



HIS 317
History in Practice: Beyond the Academic Realm
Spring 2022

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am-10:45pm

Classroom space: MHRA room. 2209 & (Virtual class, when/if necessary)

Professor: Dr. Torren L. Gatson

office hours: by appointment

office location: MHRA 2nd floor room 2119

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Course Description:

This course explores the professional field of public history and examines the place of public history within the discipline as a whole. The course also provides a forum to discuss critical and enduring issues in the practice of public history. By the end of the semester, students should be able to explain and discuss the origins and development of the field of public history; discuss a range of critical issues in public history and their implications for reflective practice in the field; and demonstrate an understanding of the intellectual foundations of public history.

This course also invites students to explore history's place in contemporary life, to discover the power of the past in unexpected places. You will pursue this theme by following two strands. The first, briefly traces the history of the popular past through the creation of the accepted pillars of public history in America since the nineteenth century, looking at moments when history was defined, shared, and, often, fought over in public settings beyond the university. Topics include: Slavery, Creation of the Smithsonian, Colonial Williamsburg and more.

Running through these examples will be a central question: How does popular history shape a collective identity? Or, to put it another way: Do we have a shared past or many individual ones? Is American heritage—and America itself—viewed differently depending on the audience?

The second strand focuses on the work of public history professionals today and the tools they use to preserve share and examine the past. We will examine the foundational elements of public history. Topics include oral history, archives, historic sites, historic preservation, museum Studies, Historical architecture, and archeology.

To achieve this goal, we will have as well numerous in class visits from public history professionals and perhaps one virtual field study (field trip). Through these examples, you will

learn about the field of public history and the work of its practitioners. Then you'll be ready to try your hand at doing public history!

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Interpret primary sources (including material culture, visual images, oral history, landscapes, and others) for cultural and historical meanings.
2. Analyze written secondary sources thoughtfully, with attention to argument and point of view.
3. Analyze public interpretations of the past—including exhibitions, historic sites, and monuments—with attention to argument, point of view, and historical context.
4. Create original interpretations of the past that engage public audiences.
5. Write clearly and persuasively.
6. Speak with passion, clarity, and respect over various historical themes.

Teaching Methods:

This course combines classroom lecture with regular opportunities for discussion and collective exploration. While primarily set in a lecture style, in addition to learning a body of historical content, we will be exploring how to “read” a variety of cultural texts to glean historical insights. In every class period, time will be reserved for group consideration of historical documents, photographic images, music, or video. Frequently, students will form smaller groups in the classroom to consider a question, an article excerpt, or a primary source.

COVID 19 Impact statement

As we return for spring 2022, all students are required to uphold UNCG's culture of care by actively engaging in behaviors that limit the spread of COVID-19. These actions include, but are not limited to:

- [Following face-covering guidelines](#)
- Engaging in proper hand-washing hygiene
- Self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19
- Staying home when ill
- Complying with directions from health care providers or public health officials to quarantine or isolate if ill or exposed to someone who is ill
- Completing a [self-report](#) when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, testing positive for COVID-19, or being identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive
- Staying informed about the University's policies and announcements via the [COVID-19](#) website

There will be a mandated seating chart for in person class meetings. These are important for facilitating contact tracing should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19. You must sit in your assigned seat at every class meeting. You may move your chairs in class to facilitate group work. **You However, you will not be permitted to Eat or Drink during class time.**

A limited number of disposable masks will be available in the classroom for students who have forgotten theirs. Face coverings are also available for purchase in the UNCG Campus Bookstore. **Students who do not follow masking requirements will be asked to put on a face covering or leave the classroom to retrieve one and only return when they follow the basic standards of safety and care for the UNCG community.** Once students have a face covering, they are permitted to re-enter a class already in progress. Repeated issues may result in conduct action. The course policies regarding attendance and academics remain in effect for partial or full absence from class due to lack of adherence with face covering and other requirements. For instances where the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS) has granted accommodations regarding wearing face coverings, students should contact their instructors to develop appropriate alternatives to class participation and/or activities as needed. Instructors or the student may also contact OARS (336.334.5440) who, in consultation with Student Health services, will review requests for accommodations.

Statement on wellness

Health and well-being impact learning and academic success. Throughout your time in the university, you may experience a range of concerns that can cause barriers to your academic success. These might include illnesses, strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol or drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. Student Health Services and The Counseling Center can help with these or other issues you may experience. 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/> or visiting the Anna M. Gove Student Health Center at 107 Gray Drive. For undergraduate or graduate students in recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction, The Spartan Recovery Program (SRP) offers recovery support services. You can learn more about recovery and recovery support services by visiting <https://shs.uncg.edu/srp> or reaching out to recovery@uncg.edu

Assignments and Evaluation:

- **Reader responses:** 10% (due every Tuesday when class is scheduled to meet)
Each week, I will ask you to write a short response to the most recent readings, to assess reading comprehension and to ensure that each student is prepared to participate fully in our in-class discussions. (learning outcomes #1, 2, and 5)
- **Midterm exam (March 17th):** 20%
This in-class exam will include short-answer, multiple choice, true- false questions and an in-class essay. (learning outcomes #1, 3, and 5)

- **Primary Source project (due January 27th): 10%**
you will select two runaway slave ads from a list of databases that will be provided to you. You will then compare and contrast the runaway ads and prepare a short reflection paper discussing how the two ads were similar or different. You will then go deeper and discuss the cultural, social, and economic tones of each ad. Finally, you will prepare a brief but concise and thought provoking (maximum 50 words) caption for both runaway ads that could be used as interpretation within a museum exhibition. (learning outcomes #s 1,3,4,5)
- **Review essay: The Public Past (due April 14th): 20%**
Choose a single public history product—an exhibition, historic site tour, memorial, commemoration, television episode, film, digital history product, etc.—and analyze and assess its form, content, and public impact: about 5 pages. (learning outcomes #s 3, 6)
- **Final project: (Presentations April 6th in class): 30%**

“Material Culture: Letting objects speak” Students will be given a photograph or historical image (newspaper, painting, etc.) Students must use this image to tell a historically accurate narrative based on their findings regarding this image. The purpose of this exercise is to uncover the layered history of its construction, uses, and the diversity of people using/observing/owning that object.

- **Class participation: 10%** (outcomes 1, 2, 3, 6)
Full participation involves advance completion of the required readings; attentiveness; engagement with in-class discussions; a willingness to ask questions and venture opinions. Although attendance is not taken verbally, I will record the unexcused absences of those without prior granted leave. It is impossible to be a successful student and pass this course if you are not in attendance.

Note: It is a known fact that situations will occur in life outside of our control. Understanding this fact, some absences will be excused provided the proper documentation is presented. Excused absences are on a case by case basis. *For this reason, PLEASE inform me as soon as you are notified of an emergency. This applies even in the case of minor illnesses, outside activities, or conflicts with other classes, because one cannot succeed in this course without attending the lectures and taking notes.

In Short...If things go awry...it's your responsibility to tell me—right away. Please allow me the chance to help you!

Attendance policy:

Students need to attend all class meetings and are encouraged to meet individually with the instructor as needed. The course instructor is not responsible for informing you of classes you have missed and how that negatively impacts your grade.

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/>. Per university policy, you will be asked to sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment in this class.

Grading scale:

A=93-100
A-=90-92
B+=87-89
B=83-86
B-=80-82
C+=77-79
C=73-76
C-=70-72
D+=67- 69
D=63-66
D-=60-62
F=59 and below

Lateness Policy:

I am receptive to *advance* requests for extensions. However, if an assignment is turned in late without an agreed-upon extension, **It is at my discretion to accept late work.** If late assignments are accepted there will be a deduction in grade value of at least of a letter grade per day (e.g., A to B+). ****NOTE**** In the event that appropriate documentation is presented (e.g., medical, counselor’s, dean’s) suitable work will be accepted and given full credit.

Special Needs

If you require accommodations for special learning needs, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services, located within the Elliot University Center (334-5440; <http://ods.uncg.edu>)! I will be very receptive to any steps to help make your learning experience healthier and more successful.

Required Texts:

Available at the UNCG bookstore:

Lyon, Cherstin M., Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum. *Introduction to Public History*, 2017.

In addition to the required text, discussions for some class session will also draw on required primary source readings and articles. All of those materials will be provided to you.

Semester Outline/ Calendar:

Week 1

January 11th Brief course overview and in-depth review of syllabus

January 13th **What is Public History?** Lyon, Cherstin M., Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum, In “Introducing Public History” and “Thinking Historically,” *Introduction to Public History* (2017), Chapters 1 & 2: 1-32. Thinking about the authors’ definitions of public history, **come prepared to share an experience you have had as a consumer of public history.**

Week 2

January 18th Lyon, Nix, and Shrum. “Collecting History,” In *Introduction to Public History*, Chapter 4: 57-81.

January 20th **Tools of the Trade: Observing Primary and Secondary Sources & Material Culture “Letting Objects Speak,” objects and primary source material.** Selected review of Henry Glassie and James Deetz. Jules David Prown. “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and method,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1982), pp. 1-19. **Overview of Primary Source Project Assignment**

Week 3

January 25nd **Laws, Ethics & Public History Procedure with Break out exercise**

January 27th **Primary Source project** (Due at time of class)

Week 4

February 1st **Exploring Museums**

February 3rd **CURATORS, like Museums and Objects tell Amazing Stories**
Guest Speaker William Strollo, Curator of exhibition at Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Museum. **(CLASS we meet via ZOOM on this day)**

Week 5

February 8th **Introduction to archives and libraries and repositories**

February 10th **No Class**

Week 6

February 15th **Uncovering UNC Greensboro's Cultural and Commemorative Landscape**
Erin Lawrimore, UNC Greensboro university archivist, Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives.

February 17th **An Introduction to Historic Preservation**

Week 7

February 22nd **Keeping Records Makes History!! Archives & Collections Management**
Guest speaker Collections Management: Archives, repositories, and Research Strategies,
Guest Speaker Sarah Calise, Archivist, Middle Tennessee State University. **(CLASS we meet via ZOOM on this day)**

February 24th Discussion of assignment **“Review essay: The Public Past”**

Week 8

March 1st **Visiting Historic Places: Historic Sites, Interpreters, and Guides**
Guest Speakers: Liz Torres Melendez, Assistant Site manager at Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum.

March 3rd **Choosing When to Remember!: Unpacking Difficult Histories**
Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*, chapters 1 & 2.

Week 9

March 8th Spring BREAK

March 10th Spring BREAK

Week 10

March 15th **RECAP for mid-term exam**

March 17th **MID TERM EXAM**

Week 11

March 22nd **Exploring the Digital Humanities: reviewing sites that store and interpret history**, Class Visit from Dr. Aleia Brown, Digital Humanist

March 24th **Know your Audience: Understanding This Visitor Experience**

Week 12

March 29th **Final Project overview**

March 31st **No Class**

Week 13

April 5th **An Introduction to Oral History**

April 7th Oral History exercise

Week 14

April 12th **Creating One narrative of Public Memory: Understanding 20th century African American Public History**

Andrea Burns. *Storefront to Monument*, chapter 1 “When Civil Rights are not enough,” (2013): 1-26.

April 14th Due in class, **Review essay: The Public Past &** We will also begin Discussion of final presentations

Week 15

April 19th Working on Final Project

April 21st Working on Final Project

April 26th **LAST DAY OF CLASS. Final presentations due**

****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 ****

**** As UNC Greensboro continues to maneuver through the COVID- 19 pandemic, there remains the possibility for rapid unforewarned changes to this syllabus. Your patience is necessary as we must remain flexible.**