HIS 626 – The Practice of Public History  
Spring 2020, Monday, 3:30-6:20 p.m.  
MHRA room 2204 & Public History Lab

Professor: Torren Gatson  
office hours: Mondays 2:00-3:00 and by appointment: MHRA 2119  
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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.

The true mark of a leader is the willingness to stick with a bold course of action — an unconventional business strategy, a unique product-development roadmap, a controversial marketing campaign — even as the rest of the world wonders why you’re not marching in step with the status quo. In other words, real leaders are happy to zig while others zag. They understand that in an era of hyper-competition and non-stop disruption, the only way to stand out from the crowd is to stand for something special.”

-Bill Taylor from article, “Do You Pass the Leadership Test?”

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 aspects 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—completion of a mission statement, creation of a marketing plan, and 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.

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### 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 continue to create the foundation and framework, collaboratively, a history project that will be practical, relevant, and engaging to real public institutions and audiences. This semester will focus on planning the **Historic Magnolia House exhibition**. You will collaborate with each other and with community and professional partners to create this exhibition that will be implemented next fall of 2020.

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### Assignments and Evaluation

You will be evaluated on

**Class participation**—5%: attending class, doing the reading, writing thoughtful and on-time weekly responses to the reading (see below), responding promptly to ANY email from your professor, speaking up in discussions, and helping to foster a sense of shared exploration within the classroom

**Weekly responses**: Each week, The STUDENT FACILITATOR ONLY, will submit a reaction to that week's readings (5 pages doubled spaced, times new roman) This Paper will be turned in at the beginning of class. Only exceptions made prior to class and with the express
agreement of the professor will be given any other exception.

Information Interview & Reflection Essay—5%: due in class
After reading in Museum Careers (Schlatter) conduct an interview with a museum professional, by phone or in person. Then each student will give a 5-8-minute in-class presentation about it to the class (presentation will be verbal only).

Required minimum questions for interview:
1) Describe your job title and role at your organization.
2) Please discuss any other duties that you chose and/or are expected to do to enhance or complete your job that the public may not be aware of?
3) Can you speak to your toughest adversity faced in your current role?
4) What advice would you share for budding public historian entering your job?

In Class Discussion leader Assessment—5%:
students will be given presentation dates, one per week
Each student will be assigned to a week’s collection of readings. You must write a 5 page review of the collected readings detailing a in depth overview of the readings (which must be synthesized in one document) and discuss their strengths, weaknesses, and relevance when applicable to the Master group project (Historic Magnolia House). You will then lead discussion with classmates.

Exhibit Narrative Paper —35%:
Working in groups, develop plans for an exhibition component through historical written narrative that will inform your exhibit creation. Students will place their name in the heading of each page they contribute to the master document. Each week, during our remaining break out time until complete I will meet with each group and check in on all progress made toward completion of each student’s contributions toward the complete narrative. I will deliver more specific details in our first class meeting.
- first full draft due March 2nd (via email and Hard copy)
- revised full draft due March 30th (hard copy)

Exhibition Script proposal—50%
I will deliver more specific details in our first class meeting.
- first full draft due April 13th (In Class)
- revised full draft due April 27th (by 5:00 p.m., via email)

Each student’s grade for the collaborative script 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. Once we have a complete narrative, As mentioned with the
narrative, weekly, during our remaining break out time until complete I will meet with each group and check in on all progress made toward completion of each student’s contributions toward the complete narrative.

For both the narrative and the script, our community partner will have access and potentially join our class to read and examine our finished product as well as offer critique or concern.

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

Note* Failure to turn in any assignment (without prior exception) carries the penalty of a loss of a final letter grade. (i.e. If you turned in all work successfully with the exception of one assignment, there is no possibility of a “A” in the course. The highest you would receive is an A- provided all other requirements were met.) Furthermore, each student is solely responsible for submitting his or her own work. I will not accept work turned in for any other student unless I have corresponded with that student prior to class.

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 notice if an emergency arises (they will be given the ability to turn in work) However, if an assignment is turned in late, It will NOT be accepted and thus receive a zero on that assignment.

If things go awry...
…it’s your responsibility to tell me—right away. If your role or deliverable of project is dead-ending or your peer collaboration imploding, I need to hear about it so that I can help resolve the issues! If you fail to notify me, then you will receive a grade based of the projects assessment.

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*


“Letter of the Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming” [Yale University] (November 21, 2016): 24 pp. [*I will send .pdf*]

*No paper required in the first week only*

**Reaching Audiences I**

**January 20: Making Public Institutions Matter and mission statements**
Read the History Relevance campaign’s “value statement”—http://www.historyrelevance.com/value-statement—and explore its website.


**Reaching Colleagues I**

*January 27: Working Collaboratively and team dynamics*


Genoways and Ireland, 1-4.

### Reaching Partners I

**February 3: Collaborating with Communities and civic engagement strategies**


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

### Reaching Audiences II

**February 10: Getting on the Radar Screen and marketing plans/branding**


Wilkening, Susan. “Suck It Up: Curated Brand Experiences.” *Museum News*
Reaching Partners II
February 17: Pursuing Outreach vs. “In-Reach”
and diversity hiring plans


February 24: Work Session

Information Interview & Reflection presentations

No paper due

March 2: No Class (Spring Break)

March 9: Collaborating with Donors I—Stating Your Case and budgets and grant-writing
Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 4: 61-93.


March 16: Collaborating with Donors II—Listening and development plans—

Guest speaker: TBA speaking on Development in the public realm


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 5: 95-139.
Reaching Colleagues II
March 23: Building a Vision
and board management


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

April 6: Managing Change
and strategic planning


Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 3: 41-59.

Optional:


April 13: Work Session
and sustaining the team process


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

Reaching Audiences III
April 20: “Futurecasting”
and seeing beyond one’s walls


Reaching Colleagues III
April 27: Leading from Below
and human resources/personnel management and finding your niche


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

*Draft of final exhibition proposal due Saturday, April 27, 9:00 a.m. (email)*

**Note: Any details found within this syllabus excluding university policy are subject to change at any time at the full discretion of the professor of record**