

**NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC HISTORY I

G57.1750

FALL 2009

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 3-5 and By Appointment

Purpose

Provide an introductory overview to the public history field in its diverse venues and manifestations.

Consider the ways in which historians have engaged various publics, with particular emphasis on public constructions of history.

Dissect such major theoretical constructs in the field as memory, heritage, community, and commemoration.

Discuss current issues, trends, and theories that continue to change the nature of public history.

Gain a basic understanding of the issues surrounding such public history work as museum exhibits, house and site interpretations, historical societies, historic preservation, and digital projects.

Supplement the theoretical component of the course with a variety of assignments that analyze the ways in which public historians carry out their work and their responsibilities.

Assignments

Write a reflective essay (3-4 pages) concerning the history of some specific place or locality that you find particularly meaningful. Due: September 21.

Visit a local historical society (the New-York Historical Society, Brooklyn Historical Society, Bronx Historical Society, and Staten Island Historical Society are all possibilities in New York City), explore its web presence, examine its programming, and prepare to discuss it in class. Due: September 28.

Post two discussion questions to Blackboard for the following classes: October 5, November 2, December 7.

Write a 3-4 page paper that discusses the 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina web sites, examining the roles of public historians in documenting national tragedies and disasters. Due: October 12.

Find a local history website that you consider especially effective and post a link to blackboard, along with two or three sentences explaining why you like it. Due: the night before the October 19 class.

Research the history of a particular place, building, block or other significant space and prepare a brief (500 word) guide that would introduce unfamiliar visitors to the site. Include illustrations. Due: October 26.

Follow the threads on Anthony Clark's blog (<http://www.anthony-clark.com>) concerning presidential libraries over the past year, and construct a blog post/response of your own. Due: November 9.

Write a 500-word review of an exhibit at: Due: November 16.

Write a 3-4 page paper that analyzes a particular historic house or site, focusing on the history, major accomplishments, issues, and programming challenges that the site faces. Due: November 23.

Select an issue that the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation has highlighted, and write a one-page (250 word) reaction that you post to Blackboard. Due: November 30.

Write a final synthetic essay that draws together readings, themes, and assignments from the course to answer an historical question about public history. I will distribute three possible questions on December 7, and you will have one week to select one and construct an 8-10 page essay. Final paper due on: December 14.

Assignment Time Line

September 21 – 3-4 page reflective essay or meditation concerning the history of some specific place or locality that you find meaningful.

September 28 – local historical society visit and class discussion.

October 5 – post discussion questions to blackboard.

October 12 – 3-4 page reflective paper that discusses the 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina web sites, examining the roles of public historians in documenting national tragedies.

October 19 – find a local history website that you consider especially effective and post a link to blackboard, along with two or three sentences explaining why you like it..

October 26 -- Research the history of a particular place, building, block or other significant space and prepare a brief (500 word) guide that would introduce unfamiliar visitors to the site. Include illustrations.

November 2 – post discussion questions to blackboard.

November 9 – follow the threads on Anthony Clark's blog (<http://www.anthony-clark.com>) concerning presidential libraries over the past year, and construct a blog post/response of your own.

November 16 – write a 500-word exhibit review of an historical exhibit, using the guidelines established by *The Public Historian*.

November 23 -- 3-4 page paper that analyzes a historic house or site, focusing on history, major accomplishments, issues, and programming challenges.

November 30 – select an issue that the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation has highlighted, and write a one-page (250 word) reaction that you post to Blackboard.

December 7 – post discussion questions to blackboard.

December 14 – 8-10 page essay due.

Classroom and Grading Policy

There will be no incompletes in the course.

If you are absent for a class session, you will be responsible for submitting a 4-5 page paper that analyzes the readings for that week, due the following class session.

Assignments are due by the end of class on the dates listed above. They may be submitted electronically or (in the case of papers) turned in at the end of class.

Blackboard postings should be submitted by midnight on Tuesday (the night before class).

Please observe page limits, pay attention to comments on written work, and take comments into consideration.

Grades are determined according to the following criteria: Class Participation and Blackboard Postings (20%); reflective essay concerning local history (10%); reflective paper concerning 9/11 and Katrina memory projects (10%); paper concerning history of a particular place (10%); exhibit review (10%); paper concerning historic house in New York City (10%); final synthetic essay (30%).

SEPTEMBER 14 - INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

There are several public history resources that all students should be familiar with.

The National Council on Public History constitutes the major professional association that engages most public historians. The web site: <http://www.ncph.org>, contains a wealth of information concerning job opportunities, professional conferences and workshops, publications and other resources. Students should also subscribe to the H-Public listserv (a discussion group), which provides similar services.

The Public History Resource Center: <http://www.publichistory.org>, also attempts to provide a center that promotes networking, scholarship, information, and education in the public history field. It grew out of a student project at the University of Maryland and the site contains extremely informative data about the field generally.

Other more specialized web sites also exist that concern various aspects of the public history movement. Historic preservation students at several universities banded together to establish PreserveNet in 1994, which is based at Cornell University and which contains news, job postings, calls for advocacy and internship opportunities for preservationists. This site can be accessed at: <http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu>.

The American Association for State and Local History, which seceded from the American Historical Association in 1940, constitutes the organization of choice for many local historians, historic site managers, and history museum workers. It also publishes numerous handy how-to-do-it manuals and can be found at: <http://www.aaslh.org>.

The Society of American Archivists, which also broke away from the American Historical Association in 1936, serves as the principal North American organization for the archival profession at: <http://www.archivists.org>.

The Oral History Association, established in 1966, maintains a consciously international focus and generates scholarship concerning the relationship between human memory and history. It publishes a journal, *Oral History Review*, operates the H-Oral listserv, and has an informative web site at: <http://alpha.dickinson.edu/oha/>.

The Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, founded by the late Roy Rosenzweig and administered by Daniel Cohen, constitutes the principal source of information for historians interested in digital projects and also operates the History News Network. This excellent resource is located at: <http://www.chnm.gmu.edu>.

The National Coalition for History is a Washington-based, non-profit educational organization that provides leadership in history-related advocacy, acting as a clearinghouse for news and information concerning history legislation and political developments. All students should read its updates and subscribe to its RSS feed. Information concerning the organization may be found at: <http://www.historycoalition.org>.

SEPTEMBER 21 - PASTKEEPERS AND TRADITIONS

Required Readings: Judith Richardson, *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) (BOOK);

Washington Irving, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (GOOGLE BOOKS);

Carol Kammen, "Local History's Past," in *On Doing Local History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), pp. 11-41 (BLACKBOARD);

David J. Russo, "The New England Pioneers," in *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 27-42 (BLACKBOARD);

ASSIGNMENT: Write a 3-4 page reflective essay or meditation concerning the history of some specific place or locality that you find meaningful.

SEPTEMBER 28 - HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Required Readings: Catherine M. Lewis, *The Changing Face of Public History: The Chicago Historical Society and the Transformation of an American Museum* (DeKalb: University of Illinois Press, 2005) (BOOK);

Sally F. Griffith, *Serving History in a Changing World: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), Epilogue, "The Predicament of Early Nineteenth-Century Institutions in a Late Twentieth-Century World" (BLACKBOARD)

ASSIGNMENT: Visit a local historical society (the New-York Historical Society, Brooklyn Historical Society, Bronx Historical Society, and Staten Island Historical Society are all possibilities in New York City), explore its web presence, examine its programming, and prepare to discuss it in class.

OCTOBER 5 - PROFESSIONAL HISTORY AND PUBLIC HISTORY

Required Readings: Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) (BOOK);

Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* (January 1932), pp. 221-236, XXXVII, 2 (E-JOURNAL);

G. Wesley Johnson, "Editor's Preface," *Public Historian* (Autumn 1978), I:1, pp. 4-10 (E-JOURNAL);

Robert Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects," *Public Historian* (Autumn 1978), I:1, pp. 16-28 (E-JOURNAL);

Ronald J. Grele, "Whose History? Whose Public? What is the Goal of a Public Historian?" *Public Historian* (Winter 1981), pp. 40-48 (E-JOURNAL);

Catherine T. Corbett and Howard S. (Dick) Miller, "A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry," *Public Historian* (February 2006) 28:1, pp. 15-38 (E-JOURNAL)

OCTOBER 12 - PUBLIC HISTORY AND TRAGIC LANDSCAPES

Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003) (BOOK);

The September 11 Digital Archive at the following URL:
<http://www.911digitalarchive.org>

Hurricane Digital Memory Bank at the following URL:
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org>

ASSIGNMENT: Write a reflective essay (3-4 pages) examining the two web sites that discusses the interplay of history and commemoration in documenting national tragedies, considering some of the theoretical points discussed in Foote.

OCTOBER 19 - PROFESSIONAL HISTORY/LOCAL MEMORY

David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001) (BOOK);

Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes As Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), Chapter 2, "Urban Landscape History: The Sense of Place and the Politics of Space," (BLACKBOARD);

Joseph Anthony Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) "Introduction: The Concept and the Practitioners of Local History" and "Chapter One: A Place Called Home" (E-BOOK);

Examine the City Lore web site (<http://www.citylore.org>), especially focusing on the “Place Matters” section, which includes several walking tours, a census of places, and various other educational materials; and the PhilaPlace web site (<http://www.philaplace.org>)

Find a local history website that you consider especially effective and post a link to blackboard, along with two or three sentences explaining why you like it. (Due by 10:00 the night before class).

OCTOBER 26 - WALKING TOURS/PLACE DESCRIPTIONS

Take a walking tour of some New York City neighborhood or place. There are numerous possibilities listed in the *New York Times*, and a really popular one is the “Big Onion Tours,” which were established by graduate students at Columbia. Be prepared to discuss your experiences in class.

ASSIGNMENT: Research the history of a particular place, building, block or other significant space and prepare a brief (500 word) guide that would introduce unfamiliar visitors to the site. Include illustrations.

NOVEMBER 2 - HISTORIC SITES

Required Reading: Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006) (BOOK);

“Sites of Conscience: Opening Historic Sites for Civic Dialogue,” *Public Historian* (February 2008), articles by Secenko and Russell-Ciardi; Madikida, Segal, and van den Berg; Baiesi, Gigli, Monicelli, and Pellizzoli; Russell-Ciardi; Layne; Gumble; and Munk, pp. 9-79 (E-JOURNAL)

NOVEMBER 9 - PRESIDENTIAL MEMORY

Required Readings: Phillip G. Payne, *Dead Last: The Public Memory of Warren G. Harding’s Scandalous Legacy* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009) (BOOK);

Benjamin Hufbauer, “Reinventing the Presidential Library: The New Displays at the Truman Museum,” in *Presidential Temples* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), pp. 139-175 (BLACKBOARD);

Sharon K. Fawcett, "Presidential Libraries: A View from the Center," *Public Historian* (28:3, Summer 2006), pp. 13-36 (E-JOURNAL);

Bruce P. Montgomery, "Presidential Materials: Politics and the Presidential Records Act," *American Archivist* (Spring/Summer 2003), pp. 102-138 (E-JOURNAL)

Follow the threads on Anthony Clark's blog (<http://www.anthony-clark.com>) concerning presidential libraries over the past several months, and construct a blog post/response of your own. (Due by 10:00 the night before class).

NOVEMBER 16 - EXHIBITING CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY

Required Reading: James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The Free Press, 2006) (BOOK);

Mary Nolan, "The Politics of Memory in the Bonn and Berlin Republics," and Teresa Meade, "Holding the Junta Accountable: Chile's 'Sitios de Memoria' and the History of Torture, Disappearance, and Death" in Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer, eds., *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) (BLACKBOARD)

ASSIGNMENT: Visit and write a 500-word review of a history-related exhibit that you have attended using the *Public Historian* Guidelines.

NOVEMBER 23 - PUBLIC HISTORY PLACE REVIEWS

Required Reading: Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2002) (BOOK).

ASSIGNMENT: Research and visit a historic house or site in New York City or the surrounding environs. You might select on that is supported by the Historic House Trust (see the following URL: <http://www.historichousetrust.org>) and report (3-4 pages) on the major accomplishments, issues, and programming challenges that face each house and prepare a class presentation based on your experience.

NOVEMBER 30 - THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION MOVEMENT

Required Reading: Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating A Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997) (BOOK);

Anthony C. Wood, "The Village People," in *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks*, pp. 167-196 (BLACKBOARD);

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (<http://www.gvshp.org>) web site. Read through current and past issues of the newsletter, and examine especially the recent controversies surrounding Greenwich Village development.

DECEMBER 7 - BLURRING GENRES

Required Reading: Jill Lepore and Jane Kamensky, *Blindspot: A Novel* (2008);

Andrew R.L. Clayton, "Insufficient Woe: Sense and Sensibility in Writing Nineteenth-Century History," *Reviews in American History* (31:3, 2003), pp. 331-341 (E-JOURNAL);

James Goodman, "For the Love of Stories," *Reviews in American History* (26:1, 1998), pp. 255-274;

Familiarize yourself with the web site: <http://dohistory.org>, which is based on *A Midwife's Tale*, the Pulitzer-Prize winning book by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich.

DECEMBER 14 - WRAP-UP/ETHICAL ISSUES

"Roundtable: Ethics in Practice," articles by Conard, Blatti, Jimerson, Babaian, Newell, Colton, Neufeld, Linenthal," *Public Historian* (28:1), 2006, pp. 75-129 (E-JOURNAL)