

HIST 300: Introduction to Public History
Undergraduate Course
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Instructor:

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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

Required Readings

Cherstain Lyon, Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca Shrum *Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2017)

OTHER Assigned readings will be available in 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.

Student Disability Services (SDS)

UMBC is committed to eliminating discriminatory obstacles that may disadvantage students based on disability. Services for students with disabilities are provided for all students qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the ADA of 2009, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who request and are eligible for accommodations. The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) is the UMBC department designated to coordinate accommodations that would allow students to have equal access and inclusion in all courses, programs, and activities at the University. If you have a documented disability and need to request academic accommodations, please refer to the SDS website at sds.umbc.edu for registration information and to begin the process, or alternatively you may visit the SDS office in the Math/Psychology Building, Room 212.

For questions or concerns, you may contact SDS through email at disAbility@umbc.edu or phone (410) 455-2459. If you require accommodations for this class, make an appointment to meet with me to discuss your SDS-approved accommodations.

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, you will work on 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 (40%):

Paper One: Personal History OR Connecting with the Past, 3 to 5 pages

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight on Friday, February 16

How do you connect to the past? Do you have your grandfather's army medals? Do you have your mother's high school year book? 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: Public Forums and Public History, 3 to 5 pages

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight on Friday March 16

Spend two to three hours examining and comparing history collections and/or history conversations on TWO social media or media sharing platforms. In the past, students have examined history collections on flickr <https://www.flickr.com/search/groups/?text=history> and instagram (type the word "history" into the search box) or twitter (try using #history or #twitterstorians or #blacktwitterstorians). You can also try selecting a few museum of historic site Facebook pages –that would count as ONE of your TWO social media platforms. If you use Snapchat, you can try that, too. 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 in these platforms? What sorts of experiences may be given primacy through this medium? Then, start exploring. What patterns do you notice? What kinds of posts seem to have the most "likes?" What kinds seem unpopular? What kinds of audience members seem to be the most active on the site? What can you uncover about the individuals and organizations posting historical images on the two platforms? How much information do they include and what is the focus of that information? Based on comments, reposts, and shares, what kinds of things seem to interest the public about the past? Is there any sort of difference between what individuals post and what organizations post? Do the organizations understand what people want? How does this influence your view of the "public?" 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, 3 to 5 pages

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight on Sunday, April 22

On History@Work, the professional blog of the National Council on Public History, use the search bar to find no fewer than five and no more than eight meaty blog posts on a topic that interests you (NOT reviews or summaries or "professional opportunities or "around the field"). For example, you can search for "collections" or "activism" or "museums" OR you can try searching for a particular historical subject like "civil rights" or "the great war" or "reconstruction." Write a review of the series of blog posts you have found, 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 have you identified or chosen to focus 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://ncph.org/history-at-work>

C. Final Paper (40%):

Choose ONE of the following THREE options, 5 to 8 pages:

Due via email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than Midnight on Sunday 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: Design a public history exhibition 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. You will need to write an introduction that explains the goals and purpose of your exhibition and tells me a bit about the audience you hope to reach. 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:

	<u>UNIT 1: AUDIENCES, MEMORY, & THE PAST</u>	
<u>By this Date</u>	<u>Read This</u>	<u>Be Ready to Talk About This</u>
T, 1/30	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?
TH, 2/1	Read in Lyon, Nix, Shrum, Chapter 1, “Introducing Public History” and 2 “Thinking Historically” AND http://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/ 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?
T, 2/6	Read in Lyon, Nix, and Shrum, Chapters 6 and 7 on Engaging Audiences. AND Visit http://chnm.gmu.edu/survey/ Read the “Book Introduction,” paying particular attention to how the authors summarize their findings. Look at the Survey questions and the Statistical Tables.	What do the authors of the GMU survey (website) say about how people think about and use the past? What do the readings suggest about audience expectations for public history? Do their findings ring true to you? Why or why not? How do Lyon, Nix, and Shrum think about audiences? Are they responding to the survey findings? What do you think about the examples they provide?
TH, 2/8	Read FOUR short articles in Blackboard Edward T. Linenthal, “Boundaries of Memory” and “Struggling with History and Memory” Vanessa Van Orden, “Exhibiting Tragedy” Renee Ater “Slavery and its Memory in Public Monuments” THEN, Visit and Explore https://www.911memorial.org/museum Try to identify the mission and explore the history portion here: https://www.911memorial.org/historical-exhibition http://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/memorial.shtml	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 memorial or memorial-museum. What do you remember about your visit? What did you learn? How did you feel?
T, 2/13	NO CLASS Please View the film “Objects and Memory.” The DVD is on reserve in the Library.	As you watch this moving film, think about the ways in which people try to connect with the past and comprehend the present. These ideas will inform your Thursday assignment

By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
TH, 2/15	View the following websites to prepare for class: https://oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/ https://www.nps.gov/flni/index.htm http://pentagonmemorial.org/ https://eji.org/national-lynching-memorial	<u>In class assignment</u> You will work in small groups to examine, compare, and analyze these four memorials AND to identify some key themes from “Objects and Memory”
FRIDAY 2/16	PERSONAL HISTORY PAPER DUE	Email to ddm@umbc.edu by midnight
	<u>UNIT 2: HISTORY OF THE PROFESSION</u>	
T, 2/20	Read in Lyon, Nix, and Shrum, Chapter 4, “Collecting History” and Chapter 5 “Interpreting and Exhibiting History” AND Read in Blackboard: Katie Stringer, “The Legacy of Dime Museums and Freakshows” Steven Miller, “Permanent Collections”	How –and when—did museums in the United States present the past? What kind of experts shaped museums’ historical collections and ideas? What kinds of messages do museums and collections communicate about the past? Why do the origins of collections matter?
TH, 2/22	View these online exhibitions that document the History of the Smithsonian Institution https://siarchives.si.edu/history/general-history	How has the Smithsonian Institution evolved over time? What does it mean to have national museum in the United States? What role should it play?
T, 2/27	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?
TH, 3/1	No Reading Assignment Guest Speaker, Lindsey Baker, Patapsco Heritage Greenway	
T, 3/6	Read selection from Andrew Hurley, <i>Preservation and Public History</i> , in Blackboard.	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?

<u>By this Date</u>	<u>Read This</u>	<u>Be Ready to Talk About This</u>
TH, 3/8	<p>Explore Roadside America website: http://www.roadsideamerica.com/</p> <p>Find at least two or three examples on this site that can help you think critically about the questions I pose here:</p> <p>If you're not sure how to begin, try this: http://www.roadsideamerica.com/map/trip/about</p>	<p><u>In-class assignment:</u> 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?"</p>
T, 3/13	<p>Read THREE short articles in Blackboard Edwin Bearss "The National Park Service and its History Program" Harlan Unrau and G. Frank Williss, "To Preserve the Nation's Past" Robert Righter, "Uses of the Antiquities Act" Explore the Park Service History website https://www.nps.gov/history/index.htm</p>	<p>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?</p>
TH, 3/15	<p>Guest Speaker Sarah Cohen, Social Media Manager, Ford's Theater</p>	
FRIDAY 3/16	DIGITAL SITES COMPARISON PAPER DUE	Email to ddm@umbc.edu by midnight
	<u>SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS WEEK OF 3/20</u>	
	<u>UNIT THREE: SOME BEST PRACTICES and CURRENT ISSUES</u>	
T, 3/27	<p>Read in Lyon, Nix, and Shrum, Chapter 3 "Interpreting the Past Case Study" AND Selections from Freeman Tilden in Blackboard</p>	<p>What are the key ideals and best practices for interpretation? How are projects planned? What are the underlying goals? Are these selections talking about "interpretation" in the same way? What ideas can we pull out to help guide analysis?</p>
TH, 3/29	<p>In class, we will watch films of NPS interpreters</p>	<p>We will analyze what we see in class using the analytical framework we developed in class on Tuesday</p>

By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
T, 4/3	<p>Read Tammy Gordon, "Heritage Commerce and Museal Display" Commerce and Museal Display"</p> <p>AND</p> <p>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>	<p>What does this reading suggest to you about how visitors encounter exhibits and museums? Together, we will pull ideas out of these readings to create an analytical framework for analyzing exhibits and websites.</p>
TH, 4/5	<p>In class, I will share with you some best practices for museum exhibition writing, and we will examine some exhibit labels, making some judgements about their effectiveness.</p>	<p>How do exhibition labels help or hinder learning in museums? What are the qualities of good exhibition labels and what methods and frameworks can you adopt for reviewing their effectiveness?</p>
T, 4/10	<p>Read Selections from James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, editors <i>Slavery and Public History</i> (New York: The New Press, 2006)</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Barbara Chase-Riboud "Slavery as a Problem in Public History</p> <p>Visti and Explore: http://whitneyplantation.com/Read Tammy Gordon, "Heritage</p>	<p>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?</p>
TH, 4/12	<p>Read in Blackboard to prepare for class discussion/debate:</p> <p>Nick Sacco, "America's ever-changing commemorative landscape: a case study at National Statuary Hall" on History@Work</p> <p>Cheryl Jimenez Frei, "Towards Memory, Against Oblivion: A Comparative Perspective on Public Memory, Monuments, and Confronting a Painful Past in the United States and Argentina"</p> <p>Nicholas Fandos, Russell Goldman, Jess Bidgood "Baltimore Mayor Had Statues Removed in 'Best Interest of My City'" <i>The New York Times</i> August 16, 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/us/baltimore-confederate-statues.html</p> <p>Watch "Mitch Landrieu's Speech on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans," Reprinted in <i>The New York Times</i>, Opinion Page, May 23, 2017 (Video of the speech is here: http://wapo.st/2i7oqK9)</p>	<p><u>In Class Assignment: Discussion/Debate</u></p> <p>Continuing and expanding on our class discussion from Tuesday, you will debate the value of historical monuments. Must they be permanent? Are they sites for learning? When and how and who should decide to tear them down? Do you think it is wrong to destroy them?> Do you think there are alternatives to the destruction of monuments?</p>

By this Date	Read This	Be Ready to Talk About This
T, 4/17	Read in Blackboard Valmont Layne, "The District Six Museum" Kevin Sieff, "An African Country Reckons with its History of Slavery" Explore the web page for the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, http://www.sitesofconscience.org/ , especially under "What We Do" tab: "Building a Global Movement," "Truth and Justice," and "Essential Engagement"	Is there a common set of problems in public history that transcend national or cultural difference? Are there problems in public history that are unique and specific to particular nations or cultures? How does exploring public history in a global context impact your understanding of the field? What happens when you consider historic sites and monuments as sites of dialogue? How do these readings help you think about -or re-frame for you-- the politics of memory?
TH, 4/19	NO CLASS	I will be at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Public History. You can follow the conference on twitter #NCPH2018. My handle is @ddmeringolo
SUNDAY 4/22	<u>HISTORY@WORK PAPER DUE</u>	Email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight
T, 4/24	Explore these sites: https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/cultural_diversity/Sand_Creek_Massacre_National_Historic_Site.html https://www.nps.gov/sand/index.htm	In class we will watch films about the history of the Sand Creek Massacre and the creation of Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site
TH, 4/26	No Reading: Guest Speaker, Bethany Nagle, Maryland Historical Society	
T, 5/1	Read in Blackboard, "OutHistory.org: An Experiment" and Linda Shopes, "Building a Community History Project," 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?
TH, 5/3	No Reading, Guest Speaker, Barry Lanman, Oral Historian	
T, 5/8	Read in Blackboard, Steven Burg, "The Future is Here" http://ncph.org/history-at-work/the-future-	How do these articles help you think about the relationship between digital methods and historical research and interpretation? What challenges do they document?

	<p>is-here-public-history-education-and-the-rise-of-digital-history/</p> <p>Jason Heppler and Gabriel Wolfenstein, "Crowdsourcing Digital Public History" http://tah.oah.org/content/crowdsourcing-digital-public-history/</p> <p>Joan Neuberger, "Public and Digital: Doing History Now" https://notevenpast.org/public-and-digital-doing-history-now/</p>	<p>What opportunities?</p>
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<u>By this Date</u>	<u>Read This</u>	<u>Be Ready to Talk About This</u>
TH, 5/10	No Reading Assignment, Guest Speaker, Alice Donahue, Assistant Director, National Electronics Museum	
T, 5/15	<p>Read in Lyon, Nix and Shrum, Chapter 8 "Putting Public History to Work in Your World"</p> <p>Explore educational and employment resources available to you at http://ncph.org/publications-resources/students/ http://ncph.org/jobs/ and http://jobs.aaslh.org/jobseeker/search/results/</p>	<p>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.</p>
SUNDAY May 20	FINAL PAPER DUE	Email to ddm@umbc.edu no later than midnight