

History 711, Fall 2014
Service Learning in Public History
The Tough Stuff: Transforming Difficult Histories into Meaningful Pasts
Mondays, 6 to 8:30

Instructor Information:

Instructor: Dr. Denise Meringolo Associate Professor of History and Director of Public History
Office Location: Administration Building, 7th Floor, Room 731; 410-455-2058
Office Hours: Walk-ins Welcome on Mondays from 4:00 to 5:30 and Wednesdays from 1:00 to 2:15;
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Course Background:

Public History service learning courses train students to recognize the entrepreneurial aspects of public history practice. Unlike other courses, public history service learning courses are entirely focused on developing a creative response to a persistent problem in our profession. These courses create an opportunity for you to take the lead in your own learning, building an original portfolio of work, learning marketable skills, and broadening your professional network.

During the fall of 2014, you will lay the groundwork and establish the interpretive parameters for what will become an ambitious, multi-semester project, tentatively titled **Mapping the Past: Slavery and Freedom on the Regional Landscape**. The course layout provides a logical pathway for you to follow in order to think critically and creatively about a persistent problem in the field of public history: How can public historians engage audiences in the interpretation of difficult subjects?

Course Goals:

1. You will take an entrepreneurial approach to the practice of history. First, you will identify a problem. You will read and analyze relevant scholarship about how the history of slavery has been interpreted in public history, documented in historic preservation, and silenced or amplified as particular landscapes, structures, and communities have changed over time. This exploration will serve as the backdrop against which you will develop innovative new approaches to the interpretation of slavery and freedom.
2. You will learn to engage with active practitioners of public history, preservation, and place making in the Baltimore region who will meet with the class, providing you with advice and role models for understanding how authority and expertise operate in a profoundly collaborative professional environment.
3. You will conduct primary and secondary historical research and create innovative public history products that engage audiences in the interpretation and use of a difficult past
4. You will learn use a variety of digital platforms as tools of social entrepreneurship, discovering and creating uses that enable craft compelling and relevant historical narratives with text, image, and mapping technologies, thereby presenting a solution to the problem of exploring difficult pasts in the public sector.
5. You will build a network of colleagues and a track record of work that can advance your professional goals

Course Outline and Description:

As social entrepreneurs, you will identify the specific parameters of a pressing problem in the field of public history and you will develop an innovative approach to that problem.

During weeks 1 to 5, you will examine and critique strategies that public historians have developed to engage audiences in dialog about the history and significance of slavery. By the end of this unit, you will have a deeper understanding of the ways in which people use the past as a well of experience and a source of inspiration for addressing contemporary problems. You will have insight into the goals and approaches public historians have brought to the particular interpretation of slavery. These insights will allow you to identify why audiences and professionals seem at odds over the history of slavery and to begin to frame the history of slavery in a way that meets audience expectations about the past.

During weeks 6-9, you will conduct original historical research. First, you will read, summarize, annotate, and share with your classmates a selection of relevant books and articles on slavery and freedom. These will help you establish a sense of context and give you an understanding of how scholars approach this subject. Then, with guidance from our partners at the State Archives, you will identify compelling stories that illustrate the instability of freedom for people of color living in our region during the decades leading up to the Civil War. You will be looking for stories and thinking about how they might resonate with contemporary issues, themes, or questions. For example, you may find stories that illustrate the ways in which different state laws regarding escape and capture constrained the movements and sense of security for free people and their families. You may find stories that help demonstrate that slavery and freedom were not static concepts, tied to particular structures or places, but rather they were contested ideas, unstable across borders and across time.

During weeks 10-14, you will learn and experiment with a variety of interpretive methods, storytelling strategies, and digital tools that will help you communicate your stories in a concise, logical, and engaging manner. You will work in teams and benefit from the expertise of a series of guest speakers and instructors: professionals who are actively engaged in an effort to improve the public interpretation of slavery; storytellers and professional interpreters who will help you revise your work; technical experts who will train you in using a variety of apps and digital tools.

By the end of the semester, you will have developed an innovative interpretive product that our partner organizations can use immediately to engage audiences in a conversation about the relevance and meaning of slavery for contemporary audiences. Your work will also serve as the foundation for further development of a digital tour –likely using the curatescape platform—that will help people connect the stories you have crafted about slavery and freedom to the material, political, cultural, and social landscapes of Southern Maryland, Baltimore, and Pennsylvania.

Course Assignments:

Due by Wednesday, October 8: Write a critical, reflective post on your blog that clearly identifies the problem(s) we are trying to address. Why do you think public historians have had a difficult time interpreting slavery and freedom? What strategies or approaches have been successful? Unsuccessful? Why? What specifically would you like to improve about the way the story of slavery and freedom in Maryland is ALREADY being told in a digital environment.

Due Monday, October 13: Write a detailed, critical summary for each of the books you have been assigned and post to your blog. You should be prepared to share the key points from each book with the class. If applicable, you should also take care to identify places and names that might be worth tracing further.

Together in class on October 13, you will work together to develop a fully annotated bibliography and a “tidy” data sheet based on these secondary sources. These will compose the shared knowledge –and questions—from which you will draw as you begin your primary source research.

Due Monday, October 27: Write a carefully annotated bibliography of the primary sources you discovered and on which you focused during our research at the Maryland State Archives. Post this to your blog. Your annotations should accomplish three things: provide enough information to enable future researchers working on this project to retrace your steps if necessary; establish the basic framework for a compelling story –who, what, when, where, why; provide information that can help us and future researchers place the events of this story on a map. Your research should fit the data format on which we decided in class on October 13.

Due by Friday, November 21: A more-or-less final version of your story, along with digital images, map and other resources you will use as you adopt digital tools and develop your project

Monday, December 8: Oral Presentation to our External Partners and Potential Partners. You will emphasize the entrepreneurial aspects of your work by addressing this question: How does my proposal present the history of slavery and freedom in an innovative fashion that enables audiences to recognize its potential usefulness for understanding contemporary social, cultural, or political problems?

Final Projects due on the Day and Time of the Scheduled Final Exam

General Assessment Goals and Parameters:

1. The reflective assignment enables me to assess your critical thinking about the assigned reading. Can you use scholarship (both class readings and discussion) to help you identify and frame a problem? Can you articulate and support an original argument about how that problem has been addressed by professionals in the field of public history?
2. The critical review and bibliographic assignments enable me to assess your ability to understand the scholarly context of slavery and freedom, the quality and diversity of materials you identify in your research, and your ability to synthesize primary and secondary sources in order to develop a creative and original story.
3. Reviewing the final story before digital development enables me to assess and foster best practices for creative storytelling and engaging interpretation, it draws attention to how well you have taken public interests and desires into account and how you have sought to address the problems we identified.
4. The oral presentations enable me to assess how well you can articulate the significance and value of your project and it allows you to receive feedback from our partners before the final project is due. This is a crucial step to making sure the projects are actually useful for addressing the problem we identified.
5. Final projects are assessed for accuracy, responsiveness to partner critiques, potential for engaging audiences, and relevance for addressing the problem we identified.

Course of Study Information

This course counts as an upper level American History elective for all MA students.

This course also fulfills an elective requirement for MA Students in the Public History Track.

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. The full Student Academic Conduct Policy is available in the [UMBC Student Handbook](#) (page. 7), the [Faculty Handbook](#) (Section 14.3), and (for graduate students) on the [Graduate School](#) website. For more information, see the Provost's website: http://www.umbc.edu/undergrad_ed/ai/

In Addition, Please Note:

Please be advised that the penalty for academic dishonesty –including plagiarism and other forms of cheating-- in any UMBC History Department course is an "F" for the course. In addition, cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Conduct Committee.

For further definitions on what academic misconduct is and how to avoid it at all costs please see <http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/>

One More Warning

I reserve the right to modify, add, or subtract assignments as necessary. This class is an intense collaborative environment, and I will make changes in response to the way our project evolves.

Weekly Class Schedule and Assignments:

For this Class	Do This	Be Ready to Discuss This	Problem Solve
September 8	<p>Read: Nora Faires “Across the Border to Freedom: The International Underground Railroad Memorial and the Meanings of Migration.” <i>Journal of American Ethnic History</i> Volume 32, Number 2 (Winter 2013): 38-67</p> <p>James O. Horton “Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue” in <i>Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). 103-135</p> <p>In Class: I will walk you through the process of establishing a domain and setting up a blog.</p>	<p>Public historians must consider not only the inherent value of understanding the past, but also work to engage audiences in a dialogue or process. It is not enough o simply want people to know. We must consider: What do we want people to DO with this knowledge? How and where is it applicable or relevant?</p>	<p>What is the broad problem outlined in these first readings? What are some ideas the authors give us about how WE might use a digital format to address that problem? Why does the story of slavery and freedom still matter –why is it relevant—for contemporary audiences?</p>
September 15	<p>Read: E. Arnold Modlin, Jr. “Representing Slavery at Plantation House Museums in the U.S. South.” <i>Historical Geography</i> Volume 39 (2011): 147-173</p> <p>Antoinette T. Jackson <i>Speaking for the Enslaved: Heritage Interpretation at Antebellum Plantation Sites</i> (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012)</p> <p>Explore: http://www.sotterleyplantation.com/history_sotterley.htm#1699-1775</p>	<p>How has the history of slavery and freedom been handled in the preservation and interpretation of historic sites?</p>	<p>Given what we have read and discussed, analyze and critique the interpretation of Sotterley. Propose a new approach.</p>

<p>September 22</p>	<p>Read John Michael Vlach "The Last Great Taboo Subject: Exhibiting Slavery at the Library of Congress" in <i>Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). 57-74.</p> <p>Gary B. Nash "For Whom will the Liberty Bell Toll? From Controversy to Cooperation" in <i>Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). 75-102</p> <p>Dwight Pitcaithley "A Cosmic Threat: The National Park Service Addresses the Causes of the Civil War" in <i>Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). 169-186</p> <p>Joanne Melish "Recovering (from) Slavery: Four Struggles to Tell the Truth" in <i>Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). 103-135</p> <p>Lois Horton, "Avoiding History: Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Uncomfortable Public Conversation on Slavery." in <i>Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). 135-150</p> <p>Explore: http://nmaahc.si.edu</p>	<p>Examine the presentation and representation of slavery and freedom at sites associated with high culture and patriotic identity.</p> <p>What specifically are the challenges?</p> <p>What kinds of interpretive practices are effective? Ineffective?</p>	<p>Based on our course reading so far, assess the mission and the institution social media presence of the not-yet-open National Museum of African American History and Culture. Where and how do you see the institution addressing issues of slavery and freedom? Think about what it has to tell us about addressing and engaging a multi-racial, multi-ethnic audience in a discussion of slavery and freedom? Critique and analyze, but also look for models, lessons, and suggestions.</p>
<p>September 29</p>	<p>Read: Cheryl Jennifer LaRoche <i>The Geography of Resistance: Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad</i> (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014)</p> <p>Guest Instructor: Cheryl LaRoche</p> <p>In Class: We will talk about "tidy data" and the necessity of establishing well-defined parameters of evidence that will be usable for mapping projects later.</p>	<p>What does LaRoche mean by "the geography of resistance?"</p> <p>How have archaeologists approached the history of slavery and freedom?</p> <p>How can we learn to see landscapes differently?</p> <p>How can landscapes become interpretive tools for public historians?</p>	

October 6	<p>Read and Explore: http://www.harriettubmanbyway.org/ http://pathways.thinkport.org/flash_home.cfm http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/ http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/html/flight/sugr.html</p> <p>Guest Instructor: Ted Maris-Wolf</p>	<p>Examine, critique, analyze the assigned websites in order to get a sense of the current state of digital formats exploring the history of slavery and freedom in Maryland.</p> <p>Our guest speaker will help us begin to think about the following: What are some best practices for the production of digital public history? What are some tools we might use to present a digital landscape that is temporal, material, cultural, and political landscapes in an engaging manner?</p>	
October 13	Write a critical summary of your Assigned Materials		
SATURDAY October 18	REQUIRED Research Trip Maryland State Archives 9:30 to 12:30		
October 20	NO CLASS		
SATURDAY October 25	REQUIRED Research Trip Maryland State Archives 9:30 to 12:30		
October 27	NO CLASS: Meet with Instructor to Discuss Story		
November 3	Story and Skill Development (Image Searching and Annotation Tools)		
November 10	Story and Skill Development (Telling a Story in Place and Time, MapStory JS)		
November 17	Story and Skill Development	Be prepared to share your drafts and images	
November 24	Digital Story Guest Instructor: Christine Ferrera		

December 1	Digital Story		
	Guest Instructor: Christine Ferrera		
December 8	Final Presentation		