

HIS 317
History in Practice: Beyond the Academic Realm
Fall 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00am-12:15pm
Classroom: Moore Humanities Building (MHRA) room 2209

Professor: Dr. Torren L. Gatson

office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 12:30–1:30 and Wednesdays by appointment
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History Department Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/>
History Department Website: <https://his.uncg.edu/>

Prerequisites: None

For Whom Planned: This course is open to all undergraduate students.

Catalog Description: Explores the place of the past in contemporary life and introduces the field of public history: the effort to make history for and with audiences outside of academic spaces.

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 one or two field studies (*field trips**) as well numerous in class visits from public history professionals. 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 making 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; and
6. speak with passion, clarity, and respect over various historical themes.

Teaching Methods:

This course is 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.

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 (*October 2nd*):** 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 October 23rd*):** 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 adds 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 November 8th): 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: select one of the two options. (presented publicly on December 4th, 11:00-12:15): 25%** Must choose one of the two

“Material Culture: Letting objects speak” select an object from a local museum of historic site and create a project (presented with digital technology) that emphasizes the power of objects as public history and cultural importance. Students must use the object to uncover the layered history of its construction, uses, and the diversity of people using that object.

Taking history to the street! Choose a single address on Tate Street or Martin Luther King Blvd., and then use public records, archives, and, perhaps, oral history, to uncover the layers of history hidden there. Then devise creative ways to “bring to the surface” the stories you’ve uncovered, sharing them at a public, open-air history celebration up and down the street. (learning outcomes #1, 4, 5, 6)

- **Informal essay: Reflection on final project (due December 6th by 11:00 a.m.): 5%**
Responding to prompts, reflect on lessons learned from your Tate Street experience. (learning outcome #5)
- **class attendance: 5%**
I will take attendance each class period. You will earn an attendance grade on the

following scale:

0 absences: A+=100, 1 absence: A=97, 2 absences: A-=92, 3 absences: B+=89,
4 absences: B=86, 5 absences: B-=82, 6 absences: C+=79, 7 absences: C=76,
8 absences: C-=76, 9 absences: D+=73, 10 absences: D=70, 11 or more: F

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 scale 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.**

- **class participation: 5%** (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; and collaboration and generosity with your “Course Partner”:

*A Course Partner is a fellow student, assigned to you in the first week of class, who will be your initial contact if you need to acquire notes from a missed lecture, to clarify deadlines, or to address confusion about a course assignment or content. Beyond these minimal mutual services, you and your partner may be in as much or little contact as you like. For instance, you might choose to serve as study partners or peer reviewers of each other’s essays.

Attendance policy: Students need to attend all class meetings and are encouraged to meet individually with the instructor as needed.

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

If things go awry...

...it's your responsibility to tell me—right away. Please give me a chance to help!

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 1/3rd of a letter grade per day (e.g., A to A-).

** In the event that appropriate documentation is presented appropriate (e.g., medical, counselor's, dean's) 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 more healthy and successful.

Required Texts:

Available at the UNCG bookstore:

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

Horton, James Oliver, Lois E. Horton. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, 2008.

E-reserves: In addition to the required text, discussions for each class session will also draw on required primary source readings and articles. All of these materials are on electronic reserve on Canvas.

Note: To access the eReserves, navigate to “MODULES” within the course’s Canvas site. The *first* time you do, you’ll need to log in to Box by clicking <http://box.uncg.edu>. Once you log in to Box, the eReserves will be accessible from within Canvas for the rest of the course.

Semester Outline/ Calendar:**Week 1**

August 14th Brief course overview and review of syllabus

August 16th **No Class**,

first “reader response” will be due the following Tuesday (August 21st)

Week 2

August 21st **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.**

August 23rd **Tools of the Trade: Objects Secondary Sources:**

Lubar Steven. “In the Field,” In *Inside the Lost Museum: Curating, Past and Present* (2017): 1-4, 60-74.

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

Week 3

August 28th **Material Culture “Letting Objects Speak”**

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.

August 30th **Introduction to Museum Studies & Rethinking Museums Impact on the Public**

Week 4

September 4th **Research Strategies, Logistics, and the UNCG Library**

Guest Speaker Lynda Kellam, Data Services and Government Information Librarian

September 6th **Museums and Objects, like Curators, tell Amazing Stories**

Guest Speaker Daniel Ackerman, Curator at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

Week 5

September 11th Introduction to archives and libraries and repositories

September 13th **Uncovering UNCG’s Cultural and Commemorative Landscape in the Archives *Field trip: Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, 2nd floor, UNCG Jackson Library, 222B***

Week 6

September 18th **Keeping Records Makes History**

Guest speaker Douglass “Biff” Hollingsworth, archivist at the Southern Historical Collection at Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

September 20th **An Introduction to Historic Preservation**

Week 7

September 25th **“Living Two Lives” Historic Sites, Interpreters, and Guides**

Guest Speakers: Mark Fansworth, assistant site manager Horne Creek Farm

September 27th **Ideals of Race Etched in Stone: 1920s Memorial Mania Colonial Williamsburg, Greenfield Village, and Living History**

Gable, Eric and Richard Handler. “Public History, Private Memory: Notes from the Ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S.A.,” In *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities* (2007): 47-62.

Week 8

October 2nd **MID TERM EXAM**

October 4th **No Class**

Week 9

October 9th **No Class, Fall Break**

October 11th **Field trip: Blandwood Mansion, 447 West Washington St., Greensboro**

Week 10

October 16th **Laws, Ethics & Public History Procedure**

October 18th Overview of primary Source Project

Week 11

October 23rd **Primary Source project** (Due in class)

October 25th **No Class**

Week 12

October 30th **An Introduction to Oral History**

November 1st Oral History exercise

Week 13

November 6th **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.

November 8th **Review essay: The Public Past (Due in class)**

Week 14

November 13th **Impact of Public History on the Community and in Public Policy**

Guest Speaker: Ted Landsmark, Director of the Kitty & Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University.

November 15th Final presentation discussion and in class work session

Week 15

November 20th no class in preparation for final project

November 22nd **No Class, Thanksgiving**

Week 16

November 27th **LAST DAY OF CLASS, Final Presentations**