



MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITE INTERPRETATION: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

UNCG HIS/IAR 627 – 84977
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MONDAY, 3:30-6:20 IN MHRA 1304/ PH LAB
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course comprises the first of a three-semester sequence that introduces you to the practices and scholarship of public history and skills that will help you thrive in the profession. Over the course of three semesters, the sequence will merge theory and practice through a public history project. The selected project will be an exhibit on the Historic Magnolia House and its career as a hotel featured in the historic Negro Motorist Green Book, a travel Guide for African American navigation throughout Jim Crow America. This exhibit will be open at the Historic Magnolia House in Greensboro, North Carolina. The History Department's Museum Studies Program, specifically your class will begin the work on this project—gathering materials, experimenting with participatory public history practices, and making connections to local people and community groups tied to the project.

In the first semester of this sequence, the HIS 627 class will focus on the practices and theories of interpreting history while conducting initial research on the history of the longue durée of the narrative. This course will also emphasize the contextual and conceptual realities of race, class and gender within the field of public history and its indelible footprint left on interpretation at historic sites and museums. That research is critical for us as we begin the project, as right now we are starting from scratch. You will break into small groups and each group will research one aspect of the project. You are also encouraged to reach out to community members and organizations connected to the project in order to begin building relationships and momentum for the project. Finally, we will host a gathering at the end of the semester in order to share your findings with Museum Studies folks and community members.

HIS 627 Core Concepts

The Museums and Historic Site Interpretation class will encourage you to learn about and engage with the following core concepts:

- How the interpretation of museums and historic sites has changed over time, and how historical moments have shaped how those places presented the past;
- The dilemmas of historic interpretation, which include ownership and authority, the role of the curator, silences and omissions, and the history of marginalized communities; and,
- Contemporary practices and models of making history meaningful to the public by partnering with communities, creating participatory projects and incorporating oral histories, material culture, and new technologies.

HIS 627 Core Skills

This class will train you in skills that historians of all stripes use to interpret the past, and that will serve you well in the public history profession.

- Reading, analyzing and evaluating primary and secondary sources
- Speaking publicly in a way that engages and activates your audience
- Writing concisely, clearly and creatively
- Collaborating with your peers and community partners with sensitivity and a stance of listening and learning
- Conducting archival research

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro greatly values integrity in the work of its students. You must appropriately cite any information that you use from your sources and you must submit work that you yourself have written or created. Copying the work of others and passing it off as your own (known as plagiarizing) is taken very seriously and will be handled by the university administration. You can read more about the policy at: academicintegrity.uncg.edu, and per university policy, you will sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment.

ACCESSIBILITY & RESOURCES

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Should you have any needs or questions related to disability issues, please contact the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services \(OARS\)](#), located in the Elliot University Center, #215. As an instructor, I am committed to making this course accessible to all of the students in it, and will work with OARS to accommodate students' requests. You do not need to disclose details about your disability to the instructor in order to receive accommodations.

For assistance with writing assignments, contact the [UNCG Writing Center](#), where staff members hold appointments both in person and via instant-messaging. [The Digital Media Commons](#) in Jackson Library provides technical help with Prezi, PowerPoint, WordPress, web design, posters/flyers, video and audio and the [Digital ACT Studio](#) helps edit digital projects and

make them more visually appealing. Finally, UNCG's [Speaking Center](#) offers a great resource for building public, small-group or individual speaking skills.

EXPERIENCES, PROJECTS & EVALUATION

To build these skills, you will engage in the experiences and projects listed below. You must hand in each assignment on-time and I will deduct a third of a grade for each 24 hours past the deadline. Unless you have a specific accommodation from the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#), I will only grant extensions in advance of the due date. That said, contact me if you sense that you will not meet the deadline. I will post the grades to Canvas, and if you see a discrepancy, please contact me immediately.

Grade Scale: A 93-100 / A- 90-92 / B+ 87-89 / B 83-86 / B- 80-82 / C+ 77-79 / C 73-76 / F 72 and below

Class Participation – 20%

Participation makes up a central part of this course, as you will grapple with the texts and learn from each other's point of view in the classroom. Attendance is mandatory and if you have any conflicts because of religious holidays, family emergencies or health issues, please contact me as soon as possible and no later than the day of class, prior to class beginning, to request an excused absence and arrange for making up that work.

Each week, after you have finished the readings, please write a brief response (around 150-250 words) on Slack.com to the readings that are due each Sunday by midnight. In your brief reviews, you must present and comment on the core issues the authors raise. You must also critique any shortcomings of the work. Be mindful that any and all work turned in should reflect that of graduate level writing and research. With that in mind make sure that any written work has focused and clear writing style. Feel free to include links to images, maps, video, and/or audio to bring it to life and be sure to read the posts of your fellow students. These weekly posts will make up part of your participation grade.

Slack comments: Each week, The student who is leading the discussion will post at least two questions to our Slack channel for the rest of the class to answer. Likewise, I will also occasionally post a question for the entire class to answer. In order to find our designated slack channel visit [slack.com](#) and then highlight and add the following tag into the box <https://museumandhist-0io8759.slack.com/>

In-Class Presentation – 10% – Dates Determined on First Day

Each of you will choose one class session in which you will give an in-class presentation on the reading(s) of that day and lead a discussion on them. In the presentation and discussion, be sure to give background information about the author and place the work in context for the era. Be

sure to cover the authors' perspectives and create questions that engage with the core themes of the text. Please plan to make your short presentation no more than 15 minutes and the discussion approximately 45 minutes. Finally, submit your discussion questions to me no later than Friday at noon of the week before class. Specific criteria for presentations are as follows:

- Must be a digital presentation (PowerPoint or keynote only)
- Must be no more than seven slides
- Slides must include: Title slide; About authors or editors slide; a slide covering the 5 W's (who is audience, what is the book, when was it published, where was it published (publishing info), and why was the book written; slide covering major theme(s) of book; and a slide covering your proposed questions for discussion.

Paper #1 – 20% – Due September 30

You will write a paper (4-5 pages double-spaced) on how public history has changed over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

Paper #2 – 20% – Due October 21

Please visit an exhibition at a museum or historic site this semester and write a review of it (4-5 pages double-spaced). The review should include a *brief* overview of the exhibition and the strengths and weaknesses of its over-arching themes, historical content, design and layout, and interactivity. The review should also engage with the questions raised in the “History, Memory, and Power” section of the class. You will also give a five-minute presentation of what you found to the class that day. The full assignment will be handed out on Sept. 18.

Final Public Project – 30% – December 2

You will work in small groups to research one piece of the history of the Magnolia House exhibit. This final project will showcase your conducted research and potential ideas for producing the exhibit. These presentations will be well researched and clearly and concisely presented providing an overview of that aspect of the project. I encourage you to be creative in finding a way to present research, which must be a visual display of a technological platform i.e. PowerPoint, Adobe Publisher, etc... I will discuss further on Oct. 7.

****Note****

Each week once we have reviewed the readings there will be time set aside, at least 30 minutes, for break out discussion, brainstorming and work on the overall class project.

READINGS

Required

Brundage, Fitzhugh. *Where the Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Faulk, John. *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*. Left Coast Press, 2009.

Greenspan, Anders. *Creating Colonial Williamsburg: The Restoration of Americas Eighteenth Century Capital*. University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Horton, James Oliver. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough stuff of American Memory*. The New Press, 2006.

Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Meringolo, Denise. *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*. University of Massachusetts, 2012.

Rolph-Trouillot, Michel. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 1995.

Rose, Julia. *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. Roman & Littlefield Press, 2016.

Simon, Nina. *Participatory Museum*. Museum 2.0, 2010.

Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*, University of North Carolina Press 4th Edition (originally published 1957).

Vagnone, Frank and Deborah Ryan. *Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums*. Routledge Press, 2016.

Recommended

Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, *Letting Go? Sharing Authority in a User-Generated World*. Routledge: 2011.

Balgooy, Max, *Interpreting African American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites*. Roman & Littlefield Press, 2014.

Burns, Andrea, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.

Schwarzer, Marjorie. *Riches, Rivals and Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America*. American Association of Museums, 2013.

Serrell, Beverly. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Aug. 26 What is Public History? Introductions and overview of the course

Sept. 2 No Class (Labor Day!)

Origins of Public History

Sept. 9 Conceptualizing the Practice of interpretation

Breakout exercise surrounding the history of interpretation

Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*.

Sept. 16 The Historical Enterprise

Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*

Sept. 23 The Power of Memory & Omission in Public History

W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Where the Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. (selected chapters)

-Catherine Bashir, Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1885-1915. pg. 139.

-Stephanie E. Yuhl, Rich and Tender Remembering: Elite White Women and an Aesthetic Sense of Place in Charleston, 1920s-1930s

-David Blight, Epilogue “Southerners Don’t Lie; They Just Remember Big.”

Sept. 30 Memorializing Historic Sites

Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*

The Tough Stuff of American History

Oct. 7 The Power dynamic of Authority & History

Michel Rolph -Trouillot, *Silencing the Past, Power and the Production of History*

Oct. 14 **No Class** (Fall Break!)

Oct. 21 Complicating Shared Authority

Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*

Oct. 28 **No Class**

Nov. 4 “Difficult” History

James Oliver Horton & Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History*

Excerpts from Julia Rose, *Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*

Putting Principle Into Practice

Nov. 11 The History Around You

Class will be held at the (Community Partner/Site) in Greensboro

Nov. 18 Community engaged exhibition and the Radical Future of Museums

Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*.

Frank Vagnone and Deborah Ryan, *Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums*.

Nov. 25 Thinking about the Visitor Experience

Excerpts from John Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*.

Dec. 2 Final projects and reflections on the Historic Magnolia House Exhibit

****Any information (i.e. dates, assignments, or instructions) found within this syllabus is subject to change at any time per the discretion of the professor of record for this course.****