What is Public History?

Public history is an interdisciplinary form of scholarship practiced as public service. Public historians help create historical knowledge 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.1

Course Description

This course introduces the practical considerations and theoretical issues concerning the public management, ownership, and interpretation of historical resources. Emphasis is placed on issues such as resource management policy, museum practice, historical preservation, historical society governance, digital history, and other facets of the dissemination of public memory. We will find out who manages our shared heritage and determine how historians can best contribute to the formulation and preservation of a shared past.

During fall 2013, this course will consider all of these issues through the lens of a public history project, co-sponsored with the Tyler School of Art’s Temple Contemporary Gallery, titled A Funeral for a Home. Students will compile oral histories and produce digital content supporting a public funeral for a north Philadelphia home slated for demolition. Our project liaison, to whom you can address questions regarding the project, is Patrick Grossi.

Course Objectives

- Identify key themes and issues bearing on the practice of public history.
- Become familiar with major scholarship concerning public history.
- Understand multiple facets of public history practice including organizational hierarchies.
- Meet public history professionals practicing in Philadelphia and beyond.
- Develop project management and public presentation skills.
- Learn to collaborate with project partners.
- Explore new media solutions to common public history problems.

Course Requirements:

Readings: Course readings will include a variety of books, essays, and audiovisual documents. The following books will be read in full and therefore must be purchased. All other documents will be made available in class.

1 “What is Public History?” compliments of Denise Meringolo.


*User Accounts:* Our collaborative work will require that all students have active user accounts with a variety of online utilities. A Google account is absolutely necessary. Go [here](#) to create one. Some of the applications we will use will include Blogger, Dropbox, Google Drive, and Facebook.

**Course Grade:**

Students will be assessed through weekly writing assignments, short papers, class participation, and contributions to a semester-long group project. Failure to complete *all* assignments will translate into a grade of F for the course. Course grades will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Course Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscribe to H-Public</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0-59 = F[ail]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Blog</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60-69 = D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Interview Prep</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70-79 = C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Assets</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80-89 = B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Blog</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>...where...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90-100 = A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Assessment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Possible Points:</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Policies

Attendance: You must attend class to succeed in this course. Successful completion of assignments will require consideration of material presented during course lectures and discussion that may not necessarily be available in weekly reading assignments. Absence due to illness still means that you are not participating in class. Students with an emergency (e.g., death in the family, severe illness, automobile accident) may have an excused absence, but if such absences amount to more than 20% of class hours for the semester, students should consider the possibility of withdrawal from the class. I take roll to determine whether you have been physically present; your participation reveals whether you have been mentally present.

Internet Accessibility: This class has numerous assignments to be completed on the internet that will require a fast connection (working with internet based video and audio-files). These assignments can be completed in any campus computer lab and on any computer in a networked dormitory, but they cannot be completed on computers with a dial-up modem connection.

Missed Assignments: Note carefully the dates for quizzes, tests, papers, and the final examination as listed on this syllabus. If you miss a quiz, test, or exam or fail to submit an assignment when due without a valid excuse (illness, family emergency), you will receive a zero for this test. It is your responsibility to inform the instructor of your absence BEFORE the scheduled test.

Religious Holidays: If you will be observing any religious holidays this semester which will prevent you from attending a regularly scheduled class or interfere with fulfilling any course requirement, your instructor will offer you an opportunity to make up the class or course requirement if you make arrangements by informing your instructor of the dates of your religious holidays within two weeks of the beginning of the semester (or three days before any holidays which fall within the first two weeks of class).

Portable Electronic Devices: Cell phones, pagers, and beepers must be turned off during class except with special permission from your instructor.

Course Withdraw: Students are responsible for officially withdrawing from classes they do not plan to complete. If you stop attending a class but remain on the class roster, you may receive an ‘F’ in the course. If you receive federal or state financial aid, you may also be required to repay those benefits.

Disability Statement: This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.

Policy on Academic Honesty: Temple University believes strongly in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited. Essential to intellectual growth is the development of independent thought and a respect for the thoughts of others. The prohibition against plagiarism and cheating is intended to foster this independence and respect.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, or another person's assistance. Normally, all work done for course—papers, examinations, homework exercises, laboratory reports, oral presentations—is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources—journals, books, or other media—these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. It is the instructor's responsibility to indicate the appropriate manner of citation. Everything used from other sources—suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language—must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism.
Academic cheating is, generally, the thwarting or breaking of the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of the individual courses. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor's approval, work in one course which was done for another; helping others to plagiarize or cheat from one's own or another's work; or actually doing the work of another person.

Students must assume that all graded assignments, quizzes, and tests are to be completed individually unless otherwise noted in writing in this syllabus. I reserve the right to refer any cases of suspected plagiarism or cheating to the University Disciplinary Committee; I also reserve the right to assign a grade of "F" for the given paper, quiz or test.

Controversial Subject Matter: In this class we will be discussing subject matter that some students may consider controversial. Some students may find some of the readings and/or comments in class (or in discussion conducted through an online forum) very challenging. Our purpose in this class is to explore this subject matter deeply and consider multiple perspectives and arguments. Students are expected to listen to the instructor and to one another respectfully, but of course are free to disagree, respectfully, with views expressed in class, in electronic discussions, or in readings.

Important Dates:

Fall semester begin, Monday, August 26
Last day to drop a course, Monday, September 9
Last day to withdraw from graduate & undergraduate courses, Tuesday, October 22
Thanksgiving recess, November 28- December 1
Weekday classes end, Wednesday, December 4
Final examinations, December 9-14
INTRODUCTION

Aug. 28: What is Public History?

Watch "Lisa the Iconoclast," *The Simpsons*

Sept. 4: Public History in Practice

Meet with Rob Blackson and Sarah Biemiller, *A Funeral for a Home* project directors (location TBA).

*A Funeral for a Home* project narrative and grant proposal.

** Subscribe to H-Public

Sept. 11: Public History in Theory

Carolyn Kitch, *Pennsylvania in Public Memory*
Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*
David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory.”

**Post to Reading Blog

A PUBLIC HISTORIAN’S TOOL KIT

Sept. 18: Oral History


**Post to Reading Blog

Sept. 25: Understanding Place

Meet with Melissa Jest, Neighborhood Preservation Program Coordinator, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.

Hurley, *Beyond Preservation.*
Haydn, “I: Claiming Urban Landscapes as Public History,” in *The Power of Place.*

**Post to Reading Blog
Oct. 2:  Digitizing the Past

Digital skills workshop with Dana Dorman, Digital Project Manager, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (location TBA).

**Submit Pre-Interview Preparation

Oct. 9: Oral History Workshop

Come prepared to interview one another and to discuss strategy for Funeral interviews (which should take place before October 30).

THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE

Oct. 16:  Exhibiting History

Meet with Polly McKenna-Kress, Associate Professor, Chair of Museum Studies, and Director of Museum Exhibition Planning and Design, the University of the Arts.

McKenna-Kress, *Creating Exhibitions.*

**Post to Reading Blog

Oct. 23:  Locating Difficult Pasts

Visit the Presidents’ House, 524-30 Market Street.

Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*
Horton and Horton, *Slavery and Public History*

**Post to Reading Blog

Oct. 30: Interview Debrief

Come prepared to discuss your interview with the class.

**Submit interview summary.

Nov. 6:  No Class

Everyone is welcome to attend *Scholarship and Partnerships: The State of History in the National Parks*

Nov. 13:  Public History as Labor

Tyson, *Wages of History.*

**Submit Project Blog
**Post to Reading Blog

Nov. 20: Looking Forward
Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, “Arts, Culture, and Economic Prosperity in Greater Philadelphia”
_____, “2011 Portfolio”

**Post to Reading Blog**

Nov. 27: No class

Dec. 4: Final Presentations

**Submit Oral History**

**Submit Project Assessment, due December 9**
H-Public/Introduction (2 points)—Due September 7

Visit and subscribe to H-Public at http://www.h-net.org/~public/. H-Public is one of numerous topical and professional email lists organized by H-Net Humanities & Social Sciences OnLine. This particular list is affiliated with the National Council on Public History (NCPH) and, as such, provides an overview of professional and academic questions, issues, jobs, conferences, and other opportunities of interest to public historians. When subscribing, I suggest setting your preferences so that you receive list mailings in digest form (one lump mailing per week rather than many daily posts). You will be prompted to provide a statement of introduction—include in yours your name, Temple affiliation, an explanation of your interest in public history, and a brief statement of your career goals. Please don’t write “my professor made me join.” Rather, be clear about your intent and objectives. I will know you have completed this assignment when H-Public lists its new subscribers.

Reading Blog (15 points)—Due weekly, beginning September 7

Toward focusing your thoughts prior to class discussion and keeping an archive of those thoughts for future reference, you must keep a weekly reading log throughout the semester. Your log must be made available to the class and other readers by way of a blog. If you have not previously experimented with blogging, visit www.blogger.com for an introduction and to set up an account. For examples, see the blog roll in the right column of our course website. Once you have created and titled your blog, email me its url (its web address) and I will add it to the class blog roll.

You may use your blog however you like within the context of this course. Blogs are particularly useful as mental sketchpads, places where you begin to develop thoughts and ideas that you’d like to develop in the future. They are also great tools for communicating who you are and what you do to a broad public. A well-conceived blog, for example, can serve as a very effective compliment to your resume when on the job market. Blogs have particular relevance to public historians who are looking to communicate quickly and affordably with a variety of audiences. In fact, many historic sites and museums have replaced websites with blogs given their easy upkeep, affordability, and flexibility.

At the minimum, your blog must include an introduction (consider using the personal statement you posted on H-Public) and weekly reading summaries. Your summaries must be posted no later than the evening preceding class. They should include an overview of the materials you read for the current week’s class meeting, your response to those materials, and thoughts on how those materials help us make sense of the public historian’s work in Philadelphia and elsewhere. Limit reading posts to 250-500 words.

From time to time I will ask that you post additional materials to your blog, especially with regard to our semester-long group project. Ultimately, however, your blog is yours to use and develop as you see fit. You may certainly add to it beyond the course requirements.

Posts will be evaluated as follows:

3 pts. Exceptional. The post is focused and coherently integrates examples with explanations or analysis. It demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. The post reflects in-depth engagement with the topic, course readings, and discussion.

---

2 pts. Underdeveloped. The post is mostly description or summary, without consideration of alternative perspectives, and few connections are made between ideas. It reflects passing engagement with the topic, course readings, and discussion.

1 pt. Limited. The post is unfocused, or simply rehashes previous comments, and displays no evidence of student engagement with the topic, course readings, and discussion.

0 No Credit. The post is missing or consists of one or two disconnected sentences.

Semester Group Project: Funeral for a Home

The lion’s share of your grade for this course—spread over five separate assignments—will reflect the quality of your contribution to our semester-long group project. At the beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned to work with an individual(s) who has a special relationship with the community in which our funeral will take place. In later weeks, you will interview the individual assigned to you, collect and digitize materials that he/she shares with the project team, and reflect on the process of doing community-engaged history.

Because these assignments will generate content for a real public history project, their particulars will be announced as details are worked out with our project partners. For the time being, though, you can expect to provide the following:

Pre-Research (10 points)—Due September 25

Toward developing a broad research context for our oral histories, post one bibliography item, one example of a public history project similar to Funeral, and at least one theme, issue, or question that our oral histories should address to the appropriate files in our shared Google Drive. Be sure to identify your contributions by including your name.

Pre-Interview Prep (10 points)—Due October 2

Submit a profile of your assigned informant along with draft interview questions and an overview of your interview strategy and any concerns you may have about conducting it. Please limit to 3-5 pages.

Interview Summary (10 points)—Due October 30

Having completed your interview, reflect on the experience in a 3-5 page paper that summaries what you learned and that assesses the strengths and weaknesses of your recorded interview. How does your interview and the experience of conducting it reflect themes and issues we have encountered in this semester’s readings? Come to class prepared to discuss your results.

Project Blog (10 points)—Due November 13

Submit an entry for the project blog that explores your informant’s relationship to our project and how his/her experiences shed light on the issues that Funeral for a Home is concerned to address. Your entry must be carefully edited, appropriately formatted for publication, and augmented by relevant audio/video suitable for distribution online.

Oral History (20 points)—Due December 4

Submit a digital recording of your interview(s) prepared according to standards detailed in class and accompanied by listening indices and full or partial transcripts.

Project Assessment (10 points)—Due December 9

Submit an overview of our semester group project with regard to how well it exemplified good public history practice. Defining “good” public history practice, of course, is not a simple matter and should be
dwell on at length in this assignment with reference to course readings where necessary. Please limit to 5-10 pages.

STYLISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must:

- Be double spaced
- Be typed in 11-12 point font
- Have 1-inch margins
- Include page numbers
- Include a title page or heading with your name, date, paper title, and course number
- Include a bibliography or works cited page (when necessary)
- Be thoroughly proofread, edited, and must adhere to proper grammatical conventions
- Be handed to me—I will not except email attachments

In all cases where your assignments rely on information gathered from identifiable sources (books, articles, websites, television, radio, etc.), you must cite those sources using either footnotes or parenthetical references. For information regarding citation style, visit:

http://www.temple.edu/writingctr/handouts/citationguides/index.html

If you have difficulties writing, be sure to see me and/or visit the campus writing center as soon as possible. I cannot stress enough the importance of good writing—next to effective use of sources, it will be the most important factor bearing on your projects’ success. Finally, resist any temptation to pass off other people’s writing—whether it is from a book, article, or electronic source—as your own. Any plagiarized material submitted for any portion of these assignments may result in an ‘F’ for the course.