas and extend invitation to community partners to 2/25 meeting*

- Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*
- Fleischer and Zames, *The Disability Rights Movement*

## MUSEUM AND HISTORIC SITE MANAGEMENT

**Feb. 4**      **Missions: Making Museums Matter & Strategic Planning**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

- Anderson, Gail, ed. *Museum Mission Statements: Building a Distinct Identity* (2000 [1998]): 12-24.
- Durel, John. "No Mission, No Money; No Money, No Mission." *Journal of Museum Education* 35 (summer 2010): 193-200
- Genoways, *Museum Administration*, Ch. 3

**Feb. 11**      **Listening to the Public: Evaluations**

*HW Due: Rough draft of project plan due*

- Diamond, Luke and Uttal, *Practical Evaluation Tool Guide*, Chapters 1, 5-7, 10.

**Feb. 18**      **The World of Fundraising and Grants**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

- Cilella, *Fundraising for Small Museums*, Ch.'s 1-8.
- Heyman, *Non-Profit Management 101*, pp. 325-340.

**Feb. 25**      **Meeting with Community Partners re. Project Plan**

*HW Due: Submit edited draft of project plan. Prepare for presentation to community partners*

**Mar. 4**      **No Class – Spring Break!**

**Mar. 11      Budgeting & Marketing, and Outreach**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

- Hoffman, “Writing Realistic Grant Budgets,” *Museum News* (1980): 48-53.
- Genoways, *Museum Administration*, Chapter 4, 10.
- Chmelik, Chapter 8.

**Mar. 18      Public Programming**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

- Genoways, *Museum Administration*, Ch. 11.
- Chmelik, Ch’s 6 and 7.

**MAKING MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES SUSTAINABLE**

**Mar. 25      Attend North Carolina Museums Conference in Asheville (March 24-25)**

The NCMC Annual Conference will be in Asheville this year. I strongly encourage the entire class to attend at least one day of the conference as part of this class, as you will meet museum professionals in the field and can attend sessions about topics we are discussing in this class. You may receive travel funds from the Graduate Student Association (Contact Chelsea Stewart for more information).

*HW Due: Final Draft of Project Plan Due*

**Apr. 1      Working with and Leading Teams**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

*Dr. Parsons will hand out Preliminary Draft Assignment*

- Fisher, Roger and Alan Sharp. “Lateral Leadership.” In *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You’re Not in Charge* (1998): 14-34.
- Lundin, Stephen C. Harry Paul, and John Christensen. *Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*, 2000.
- Dilenschneider, Colleen. “We Can’t Keep Our Mouths Shut.” In *A Life in Museums: Managing Your Museum Career*, Greg Stevens and Wendy Luke, eds. (2012).

**Apr. 8      Thriving in the Museum World**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

- Bergeron, *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement*

## **EXHIBIT CURATION**

**Apr. 15**      **Curating Museum Exhibitions**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

- Excerpts from McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*

**Apr. 22**      **Informational Interview Presentations**

*HW Due: Give informational interview presentations*

**Apr. 29**      **Last Class – Writing for Exhibitions**

*HW Due: Do homework on Canvas*

- Excerpts from Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*

**May 6**      *Due: Preliminary Drafts of Exhibit Components*