

This syllabus is dynamic and is subject to change

**Public History: Theory, Method, and Practice
HIST 506: 301 (3 credits) – Spring 2022**

**Mondays & Thursdays, 12:10-1:30pm
Scott Hall 116**

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Office Hours: Thursdays 2pm-4pm, and by appointment (email me to schedule)

Course Description

For students completing the Certificate in Public History, this course serves as the core methodological and theoretical training to support entrance into the discipline.

How do we know what we know about history? How do the histories that we learn in the classroom differ from those we learn on the street, in the museum, and in government documents? How do public historians grapple with the Confederate monument debate? Why do we preserve historic buildings? How does one explain the history of the women's suffrage movement in a 100-word statement on a plaque in a town square in a way that could be understood by an eight year old? Does the public consume historical information differently than scholars and students? *Are* scholars and students distinct from the public? Who controls the narratives of our histories, and what does that mean for who is and is not included in our retellings of the past? How should we account for power and absences in history?

Studying public history involves considering these questions and exploring a variety of possible answers through the lens of the theory and practice of the field. By investigating a variety of public history institutions, from archives to museums to websites to parks and beyond, we consider different methodologies for sharing historical information, how various practitioners craft and disseminate historical narratives, and why. This course will explore a variety of definitions of the term "histories" as they exist within and without academia. Learning the intellectual and practical tools for creating and sharing history enhances community and civic engagement and shapes shared cultural memory.

Each semester, this course is organized around a community history project of some sort. For Spring 2022, we are hoping to collaborate with the Burlington County Prison Museum, Lyceum & Parks Departments to curate an exhibit about histories of poverty and incarceration.

Theory & Method: In this course, students will read academic, professional, and popular discussions of history and public history that will allow us to explore what it means to disseminate historical knowledge in different forums and mediums, and how to identify different constituencies and take into consideration the audiences receiving that knowledge. In this course, students will be challenged to think critically about what sorts of histories they've internalized as participants in public discourse, how those narratives were constructed, and how that construction and impact can deepen our understanding of historical facts and fictions. In doing so, students will engage with public dialogues surrounding complex and challenging histories in order to identify how historical knowledge on these subjects has been created, disseminated, and received.

Practice: This course provides an opportunity to utilize the narrative-creation and analytical skills students will have acquired in other humanities courses in application in a public setting, as many graduates in history and related disciplines go on to do. Students in this course will take on the role of aspiring public historian in order to explore the variety of communication styles, analytical approaches, and research directions that make it possible to disseminate historical information in a wide variety of contexts. Through class projects and hands-on experience, including methodological training and site visits, this course serves as a window into public history as a profession as well as a discipline, and will provide an overview of different methods utilized in a variety of public history careers – from archives to digital production to museums and libraries.

Texts

There are no required textbooks for this class. Articles, chapters, and other reading material, including blog posts, websites, and listening/viewing material such as podcasts/documentaries, will be uploaded to or linked on Canvas under Resources.

Assignment and Grading Overview

Additional information about each assignment will be provided throughout the course.

Reading engagement and participation in class discussions – 15%

Public history is an active discipline that relies on frequent and open communication and interpersonal engagement, and the structure of this course reflects this. Students will have ample opportunities to participate in discussions and engage with classroom activities and active participation will be encouraged.

Two site visit responses/exhibit reviews – 15% each (30% total)

Students will review two virtual tours, digital exhibits, or historic sites' interpretation/representation of historical content. Students will write response essays linking what was encountered at the site with the theory, method, and practice covered in the coursework, analyzing the methodologies deployed by the site/exhibit in keeping with public history praxis. At least one of these essays will be based off of an in-class site visit.

Applied public history project – 35%

Each semester, this course is organized around a community history project of some sort. For Spring 2022, we are hoping to collaborate with the Burlington County Prison Museum, Lyceum & Parks Departments to curate an exhibit about histories of poverty and incarceration. Students will be placed in collaborative groups, and assigned to work on components of the larger class project. The assignments for this project will be broken down into sections throughout the semester and students will receive both individual and group grades so that each student's contributions to the project are recognized and ensure groupwork fairness. We will have hands-on, in-class project work time, transparent deadlines and rubrics for this work. Public history work is about process over product – so the work we do collectively and the collaborative elements of our work are emphasized in this course.

Final essay - 20%

A thoughtful written response to one of three assigned questions, considering theoretical, methodological, and practical concerns in the field of public history. You must include direct

references to assigned readings, as well as references to specific class discussions and relevant case studies (e.g. museum exhibits, historic sites, controversies, etc.). You should not need to consult any outside materials to complete this essay. Approximately 2000 words. Questions provided in advance.

Grading Scale

- A: 92-100
- B+: 87-91
- B: 81-86
- C+: 77-80
- C: 70-76
- D: 60-69
- F: 0-59

Attendance & Other Class Policies

Students must check their email and other University digital course tools (including Canvas) regularly in order to stay up to date with class information, syllabus adjustments, assignments, etc.

Participation is essential in this course. Participation involves careful reading, attentive listening, thoughtful notetaking, writing, asking questions, completing assignments, and contacting the instructor with any questions. Sending emails and attending office hours also demonstrates active course participation.

Please let me know how I can accommodate your learning styles in how we approach participation grading.

If you have to miss any classwork due to illness, an emergency, or for another excused reason, please notify the instructor via email.

Late or make-up work will be accepted in situations where the student has an excused absence. All other late assignments will receive a 10% grade deduction for each day the assignment is late.

If a student needs to miss class or adjust their completion of coursework for religious observation, the instructor should be notified in advance and accommodations will be made.

Special Accommodation Requests

Requests for disability or other special accommodation should be made to the instructor within the first two weeks of class, if possible. Official procedures for doing so are outlined by the Office of Disability Services here: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>.

Contacting the Professor

I am available during office hours each week and by appointment. I check email regularly and will almost always respond within one business day. In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), please use your Rutgers ScarletMail account (and not a personal email account) to communicate with me. As the Rutgers University Ethics and Compliance webpage states, "All Rutgers University students, staff, and instructors are assigned a university managed email account to be utilized for purposes of official correspondence." Please contact me with any questions or concerns as soon as they arise. I am always happy to help students with the course material and with their writing.

Academic Integrity Policy

Consult, don't plagiarize -- document your research! For tips about how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism.

All students are expected to adhere to the principles of academic integrity laid out by the university here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>. Plagiarism will be addressed to the fullest extent in accordance with University policy.

By participating in the coursework required for this course, you are bound to adhere to the following **honor pledge**: *"On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment)."*

Course Schedule & Reading Assignments

All readings are available via Resources and/or Pages on Canvas. Most are PDFs, but some are selected chapters from Ebooks accessible via Rutgers Libraries. Readings should be done prior to the date listed on the syllabus. Please come to class ready to discuss the listed materials (with the text and your notes in hand).

We'll collectively work through different methods, case studies, and debates in public history praxis with as many experiential, hands-on learning opportunities as possible.

This syllabus is dynamic, and may evolve with the direction of the course. If/when changes are made, students will be made aware of adjustments in a timely fashion. For most up to date information, refer to the electronic version of the syllabus on Canvas instead of a printed version.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This class meets twice per week, on Mondays and Thursdays. Mondays will be our days for lectures, theory, and reading discussions. Thursdays will be our days for hands-on experiential learning opportunities, activities, project work, site visits, exhibition viewing, etc. As such, you'll be assigned articles and book chapters to read in advance of Monday classes, and you may be asked to bring your laptop or review some other material, such as a digital exhibit or news article, before Thursday classes.

Week 1

Defining public history

Read: Lyon, Nix, and Shrum, Chapter 1, *Introducing Public History*

Listen: History & Historians in the Public, Ben Franklin's World podcast episode featuring Dr. Lonnie Bunch (Smithsonian Director)

Week 2

Archives & knowledge

For Monday, read: Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, Preface & Chapters 1-3 (ebook available free through Rutgers Libraries; link on Canvas Pages)

In class on Thursday, we will do: Finding aid activity

Week 3

Artifacts & curation

For Monday, read:

Lubar, "Why Collect?", *Inside the Lost Museum*

Lubar, "Curator as Auteur," *The Public Historian* (36) 1, February 2014, pp: 71-76

In class on Thursday, we will do: Material culture activity

Week 4

Place & space

For Monday, read:

McClellan, "Place-based epistemology: This is your brain on historic sites"

Hayden, "Urban Memory and Preservation," *Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*

In class on Thursday, we will do: First site visit (response assignment due one week later)

Week 5

Preservation

For Monday, read:

Mason, *Once and Future New York : Historic Preservation and the Modern City*, Ch. 1 - Memory Sites (ebook available free through Rutgers libraries; link on Canvas Pages)

Frey, "Why Historic Preservation Needs a New Approach", *City Lab*

In class on Thursday, we will do: National Register activity

Week 6

Community engagement

For Monday, read:

Sandul, "Of Sharing Authority and Historic Blocs: Toward New Historiographies of Counter-Hegemony and Community in Nacogdoches, East Texas," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 41 No. 3, August 2019; (pp. 91-112)

Russell-Ciardi, "The Museum as a Democracy-Building Institution: Reflections on the Shared Journeys Program at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 30 No. 1, February 2008; (pp. 39-52)

In class on Thursday, we will do: Second site visit (response assignment due one week later)

Week 7

Memorials/monuments

For Monday, read:

Lubar, "Leave the Durham memorial on the ground"

Excerpts from Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-century America*

In class on Thursday, we will do: Monument Lab Field Trip

Week 8

Commemoration

For Monday, read and listen: Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, Chapter 4

Ford's Theatre talk by Dr. Rachel Green & Kevin Levin

(optional) BackStory podcast episode "Contested Landscape: The Battle over Confederate Monuments" #0198, 06.16.17 and/or "Charlottesville: Our Town, Our Country, #0207, 08.18.17

In class on Thursday, we will do: applied public history project work

Week 9

Interpretation

For Monday, read:

Halifax, "McLeod Plantation Historic Site: Sowing Truth and Change," *The Public Historian* (2018)

Biehl & Boice, "What Jack Wore: Incorporating the history of enslaved people at a Pennsylvania farmstead," *History@Work*, 2019

Biggs, "Re-Designing Historic Space: Corrective Landscape Planning at Stagville State Historic Site," *History@Work*, 2020

In class on Thursday, we will do: applied public history project work

Week 10 – Spring Recess

Week 11

Living History

For Monday, read and watch:

Tyson and Dungey, "Ask a Slave" and Interpreting Race on Public History's Front Line: Interview with Azie Mira Dungey," *The Public Historian* 36 (2014): 36-60

Putman, "Occupied Philadelphia: An Experiment in Urban Living History", *The Public Historian* 41, no. 3 (2019), 31-48

An episode of "Ask a Slave" web series

In class on Thursday, we will do: applied public history project work

Week 12

Ethics in public humanities

For Monday, read:

McManamon, "Repatriation in the USA: A Decade of Federal Agency Activities under NAGPRA" chapter in *The Dead and Their Possessions: Repatriation in Principle, Policy, and Practice*

Colwell, "Can Repatriation Heal the Wounds of History?", *The Public Historian* 41, no. 1 (2019), 90–110.

In class on Thursday, we will do: applied public history project work

Week 13 Final projects due

Genealogy & Family History

For Monday, read:

de Groot, "Ancestry.com and the Evolving Nature of Historical Information Companies, The Public Historian", *The Public Historian* 42, no. 1 (2020), 8-28.

Lonetree, "A Heritage of Resilience: Ho-Chunk Family Photographs in the Visual Archive," *The Public Historian* 41, no. 1 (2019), 34–50.

In class on Thursday, we will do: applied public history project work

Week 14

Applied public history projects due Monday

Natural History & Historical Landscapes

For Thursday, read:

Harmon, "Shenandoah National Park and the Racialization of Progress," *Contested Commemoration in U.S. History: Diverging Public Interpretations (ebook available free through Rutgers Libraries; link on Canvas Pages)*

Lockhart, "The Trouble with Wilderness" Education in the National Park Service: The Case of the Lost Cattle Mounts of Congaree, *The Public Historian* (2006) 28 (2): 11–30.

Week 15

Global public history

For Monday, read:

Crooke, "Confronting a Troubled History: which past in Northern Ireland's museums?", *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 7, no. 2 (2001), pp. 119-136

Final Essay due Monday, May 2 by 11:59pm