

Public History
(History 659)

“The history that lies inert in unread books does no work in the world.”
-- Carl Becker

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9-11 a.m., and by appt.

Fall 2004
Herter 640
Tuesday, 2:00-5:00

Course objectives: The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the world of public history – both the ideas and questions that make it tick, and the practical, on-the-ground concerns that confront public historians in a variety of professional settings. The course will turn on five key concept areas that inform the world of public history: History and Memory; Shared Authority and/or Inquiry; Agendas and Audiences; Ethics; and Economics and Entrepreneurship. By the end of the semester, you will have read some of the most significant past and contemporary literature in the field of public history, and, through discussions in and beyond the classroom, have formed your own understanding of what constitutes public history. Through our shared readings, forays into the community, conversations with guest speakers, and through your own public history fieldwork, you will also have a clearer idea of what it means to work in a variety of public history settings in terms of both theory and practice.

Course requirements: Formal requirements include: 1) attendance at all seminar discussions and field trips, guided and self-guided; if you must miss something, make arrangements with me in advance; 2) weekly response papers (ca 2-3 pp; these will be evaluated on a simple \checkmark $\checkmark+$ $\checkmark-$ system, with $\checkmark+$ only available to papers that engage *all* of the assigned readings); 3) participation in one major project, executed in teams, exploring some facet of public history in more depth (see below); and 4) a ca. 8-10 page paper reflecting on the topic chosen.

Though this course explores the work historians do out in the world, it is itself of course a seminar, and the essence of a seminar is *discussion*; each week, we will meet to discuss, among ourselves and with others, issues and subjects of current concern to the Public History community. It is essential that you come to class prepared to contribute to those conversations, having read the material at hand and having given it some thought as well. I take the idea of contribution very seriously; it is the obligation of each student to guide our shared conversation toward the subjects he or she thinks most important for the course to cover.

Readings: Books listed below are on Reserve at DuBois Library and available for purchase at Jeffrey Amherst Bookstore. Some of these we will read in their entirety, while only selections of others are

assigned for the course; you may wish to review your syllabus before making your purchases. Most of the articles assigned in this course (those marked with a ✓) are contained in the coursepack available for purchase at CopyCat.

Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*

Allison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age*

of Mass Culture

Edward Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*

Gary Nash, *History on Trial*

Max Page, *Giving Preservation a History*

Roy Rozenzweig and David Thelen, *Presence of the Past. Popular Uses of History in American Life*

Patricia West, *Domesticating History*

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past.*

Group project: In order for you to gain greater depth in one of the five concept areas, each of you will join a team whose charge is to develop a presentation for the rest of the class (and other interested faculty and graduate students) that explores some key episode, incident, or issue within that topic area. For example, the team assigned to the topic “Ethics” might present on the recent tangle at the New York Historical Society, which some historians fear has come under the influence of a single wealthy donor. The team assigned to “Audiences” might present on innovative new approaches and/or “best practices” you have discovered to forge collaborations between museums and historic sites and new communities of users. Each student in the course will submit his/her list of preferred topics to me at the 3rd class meeting, along with a note explaining their rankings. Groups must report their proposed plan to me no later than OCTOBER 12th.

Groups will present their findings in a conference-style event that will be open to the department on the afternoon of FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3rd. Each team will make a 30-minute presentation, with 10 minutes of discussion to follow (Session I: 12:30-1:10; Session II: 1:15-1:55; Session III: 2:00-2:40; Session IV: 2:45-3:35; Session V. 3:30-4:10).

Course Schedule

TUES SEPT 14: Introduction: What is Public History?

Shopes, et al, "Public History, Public Historians, and the American Historical Association," Report of the Task Force on Public History, submitted to
AHA
Council, Dec 2003

Recommended: Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Power of History: The Weakness of a Profession," *Journal of American History* 88 (March 2002): 1299-1314.
(J-Stor)

HISTORY AND MEMORY

TUES SEPT 21: Memory v. History

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*.
√Barbara Taylor, "How Far, How Near: Distance and Proximity in the Historical Imagination;" and Mark Salber Phillips, "Distance and Historical Representation," in *History Workshop Journal* (Vol. 57), 117-141.
√Christopher Bollas, "The Functions of History," from *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience* (1995)
√Margaret Strobel, "Getting to the Source: Becoming a Historian, Being an Activist, and Thinking Archivaly: Documents and Memory as Sources," *Journal of Women's History* Vol 11 No. 1 (Spring 1999): 181-92.
A Family Gathering, Lise Yasui, *The American Experience* (1989) [AVAILABLE

ON

RESERVE FROM SEPT 18-21) *There are 2 versions of this on reserve, the hour-long PBS version, and her original, 30-minute student edition. Please see the PBS version, nominated for the Oscar for short documentary. Those of you with special interest in documentary, however, will be interested to see the changes in the film from Yasui's original version to the one broadcast nationally. The later is available Sept 18th*

FRIDAY SEPT 24 The Past in Everyday Life: FIELD TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY

Roy Rozenzweig and David Thelen, *Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*
Carl Becker, "Everyman his own Historian" (1932)

Want Cameron and Gatewood, "Excursions into the Unremembered Past: What People
Want from Visits to Historic Sites," *The Public Historian* 22 (Summer 2000), 107-127.

We will draw on the insights from *Presence of the Past* in our discussion of the work of the Brooklyn Historical Society; please get through the intro, chapter 1, and the afterthoughts, and skim the rest.

TUES SEPT 28 Memory Studies (as you prepare your response papers this week, please try to incorporate relevant insights from the preceding readings)

GUEST: David Glassberg

Allison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*

√David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory" *Public Historian* (Spring 1996): 7-23.

√Marla Miller and Anne Digan Lanning, "'Common Parlors: Women and the Recreation of Community Identity in Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1870-1920,'" *Gender and History* (1994), 435+

SHARED AUTHORITY, SHARED INQUIRY

TUES OCT 5: Shared Authority

GUEST SPEAKERS: Joyce Berkman, Chris Appy

Michael Frish, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Public History*

Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event," in Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (1991), 1-26.

Sherna Gluck, "What's So Special About Women? Women's Oral History," in Dunaway and Baum, *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (1996), 215-230.

Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History," in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (1998), 87-100.

Ronald J. Grele, "Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History," in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (1998), 38-52.

You may also wish to examine the website for the New England Center for Oral History: <http://www.ucc.uconn.edu/~cohadm01/neaoh.html>

And

Judith Moyer's "Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History" at:
http://www.dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html

TUES OCT 12 Contested Authority in Museums

Gary Nash, et al, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (chs 1, 5, 7-10)

[RESERVE]

*"Introduction," and "Anatomy of a Controversy," Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhard, eds., *History Wars: the Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (Holt, 1996), pp. 1-62. [RESERVE]

Faith Davis Ruffins, "Culture Wars Won and Lost: Ethnic Museum on the Mall, Part I: The National Holocaust Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian," *Radical History Review* 68 (Spring 1997): 79-100.

Faith Davis Ruffins, "Culture Wars Won and Lost, Part II: The National African-American Museum Project," *Radical History Review* 70 (Winter 1998): 78-101.

TUES OCT 19: Contested Authority and Memorials

Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*

Jacqueline Trescott, "Smithsonian Curators Scramble to Save Artifacts," *Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 2002

James B. Gardner and Sarah M. Henry, "September 11 and the Mourning After: Reflections on Collecting and Interpreting the History of Tragedy," *Public Historian* Vol 24 (Summer 2002), 37-52.

AGENDAS AND AUDIENCES

TUES OCT 26: The Politics of Museum Interpretation

Field trip to Historic Deerfield.
MEET AT THE FLYNT CENTER AT 2:00 p.m.

Pat West, *Domesticating History*.

√Henry Flynt, introduction, *Frontier of Freedom* (Hastings House, 1952).

√Harold Skramsted, "An Agenda for American Museums in the Twenty-First Century" *Daedalus* (Summer 1999), 109-129.

√Stephen E. Weil, "From Being *about* Something to being *for* Somebody: The Ongoing Transformation of the American Museum," *Daedalus* (Summer 1999), 109-129. 229-258.

Recommended: John Herbst, "Historic Houses," in Leon and Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Univ. of IL, 1996), pp. 98-114.

Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past: History Museums in the U.S.," in *Mickey Mouse History*.

TUES NOV 2 : New Agendas, New Audiences:

√Lois H. Silverman, "The Therapeutic Potential of Museums as Pathways to Inclusion,"

In Sandell, ed., *Museums, Society, Inequality* (Routledge), 69-83.

James Green, *Taking History to Heart: The Power of the Past in Building Social Movements*, Introduction and Ch 2, on the Massachusetts History Workshop

√Ron Chew, "Advocates? Or Curators of Advocacy? Taking Action!" *Museums*

News

(March/April 2004)

Ruth Abram, "Planting Cut Flowers," *History News*, Vol. 55, #3 (Summer 2000); 4-10

"The National Park Service and Civic Engagement: The Report of a Workshop Held December 6-8, 2001 in New York City," NPS: Northeast Regional Office, 2002.

Browse these 2 websites:

"Great Places, Great Debates; Opening Historic Sites to Civic Engagement"

<http://www.nps.gov/nero/greatplaces/indexgreatplaces.htm>

International Coalition of Historic Site museums of Conscience

(<http://www.sitesofconscience.org/>) including 2003 Conference Report.

ETHICS

TUES NOV 9: Who Controls the Past? Donors and the Ethics of Collections Management

Field Trip to the Sophia Smith Collection and Smith College Archives

Alumnae Gym, Nielson Library, Smith College

Host: Sherrill Redmon, Director, Sophia Smith Collection

√Karen Benedict, *Ethics and the Archival Profession* (excerpts – coursepack)

“A Code of Ethics for Archivists with Commentary,” SAA

√”Guidelines for Museums on Developing and Managing Individual Donor Support”
(AAM)

√International Council of Museums Code of Professional Ethics (ICOM)

Steven L. Hensen, “The President's Papers Are the People's Business,” *Washington Post*, 16 December 2001

Amy E. Hague, “Never...Another Season of Silence: Laying the Foundation of the Sophia Smith Collection, 1942-1965,” *Revealing Women's Life Stories* (Smith College, 1992): 9-28.

Browse website of the Society of American Archivists: www.archivists.org.

TUES NOV 16 Show Me the Money: Integrity, Interpretation, and Cold Hard Cash

Daniel Penrice, “Can this Museum be Saved?” Parts I & 11 and associated links, *Common-Place* ([vol. 3 no. 1 October 2002](http://www.common-place.org/vol-03/no-01/penrice/index.shtml))

<http://www.common-place.org/vol-03/no-01/penrice/index.shtml>

√Joe Pratt, “Warts and All?: An Elusive Balance in Contracted Corporate Histories about Energy and Environment” *The Public Historian* Winter 2004, Vol. 26, No. 1: 21-40

√James C. Rees, “Forever Changing. Forever the Same; The Dilemma Facing Historic Houses” *American House Museums in the 21st Century*, An Athenaeum of Philadelphia symposium, December 1998.

√Marjorie Schwarzer, “Schizophrenic Agora: Mission, Market, and the Multi-
Tasking

Museum,” *Museum News* (Nov/Dec 1999).

√ “Is There Enough History to Go Around?” *HistoryNews* (Winter 1996),

Tues Nov 23: History, Integrity, and Marketable Assets: Historic Preservation

Guest: Max Page

Page and Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History* – essays by Page, Lowenthal, Greenfield, Wilson & Morley

organized
Mason, et al, *Economic and Heritage Conversation* (proceedings of a meeting

by the Getty Conversation Institute, 1998):

http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/pdf_publications/econrpt.pdf

Also, please review the below, all on RESERVE

Leader's

Donovan D. Rypkema, *The Economics of Preservation: A Community*

Guide (NTHP)

“Know-How #3: What You Need to Know About Listing on the National Register

”Local Historical Commissions: Their Role in Government”
(MHC, 1992) RESERVE

”Preservation Through By-Laws and Ordinances” (MHC, 1999)
RESERVE

Recommended: Michael Wallace, “Preserving the Past: A History of Historic Preservation in the U.S.” and “Preservation Revisited,” in *Mickey Mouse History*.

TUES NOV 30TH Heritage Tourism

Browse website: http://www.nationaltrust.org/heritage_tourism/ (especially :Getting Started,” “Benefits” and “Success Stories.”

“Heritage Tourism and the Federal Government”
(<http://www.achp.gov/heritagetourismsummit.pdf>)

“Alternative Enterprises; Heritage Tourism: How to Use your Land’s Legacy to Benefit the Public and Boost your Bottom Line”
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS/altenterprise/info_heritage.pdf

FRIDAY DEC 2nd: CLASS CONFERENCE

TUES DEC 7 LAST CLASS: Taking Stock: Public History in Contemporary American Culture

FINAL PAPERS DUE!

And don't forget: tonight is the PH program event "The Civil Rights Movement in History and Public Memory" 106 Thompson Hall, 7:30 p.m.