

THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC HISTORY SPRING 2021

UNCG HIS/IAR 626

ANNE E. PARSONS

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS: MON., 1:00-3:00

OFFICE HOURS SIGNUP: [HTTP://GO.UNCG.EDU/TALKWITHDRPARSONS](http://go.uncg.edu/talkwithdrparsons)

CLASS TIME: WED., 2:00-4:50 – ONLINE

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course comprises the second semester of the MA in History/Museum Studies track. The first class, HIS 627, focused on historic interpretation and the final class, HIS 633, will center on a 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. Students will also learn the basic principles and practices of museum management, budgeting, and fundraising as well as digital methods in museums. Finally, students will build their skills in writing, public speaking, historical interpretation, and working in a team.

The class is broken into four parts, with about 3-4 weeks per part.

- Community Engagement through Oral Histories
- Sustainable Museums
- Connecting to Audiences
- Funding the Fun

In the spirit of public history practice, students will learn by doing. The readings include texts and videos on best practices in museum and non-profit settings, which students will discuss. The class will also do assignments that bring the issues to life and will take three virtual field trips and will meet with people working in the field.

Finally, the class will put theory into practice with a major public project that will culminate in Fall 2021. In the Spring and Fall 2021 semesters, the class will develop a traveling exhibit about a Jewish uprising in Tuchyn, Ukraine in 1942. The target audience is advanced high school students in North Carolina and the exhibit will launch in January 2022. It will travel to at least 5 schools throughout the state with the North Carolina Holocaust Council. This semester, the class will work as a team to create an interpretive plan website that will set us up for our success in Fall 2021.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

Enduring Understandings

- **Students will be able to articulate, evaluate, and implement best practices in community engagement** through oral history work and collaborating with community partners and donors, including identifying local needs and interests, and fostering civic engagement. Students will evaluate the dynamics in these relationships and how they shape public history work.
- **Students will be able to assess and implement strategies to reach audiences** and increase participatory practices, create evaluation plans, and work to preserve the public trust. Students will assess the potential conflicts embedded in serving the general public and multiple audiences.

Core Concepts

- **Students will learn how to cultivate a sustainable team and institution** through strategic planning, management skills and best practices in leadership and group work.
- **Students will assess new directions in digital methods** and technologies in museum and historic site interpretation.
- **Students will deepen their knowledge of cultural competency** and will be able to assess and implement best practices.
- **Students will have a stronger knowledge of fundraising techniques** such as development planning, identifying grants, building membership, and budgeting money. They will be able to read and create a budget and assess various fundraising strategies.

Skills

- **Writing** concisely, clearly, and creatively for professional environments (both analog and digital platforms).
- **Speaking and presenting publicly** in a way that engages and activates your audience (both live and in video recordings).
- **Working collaboratively** with peers and community partners with sensitivity and a stance of listening and learning.
- **Exhibition development skills** that include how to design the layout of an exhibit, research the text and images, and plan multimedia elements in a way that is accessible.

EXPERIENCES, PROJECTS & EVALUATION

To build these skills, students will engage in the experiences and projects listed in the Assignments tab. 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, speakers, 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. If it is excused, you may do the makeup work for that day so that you receive credit towards class participation. This grade is comprised both of the student's attendance and their grade in class discussions – both on Canvas discussion boards and in live class sessions via Zoom.

Regular Homework Assignments – 30%

This class merges reading and practice and so you will have regular homework assignments to complete by the beginning of class. Because this class is geared towards preparing you for careers in public history, the assignments will often resemble professional products that you might give in a typical museum environment (ex: memo's, short presentations, and draft deliverables). These assignments will be posted in the Canvas modules and will provide instructions on what to do. I will post the assignments at least two weeks before the deadline.

There will be three types of assignments:

- Reflection assignments that give you a chance to process what you are learning and how it applies to your career.
- Homework assignments that engage with core concepts in the class (ex: drafting a budget, assessing an interpretive plan).
- Assignments that advance the oral history project and final project.

Oral History Project – 15% Due: February 24

Oral history skills are not only central to public history – they are an excellent chance to improve your presentation, interpretation, and digital skills. Over the course of the semester, you will identify someone whose life story teaches us something about the history of oppression, genocide, and/or resistance to injustice. You may interview a friend, family member, peer, or coworker. You will conduct an oral history with this person and will then prepare it as if you would deposit it in a library or archive. Finally, you will present your findings to the class with a short video presentation.

Group Presentation on Holocaust Book – 15%

Due: Dates According to Group Assignment

During this semester, the class will read three key texts on the Holocaust: *Holocaust by Bullets*, *Bloodlands*, and *The Shoah in the Ukraine*. Students will break up into groups of 3-4 and will together plan out a presentation about the book – the core argument, sources used, and major lessons for us as we study the history of Tuchyn. First, the group will create a 15-20 minute video presentation that will be provided at least 5 days before class. Then, half of the group will facilitate a discussion online in the days before class. The other half of the group will lead a one-

hour discussion via Zoom during classtime. The purpose of this assignment is to strengthen your presentation and discussion facilitation skills – both central to any work environment. It will also give you a chance to experiment with working in a team.

Interpretive Plan – 25% Due:

The class as a whole will submit an interpretive plan, based on work done throughout the semester. The interpretive plan will be published on a website that will help us communicate our project to external partners and will guide the project going forward. While the class will discuss and decide the plan as a team, students will work in pairs. Each pair will draft 1-3 components of the interpretive plan. We will meet with a group of community partners on March 31, 2021, to get feedback and the team will present the final interpretive plan to partners the week of May 3, 2021.

The interpretive plan website will include the following, at a minimum:

- The title, mission, and big idea of the project,
- Core community partners and team members – roles and responsibilities,
- Timeline of exhibit creation,
- The target audience and a formative evaluation write-up,
- Sources of funding and budget,
- A description of the layout of the physical component, including the physical layout and interpretive structure,
- A basic outline of the website,
- Core stories based on primary sources,
- Bibliography (primary and secondary sources),
- Key digital assets with information on rights and reproductions, and,
- A best practices checklist for exhibit design.

The project will work within the following parameters:

- The target audience is advanced high school students in North Carolina
- The exhibit will include both physical and digital elements (could be primarily one or the other or divided equally)
- Resistance will be a key theme, based on our Fall 2020 work
- Our main primary sources will be the testimonies from the 1967 and 1990 yizkor (memorial) books, which our team is having translated into English
- We will center the stories of survivors, using research from Fall 2020
- Participatory and multimodal elements will be central to the exhibit
- The exhibit will be physically/technologically sustainable and can be used by high school teachers (ex: physical elements can be easily transported, digital elements can be opened on school devices).

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.

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 books are available on Amazon.com or through Interlibrary Loan, or on reserve (e-reserve or hardcopy) at UNCG's Jackson Library. Any articles listed will be posted to Canvas.

Required

Bergeron and Tuttle, *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement* (AAM, 2013).
Brandon and Lower, *The Shoah in Ukraine* (Indiana Univ. Press, 2010).
Desbois and Shapiro, *Holocaust by Bullets* (St. Martin's, 2008).
Genoways and Ireland, *Museum Administration 2.0* (RLPG, 2016).
Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums* (UNC Press, 2012).
Perks, *The Oral History Reader* (Routledge: 2015).
Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (Basic Books, 2012).
Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual 3rd Edition* (AASLH: 2018).
Turino and Balgooy, *Reimagining Historic House Museums* (AASLH, 2019).

CLASS SCHEDULE

Below is a schedule of major readings and major assignment deadlines. We will meet via Zoom every week unless otherwise indicated in the schedule. Sometimes we will meet as a whole class and sometimes we will meet in smaller groups (each group meeting for half the class period). More information about our meetings, guest speakers, and assignments will be posted to the Canvas Modules.

PART I: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH ORAL HISTORIES

We are beginning the course with oral histories because they are an excellent microcosm of the public history field as a whole. Not only will you build your skills in conducting interviews, you will also evaluate the logistics of planning public history projects and new digital technologies, and improve your skills in connecting to everyday people as both partners and audiences. You will demonstrate your new knowledge through class discussions, assignments, and by conducting your own oral history.

Jan. 20 **Introductions to Class & Oral Histories**
Introductory Class via Zoom, 2-3 PM EST

Jan. 27 **Oral Histories: Preparing for the Interview**
Due: Homework posted on Canvas

- Selections from *Oral History Reader* and *Oral History Manual*

Feb. 3 **Oral Histories: Processing the Interview**
Due: Homework posted on Canvas

- Selections from *Oral History Reader* and *Oral History Manual*

Feb. 10 **Complexities of Oral Histories**
Due: Homework posted on Canvas

- *A Holocaust by Bullets* (Group Presentation)

PART II: SUSTAINABLE MUSEUMS

In Part II of the class, you will learn about how to make your institution matter and your team more sustainable. You will learn about the process of crafting missions and strategic plans, best practices in working with co-workers and volunteers, and how museums can thrive in rocky times. You will learn these concepts by evaluating strategic plans, crafting a mission for our project, and by speaking with museum professionals about how they make their institution sustainable.

Feb. 17 **Missions: Making Museums Matter & Strategic Planning**
Due: Homework posted on Canvas

- Anderson, Gail, ed. *Museum Mission Statements: Building a Distinct Identity* (2000 [1998]): 12-24.
- *Museum Administration*, Ch. 3

Feb. 24 Working with and Leading Teams

Due: Oral History Project

- Fisher, Roger and Alan Sharp. "Lateral Leadership." In *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge* (1998): 14-34.
- 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).
- *Reimagining Historic House Museums*, Introduction, Ch. 1, Ch. 4, and Ch. 5
- *Museum Administration 2.0*, Ch. 6

Mar. 3 Take the Week Off ~ No Class Session and No Homework

Mar. 10 Thriving in the Museum World

Due: Homework posted on Canvas

- *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement*

PART III: CONNECTING TO AUDIENCES

Museums survive because of their visitors and supporters. In Part III of the course, we will examine why community engagement matters not only to the functioning of museums and historic sites, but also because of its effect on the histories told at these places. We will study ways to reach new audiences, including through digital methods, will strengthen our skills in intercultural competency, and will examine new forms of evaluation. Students will demonstrate their abilities by creating their own audience evaluation experience and by incorporating best practices into our Tuchyn exhibit.

Mar. 17 The Importance of Community Engagement

Due: Homework posted on Canvas

- *Decolonizing Museums*

Mar. 24 Listening to Your Audience: Evaluations

Due: Draft Website of Final Project and Outline of Sections

- *Reimagining Historic House Museums*, Ch. 3
- Diamond, Luke and Uttal, *Practical Evaluation Tool Guide*, Chapters 1, 5-7, 10.

- Mar. 31** **Connecting to Audiences**
Due: Homework posted to Canvas and Small Group Meeting with Partners for Feedback on Project
- *Reimagining Historic House Museums*, Ch. 10-13 and Chapters of your choice from Ch.'s 14-24
 - *Museum Administration 2.0*, Ch.'s 7 and 10

- Apr. 7** **Project Work Week**
Due: Rough draft of interpretive plan website

PART IV: FUNDING THE FUN

For better or worse, money makes the museum world go round. Part IV of the class trains you in the main forms of fundraising, looking for grants, managing budgets. In this part of the class, you will evaluate fundraising plans and budgets of museums and will review funding/budget documents.

- Apr. 14** **Good Gracious, Grants!**
Due: Homework posted on Canvas
- *Bloodlands* (Group Presentation)

- Apr. 21** **The World of Fundraising**
Due: Final rough draft of interpretive plan website
- Cilella, *Fundraising for Small Museums*, Ch.'s 1-8.
 - *Museum Administration 2.0*, Ch. 5
 - *Reimagining Historic House Museums*, Ch. 6

- Apr. 28** **Show Me the Money! (Budgeting)**
Due: Homework posted on Canvas
- *Museum Administration 2.0*, Ch. 4

- Week of** **Final Presentation (Date/Time TBD)**
May 3 **Due: Final Project due on May 3, end of day**