

HIST 711: Digital Public History
What is the Role of the Digital Public Historian in Addressing Current Events?
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Instructor:

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Course Background:

Digital Public History is primarily a skill-building course. This semester, you will play with a variety of open source digital tools as well as tools built into the devices you already own in order to establish a professional web presence, organize your research, and develop interpretive products with public goals in mind. This course creates 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.

You do not need to code in order to succeed in this class.

In addition, Digital Public History is designed to explore the “entrepreneurial” aspects of public history practice. Public historians practice history in service to communities, and use historical tools to develop creative and innovative approaches to problems in the field of history, in the realm of place making, or the creation of politically viable community identities.

This semester, our guiding question is: what is the role of digital public history in addressing current events? Our case study is the Baltimore Uprising of 2015. During the first third of the semester, we will explore public historians’ efforts to respond to the Uprising (and related events). We will also examine a variety of historical contexts that might help us arrive at a deeper understanding of the root causes and desired outcomes of the Uprising.

Course Goals:

1. You will take a social entrepreneurial approach to the practice of history: You will work to identify the historical dimensions of a persistent problem. You will consider the appropriate role that public historians might take in addressing this problem. You will read and analyze relevant scholarship. You will develop innovative and creative approaches to this problem.
2. 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
3. You will learn use a variety of open source digital platforms as tools of social entrepreneurship, discovering and creating uses that enable you to craft compelling and relevant historical narratives with text, image, and mapping technologies.
4. You will build a track record of work that can advance your professional goals

Course Assignments:

1. CRITICAL REFLECTION, due by midnight on Sunday March 5
At the end of unit one, post a critical reflection on your blog. This post must (a) demonstrate your evolving understanding of the Uprising, (b) chart a path for your own research project (both in terms of

content and in terms of tools/methods), (c) critique the various digital public history responses to the Uprising and similar events, and (d) reflect on the relevance of public history in the context of contemporary unrest and conflict. IN OTHER WORDS: What do you think are the social, historical, and cultural conditions that led to the Uprising? What contexts would you like to explore for your own research? What digital tools do you plan to use? What specifically would you like to improve about the interpretation of police violence, racism, and protest in Maryland? How –and for what reason—should public historians interpret the Uprising and other contemporary incidents of protest and civil disobedience, particularly as they relate to a history of racism and white privilege?

2. ANNOTATED RESEARCH COLLECTION, due by midnight on Sunday, March 26. Gather a collection of research resources in our shared Zotero Collection. These are the sources –along with those you have encountered in class-- you will use to craft your digital project. Your sources should be a combination of primary and secondary, textual and visual. You may also include audio and/or video sources. Include annotations of your most important materials. Your annotations should accomplish three things: provide enough information to help your classmates; establish the basic framework for a compelling interpretive story –who, what, when, where, why; provide details that can help us place the events of your story in both time and place.
3. COMPLETE WORKING STORY DRAFT, due by midnight on Sunday, April 16. Write a complete working draft for a digital story and assemble the images you can use to help tell your story. The digital story will complement your final digital project, but it will be most effective if it is a self-contained narrative dealing with a single individual or event. Think about it as illustrating a larger point by drawing attention to a single activist or organization.
4. DIGITAL STORY, due as part of your final digital project. We will work on these in class under the direction of Dustin Roddy, video producer from the UMBC New Media Studio.
5. ORAL PRESENTATION IN CLASS, May 11 Oral Presentation. Emphasize the entrepreneurial aspects of your work by addressing this question: How does my proposed digital project interpret the history of racial inequality in Baltimore in an innovative fashion that enables audiences to recognize its potential usefulness for understanding contemporary social, cultural, or political problems, for opening up meaningful dialogue, and/or for fostering empathy?
6. FINAL COMPLETE DIGITAL PROJECT, due by midnight on Sunday May 21

Assessment and Grading:

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 annotated research collection enables me to assess your ability to identify and interpret a variety of appropriate sources and to connect them with our broader project
3. The Digital Story draft and the Final Digital Story together enable 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 before the final project is due.

5. Final projects are assessed for accuracy, responsiveness to the problem we are addressing AND to critiques/comments from your audience, creativity, potential for engaging audiences, and relevance for addressing the problem we identified

HIST 411 (Undergraduate Section) Course of Study Information

This course counts as an upper level American History elective for history majors.

This course has been approved to fulfill requirements for the Entrepreneurship minor.

This course has been approved to fulfill requirements for the Public History minor.

This course **DOES NOT** fulfill any GEP requirements

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:

<u>UNIT ONE: TOOLS AND CONTEXTS</u>			
<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject Matter Reading for Discussion</u>	<u>Tools and Readings for Hands-on Learning</u>	<u>What to Expect</u>
2/2	<p><u>Read in Blackboard:</u> The Syllabus Freddie Gray Basics; Basic Context: How Baltimore Became Baltimore; and Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Executive Summary</p> <p><u>Think About This:</u> What exactly happened in April 2015? What were the major points of conflict and controversy? Did journalists and observers see it as an isolated event or as part of a series of events? Does the Uprising still matter? Why? How? For Whom? What role can/should public historians play in addressing the Uprising? In what specific ways might the Truth and Reconciliation Model help us define our values, mission, and interpretive goals?</p>	<p><u>Read in Blackboard:</u> “Creating Your Web Presence: A Primer for Academics,” <i>Profhacker</i> (February 14, 2011).</p> <p><u>In Class (as necessary) we will:</u> Establish a Reclaim Hosting Account and a WordPress website; Begin writing a biography for your “About Me” page; Establish a Twitter Account; Discuss other social media sites and the process of establishing a professional web presence.</p>	<p>We will spend the first half of class discussing the syllabus, identifying the course subject matter, and beginning to think about the challenge of interpreting recent history. We will spend the second half of class establishing your basic web presence.</p>
2/9	<p><u>Read/Explore in Blackboard:</u> Preserve the Baltimore Uprising; Documenting Ferguson; Sites of Conscience Initiative, “From Brown v. Board to Ferguson;” Sites of Conscience: Dialogues on Race and Policing; The Inclusion Joint Statement on Ferguson</p> <p><u>Think About This:</u> Examine, critique, and analyze the assigned websites. Familiarize yourself with the content: What do they tell you about the ways in which public historians and public history organizations have responded to incidents of police violence, racism, and protest? What do you think about the role the public historians have assumed? What seems to be the goal? What ideas or questions do they open for</p>	<p><u>Read in Blackboard:</u> Dan Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, <i>Doing Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web</i> (2005), Introduction and Chapter 1.</p> <p><u>Prepare for in Class Learning</u> Visit the Zotero website (linked in Blackboard) and Watch the screencast tutorials “Tour of Zotero,” “Quick Bibliographic Demo” and “Getting Stuff into Zotero”</p>	<p>We will spend the first half of class discussing public historians’ response to recent events related to police violence and racial unrest. We will work to identify the professional problems such work poses and we will begin to think about alternatives. We will spend the second half of class playing with Zotero as a tool for collecting and organizing</p>

	you about what YOU can do? Pay attention to your feelings and decide what you are able and willing to do.		research.
2/16	<p>Read: Antero Pietila, <i>Not in My Neighborhood</i></p> <p>Think About This: Identify the main arguments and themes in Pietila’s book. How does his work help us understand the particular roots and experience of racial disharmony and inequality in Baltimore? What questions does this book open up for you about how race in Baltimore has been contextualized and understood? What is the usefulness of this particular context for addressing the Uprising? For creating relevant and useful digital public history projects about the Uprising?</p>	<p>Prepare for In-Class Learning: Visit the Omeka Website (linked in Blackboard)</p> <p>Go to “Documentation” Watch the “Intro to Omeka 2.0” movie Read “Site Planning Tips” Visit the Omeka Showcase to look at Omeka based projects NOTE: As you play with Omeka, you should return here to find answers when you have a question.</p> <p>In class, we will use Flickr. If you do not have a free account, please sign up for one before we meet for class.</p>	We will spend the first half of class discussing the Pietila book with an eye toward identifying interpretive contexts for historicizing the Uprising. We will spend the second half of class loading Omeka onto your Reclaim Hosting site and playing a bit with it as a tool for gathering, documenting, and exhibiting research.
2/23	<p>Read in Blackboard NPR Story on Redlining Digital History Project; Mapping Inequality: Baltimore; Mapping the Lasting Effects of Redlining; Redlining Still Divides Baltimore</p> <p>Think About This: The readings for this week include BOTH content/context AND examples of digital historians’ efforts to put this information on the web. So, think about these readings BOTH in terms of the information and context they provide AND as examples of historians dealing with contemporary issues. How does it complicate or complement our reading of Anthony Pietila’s book? What is new here? What do you think is most important? Do you want to use this particular context in your project? How will it be useful to activists/advocates? What has been done</p>	<p>Prepare for In-Class Learning Explore StoryMap JS and HistoryPin (both linked in Blackboard). Watch Tutorial Videos and Read Documentation and other “How To” Information</p>	We will spend the first half of class discussing redlining and identifying both interpretive contexts AND interpretive methods. We will spend the second half of class playing a bit with two tools that allow you to put content on a map.

	well? Does it reach a “general” public?		
3/1	<p><u>Read in Blackboard</u> Selections from Jessica Elfenbein, Thomas Hollowak, and Elizabeth Nix, editors, <i>Baltimore 68</i> Slate Interview with Elizabeth Nix, “What the Riots of 68 Can, and Can’t, Teach us about Baltimore Today.”</p> <p>Explore the Baltimore 68 Archives, linked in Blackboard</p> <p><u>Think About This:</u> What do YOU think about the relationship between the 68 Riots and the Baltimore Uprising of 2015? What do these readings suggest is the popular understanding of the relationship? Is there an aspect of this history that could be relevant or useful? Are there any comparisons to be made between the Baltimore 68 Archive and the Preserve the Baltimore Uprising Archive? Is there something in this site that you think could be a model for a project related to the Uprising?</p>	<p><u>Prepare for In-Class Learning</u> Explore Timeline JS and Neatline (both linked in Blackboard). Read through documentation and installation information.</p>	<p>We will spend the first half of class discussing the 68 Riots and their potential relevance for context. We will spend the second half of class playing a bit with two timeline tools.</p>
	<u>3/5 ASSIGNMENT DUE: REFLECTIVE BLOG</u>		
	<u>UNIT TWO: PLANNING AND BEST PRACTICES</u>		
3/9	<p><u>Read in Blackboard:</u> Writing History in the Digital Age, Part 6: “Public History on the Web”</p> <p>Sharon Leon Blog Post, “Sharing Lessons Learned”</p> <p><u>Think About This</u> How do these models and “think pieces” help you begin to think about your own digital project? What are the main lessons you wish to take away here?</p>	<p><u>Read in Blackboard</u> Planning a Digital Public History Project Worksheets AND see how these worksheets translate to the development of a single project by reading the Guide, “Building Histories of the National Mall”</p> <p><u>Prepare for In-Class Learning</u> It is not practical for us to achieve ALL of the goals represented on these worksheets. Which ones seem</p>	<p>We will spend the first half of class talking about the reading, paying particular attention to evidence of planning, reception, and relevance. We will spend the second half of class</p>

		most important AND most reasonable to accomplish as part of a class project? Select three you think are most valuable.	developing individualized approaches for planning your final project.
3/16	<p>Read in Blackboard: Sharon M. Leon “Layers and Links: Writing Public History in a Digital Environment;” John Veverka “Interpretive Planning for Exportable Interpretation;”</p> <p>OPTIONAL (also in Blackboard): Read/Review Beverley Serrell’s Exhibit Labels</p> <p>Think about This: This reading will be a “review” for most of you. However, in the context of a digital project, it is even more crucial to approach best practices for interpretation and interpretive writing. What SPECIFIC advice resonates with you? What challenges does this pose for you in terms of your own writing habits and style? What changes will you need to make to your habits and style?</p>	<p>Prepare for In-Class Learning View examples of Digital Stories (linked in blackboard).</p> <p>Think about: The script –pay attention to the style and length of the script as well as the voice of the speaker. The images—pay attention to the use of images. Identify one or two that you think</p>	In class, we will first discuss the reading, pulling out specific writing advice. We will also practice a bit, adopting best practices for interpretive writing to the demands of a digital story and project.
3/23	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK		
	3/26: ASSIGNMENT DUE: ANNOTATED SOURCES		

	<u>UNIT THREE: PROJECT DEVELOPMENT</u>		
3/30	<u>In Class Writing and Project Design</u>	<p><u>Prepare for In-Class Learning</u> Think critically about the research you have assembled. Is there a story that will suit the “digital storytelling format?” Think about how to use images creatively and evocatively. Associate images with themes or ideas. As you are working, think about how best to organize ideas/images/text for the digital tool you have selected for your project. Where will you place your digital story within the larger project?</p>	In class, we will work toward organizing your materials into chunks (as described to the left of this text box) as a way to move toward writing. Our primary focus will be to work towards digital storytelling, but take advantage of the opportunity to begin your writing/organizing of your complete digital project
4/6	<u>IN CLASS WRITING AND PROJECT DESIGN</u>	<p><u>Prepare for In-Class Learning</u> Using the organizational structure you developed last week, begin to draft your digital story text. Make use of the “rules” we identified in class before spring break. Focus on drafting your digital story and identifying images for use with the story. To the extent that this is possible, lay out your digital project, too.</p>	In class we will provide feedback to one another
4/13	<u>IN CLASS WRITING AND PROJECT DESIGN</u>	<p><u>Prepare for In-Class Learning</u> Revise and edit</p>	
	<u>4/16: ASSIGNMENT DUE: COMPLETE DRAFT OF INTERPRETIVE STORY</u>		
4/20	<u>NO CLASS: NCPH</u>		
4/27	<u>Digital Storytelling Workshop with Dustin Roddy</u>		

5/4	<u>Digital Storytelling Workshop with Dustin Roddy</u>		
5/11	<u>Oral Presentations</u>		