

HIST 300: Introduction to Public History
Spring, 2015
Monday and Wednesday 1:00 to 2:15

<p>Instructor: Dr. Denise D. Meringolo Administration Building, Room 731 410-455-2058 ddm@umbc.edu</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: I prefer to be addressed as Dr. Meringolo or Professor Meringolo.</p>	<p>Office Hours: Walk-ins welcome on a first come, first served basis with no appointment necessary on: Mondays from 11:00 to 12:30 and Wednesdays from 3:00 to 5:00</p> <p>If you need to see me on another day or at another time, please email me for an appointment.</p>
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What is Public History?

Public history is an interdisciplinary form of scholarship practiced as public service. Public historians help create historical understanding by sharing authority and inquiry with a variety of partners, including audiences, museum professionals, preservationists, business leaders and others. Public historians are trained, first and foremost, as historians –to conduct research, to craft interpretations and to write well. However, public historians must also be prepared to work collaboratively with partners for whom an understanding of history can have immediate practical implications. Public historians produce original interpretations that build bridges between scholarship and everyday life by respecting the ways in which their partners and audiences use history, and by balancing professional authority against community needs.

Course Objectives:

1. examine the history, value and best practices of public history
2. understand and respect public uses of the past
3. expand your working definition of historical professionalism
4. read, evaluate and discuss scholarship that composes public history as a field of intellectual inquiry
5. learn to work collaboratively
6. learn to think critically and analytically by working together to develop an analytical framework for writing about and evaluating public history

Assigned readings will be available on Blackboard

Course Description

This course will provide you with a basic introduction to public history. We will touch on three major elements of the profession. First, we will ask questions about how Americans think about and use the past. This will allow us to pay attention to the challenging role that audiences play in shaping interpretations of the past, exploring questions about the needs and desires of history consumers. Second, we will examine some of the events, trends, and conditions that led to the creation of the field. Third, we will explore some of the specific kinds of work that public historians do and uncover evidence and information about best professional practices. All the while, we will challenge ourselves to articulate the function and value of historical interpretation in public places.

The learning environment in this course is collaborative. The best practitioners of public history do not simply “present” the past to their audiences. Rather, they engage a variety of stakeholders in the process of historical inquiry, inviting them to participate in both shaping questions and arriving at original interpretations. Thus, this class will not simply tell you about public history; it will invite you to arrive at your own understanding of the field, enabling you to follow the questions that most interest you. Weekly meetings will include a mix of lecture, discussion and small group work. Over time, you will develop your own analytical tools to help you become a more active participant in the production of public history.

You are expected to come to class having completed the assigned reading and ready to participate actively and to communicate with one another respectfully.

Finally, because public history is a diverse field, no one practitioner has all of the experience and expertise necessary to provide a complete picture of the profession. Thus, over the course of the semester, a small selection of guest lecturers will address the class, sharing information about their work. These lectures serve two purposes. First, guest lecturers will provide you with a window into career opportunities in public history. Second, they will enable us to explore the extent to which the history of the field, its engagement with audiences, and its best practices remain more or less relevant to all public historians regardless of where they work.

Statement of Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a serious matter at UMBC. We expect the absolute highest standards from students and faculty in their pursuit of new knowledge through academic coursework. By enrolling in this course, you assume the responsibilities of an active participant in the UMBC scholarly community. 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 complete Student Academic Conduct Policy is available through the Provost's website:

http://www.umbc.edu/provost/integrity/acc_policy/

Statement Regarding GEP Status

This class was approved as a Social Science requirement by the University's GEP Committee in October, 2013. This class also fulfills a requirement for the Undergraduate Minor in Public History.

I reserve the right to make changes to the assignments and due dates in this syllabus.

It may also be necessary to change the dates of guest speakers to accommodate their professional schedules.

Course Assignments:

A. In Class Collaborative Learning Assignments (20%):

Over the course of the semester, I will assign a variety of in-class exercises designed to foster a collaborative learning environment. You can prepare for them by keeping up with the reading and using the guiding questions in the syllabus to help you approach the reading. **These assignments cannot be made up.**

B. Three Short, Critical Papers (50%):

Paper One: Personal History OR Connecting with the Past, 5 to 8 pages

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight on Friday, February 20

How do you connect to the past? Choose an object, a book, a photograph, or some other personal item that has special significance for you. Explain how it links your present to the past, why and how it matters to you, when it takes on special significance, and what it helps you understand about your place in time. You might also describe how the meaning and uses of this thing have changed over time.

Paper Two: Pinterest Paper OR The "Public" and "History", 5 to 8 pages

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight on Friday March 27

What do audiences want? Spend two hours examining Pinterest's "History" category. What can you glean from the posts, comments, and "repins" about the kinds of things that captivate the public about the past? How does this influence your view of the "public?" To do this, first create a series of hypotheses based on what we have already discussed in class about audience expectations and about the development of public history over time: what do you expect to find? What do you think the pinning world considers history? What sorts of experiences may be given primacy through this medium? Then, start exploring. <http://pinterest.com/all/?category=history>

What do you discover? How might you categorize and analyze your findings in relation to the ideas of “public” AND “history?” What does this exercise suggest to you about the way public history has evolved over time and what public historians need to think about now and in the future?

Paper Three: History@Work Paper OR The Profession of Public History, 5 to 8 pages

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight on Friday May 1

Select one of the sections in of the History@Work website, sponsored by the NCPH –“In the Academy,” “Consultants Corner,” “Projects,” “International,” “Activism,” etc... Read at least the five most recent blog pieces in the category you have chosen. Write a review of the blog series, focusing on what the posts tell you about the current state of the field. Think about all of the work we have done this semester to understand public history as a profession. Which sub-group of public historians are you focusing on? What are they thinking about and working on? What kinds of problems or issues do they discuss? What patterns do you notice? What constructive critiques can you make? Can you make any connections to the ideas/issues/problems we have read about and discussed in class? Is anything surprising or new to you?

<http://publichistorycommons.org/>

C. Final Paper (30%):

Choose ONE of the following THREE options, 8 to 10 pages:

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than 3:00 on Wednesday May 20

Option One: Write a review of an online or real-space public history exhibit. Use analytical tools we identified together in class, and make sure you footnote the sources you choose to use, whether they came from our work on museum education, interpretation, interpretive writing, etc. Think about what you have learned about how people approach and use the past and write a thoughtful, critical, and constructive review that identifies who an exhibit is for and how well it works for its intended audience.

Option Two: Are there any events that have occurred in your community, at your workplace, in a city you are familiar with, or even in your family that are rarely discussed or commemorated -- perhaps because they are difficult, problematic or because they challenge the reputations of those involved? Why do you think it should be remembered? How would you work to commemorate the event while maintaining respect for the difficult history portrayed? Use the analytical tools we identified together in class as a guide to help you think about design, process, and purpose. Make sure you cite the sources you choose to use, whether they come from our work on memorials or memory or cultural tourism., etc.

Option Three: Create a digital public history exhibition using Pinterest in which you offer some historical context that might be valuable for thinking critically about a pressing current event. You will need to choose no fewer than 10 and no more than 15 images to illustrate your history, and you will need to write historically accurate and relevant text to go along with each image. Your images should logically connect to one another. As you create this exhibition, you should be thinking about our readings on audiences, on interpretation and interpretive writing, and about public historians political role. Fair Warning: this assignment is more difficult than it seems!

Weekly Assignments:

	UNIT ONE: AUDIENCES AND THE PAST	
By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
M, 1/26	Course Syllabus	What do I want or expect from this class? What question do I have about assignments? What did the Professor forget to include?
W, 1/28	http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history/ http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/alt-ac/pieces/vocation-public-history	What is unique about Public History? What seem to be the challenges of public history? How does public history fit with the discipline of history? How does it stand apart?
M, 2/2	Read selections from Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, <i>The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life</i> (New York: Columbia University Press) 2000 in Blackboard	What did the authors' discover about how people think about and use the past? Are there any notable differences across race/class/gender/generation? Similarities? What does this suggest about audience expectations for public history? Do their findings ring true to you? Why or why not?
W. 2/4	No Reading Assigned In Class, we will view, "Objects and Memory."	As you watch this moving film, think about the ways in which people try to connect with the past and comprehend the present
M 2/9	Read Selections from the work of Edward T. Linenthal Two short articles by Linenthal. One on Enola Gay and one on Holocaust Museum. Showed 9/11 Museum website focusing on mission and on history exhibit.	How does this reading on memory, commemoration, and public history relate to our previous reading/discussions on audiences? How does this reading change what you think you know about Memorials and Museums? What connections can you make between the stories in this reading and the stories from "Objects and Memory?" Share a story about your own visit to a historic battlefield or memorial. What do you remember about your visit? What did you learn? How did you feel?
W 2/11	In class assignment on sites of memory: 9/11 and Oklahoma City	

	UNIT TWO: HISTORY OF THE PROFESSION	
By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
M 2/16	Read Barry Mackintosh, <i>The National Parks: Shaping the System</i> It is available online here: http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/shaping/index.htm Explore more about Park Service History http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/	How and when did the National Park Service begin practicing history? How has NPS history work evolved over time? How does this reading connect with previous weeks' reading –by raising questions and/or illuminating something surprising? How does public history fit with the mission of the National Park Service? What do you notice about how the National Park Service approaches history today?
W 2/18	No Reading Assignment Guest Speaker, Susan Chumley, National Park Service	
FRIDAY 2/20	PERSONAL HISTORY PAPER DUE	Email to ddm@umbc.edu by midnight
M 2/23	Read in Blackboard: Chapters 3 and 5 from Steven Conn: <i>Museums and American Intellectual Life</i>	How –and when—did museums in the United States present the past? What kind of experts shaped museums' historical collections and ideas? What are the messages communicated by these example museums about the past? What are the messages communicated by these example museums about audiences and experts?
W 2/25	Explore Smithsonian Institution Archives Website, http://siarchives.si.edu/history/main.html View online exhibitions on the History of the Smithsonian	How has the Smithsonian Institution evolved over time? Do you see any similarities between the history museums Steven Conn wrote about and the early Smithsonian? Do you see any differences? What does it mean to have national museum in the United States? What role should it play?
M 3/2	Read Selections on Blackboard from Amy K. Levin, <i>Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities</i>	What do local, small, quirky museums offer to audiences that is different from what is offered by large, private, or national museums? What is the role of these places? What is the role of a historian working in a place like this?
W 3/4	No Reading Assignment Guest Speaker, Lindsey Baker, Executive Director of the Laurel Historical Society	

By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
M 3/9	Read Delores Hayden, <i>The Power of Place</i> and brief History of Historic Preservation	What is the value of preservation? What are some of the problems associated with preservation in American society and culture? What is the role of public history in the field of preservation? What do Delores Hayden mean by “place?” How do you think about “place” as a concept?
W 3/11	Explore Roadside America website: http://www.roadsideamerica.com/ Find at least two or three examples on this site that can help you think critically about the questions I pose here:	Thinking about all we have learned so far about people’s uses of the past, about the history of museum and collections, and about the realm of preservation, be prepared to “defend” roadside memorials and attractions. What do they tell us about people? About the past as an active part of American social life? About the meaning of “things?”
	<u>SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS WEEK OF 3/16</u>	
M 3/23	Read in Blackboard, “OutHistory.org: An Experiment” and then Explore Outhistory.org. Make sure to read any two oral history transcripts from the Philadelphia LGBT History Project	How does this article define “public history?” What seems to be particularly valuable about this project? What are the project goals? How is the project seeking to meet those goals? Who is this site for? What purpose(s) does it serve? What is the value of the oral histories?
W 3/25	No Reading, Guest Speaker, Dorothy Beyer	
FRIDAY 3/27	PINTEREST PAPER DUE	Email to ddm@umbc.edu by midnight
M, 3/30	Read Selections from James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, editors <i>Slavery and Public History</i> (New York: The New Press, 2006) Available in Blackboard	What is the role of public historians when it comes to difficult histories or unpleasant pasts? Thinking about what we’ve learned about audience needs and desires, what do you think is the importance of telling these stories? Thinking about what we’ve learned about community based public history, how do you think the techniques and goals in these examples are similar to or different from those practiced by the folks at OutHistory or by people like Dot Alexander?
W 4/1	Read Selections about how public historians responded to Ferguson	What other responses can you imagine?

	UNIT THREE: SOME BEST PRACTICES	
By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
M, 4/6	TBD	TBD
W, 4/8	<p>Go to this website and watch the two David Larsen videos posted there: http://cwmemory.com/2013/01/09/david-larsen-on-interpretation-and-public-history/ Remind yourself what happened at Harper’s Ferry by reading this brief description: http://www.wvculture.org/history/jnobrown.html</p>	<p>Compare what David Larsen is saying to what you learned from Freeman Tilden. Be ready to discuss the gun talk. Imagine you went to Harper’s Ferry and heard the gun talk. What would help you understand? What is missing?</p>
M 4/13	<p>Explore: http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/index.html Make sure you Read “How to Get Started” (make sure to read the “five principles” and “four steps”) Read the following “Success Stories:” Tennessee Historic Jonesboro, Arizona Tribal Tourism, and Virginia Civil War Trails (make sure to read the complete story in each case) Visit and Explore: http://explore.baltimoreheritage.org/</p>	<p>Is cultural tourism/heritage tourism different from community based history? From preservation? Is it “public history?” Why or why not? What observations do you make about the way content is presented? Be prepared to discuss the “How to Get Started” the “Five Principles” and the “Four Steps.” Think about how you might use these to help you analyze historic walking tours or other forms of heritage tourism. What is missing from these?</p>
W, 4/15	NO CLASS	I will be at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Public History. You can follow the conference on twitter #NCPH2015. My handle is @ddmeringolo
M, 4/20	<p>Read Selections from John Falk and Lynn Dierking <i>Learning From Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning</i> (New York: AltaMira Press) 2000, available on blackboard</p>	
W, 4/22	<p>Explore the Smithsonian Museum Education website: http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/ AND The National Park Service interpretation website http://www.nps.gov/learn/</p>	<p>Compare the ways in which each website identifies and addresses audiences. Think about the principles established by Falk and Dierking and be ready to talk about how –or whether— these two websites foster creative learning opportunities.</p>

By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
M, 4/27	Read Selections on Blackboard from Beverley Serrell, <i>Exhibition Labels</i>	Think about what we have discussed about interpretation and learning in museums. How do today's readings complement or complicate our previous work? We will examine several examples of exhibit labels in class, be prepared to identify different kinds of exhibit labels based on Serrell's scheme and to identify various levels of interpretation.
W, 4/29	No Reading Assignment, Guest Speaker, Alice Donahue, Assistant Director, National Electronics Museum	
FRIDAY 5/1	HISTORY@WORK PAPER DUE	Email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight
M, 5/4	Read "Imperiled Promise," "A Call to Action" and explore the website and mission of Smithsonian Consortium on Understanding the American Experience	What problem do these documents identify? What solutions do they propose? What do these materials help you understand about the current state of public history, particularly as it is practiced in national institutions in the US
W, 5/6	Explore the following websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.nps.gov/cwindepth/civwar150_states.htm • www.ma150.org/ • www.virginiacivilwar.org/ 	Come to class ready to identify and discuss the debates and discussions that were going on in and among organizations/commissions and groups planning commemorative events related to the sesquicentennial of the US Civil War
	CONSIDER THIS INSTEAD FOR 5/6 Explore James Loewen's Top Ten Worst Historic Places: http://sundown.afro.illinois.edu/content.php?file=slideshow.html AND Teaching with Historic Places website: http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/	CONSIDER THIS INSTEAD FOR 5/6 Think about Tuesday's reading and today's websites together, what do you think about the educational value of historic places, particularly sites related to war and violence? How should educators -including public historians—use these places? What do you think would be the most difficult part of using these sites for education? What would you do?
M, 5/11	Explore educational and employment resources available to you at www.ncph.org and http://www.h-net.org/~public/	During the course conclusion, we will talk about the current state of the field in terms of job opportunities, and I will answer any questions about the final paper.
WEDNESDAY 5/20	FINAL PAPER DUE	Email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than 3:00 pm