Course Overview
The purpose of this course is to introduce the practice of public history and its intellectual foundations. Through class discussions and assignments, we will examine the activities of public historians and the issues they face in their work.

Public history encompasses a variety of occupations which all involve, to some degree, collecting, preserving, and interpreting history for the public. Public historians are well-trained historians who may work as museum curators and educators, historic site interpreters, archivists, oral historians, community activists, film and digital media producers, or historic preservationists. They may be employed at nonprofit organizations, cultural institutions, corporations, government agencies, and as independent consultants.

The practice of public history typically takes place outside of the traditional academic arena and its audience is the general public—children and adults alike. Yet, the two arenas overlap and public and academic historians often work collaboratively.

In addition to looking at the many areas of public history, we will examine related theoretical constructs like heritage, community, commemoration, and memory, and we will explore the many methods of engaging audiences. Class activities and assignments will include practicing some of the basic methods of public history, including material culture analysis and oral history collection. We will grapple with some of the difficult issues of public history, such as: Whose history do we collect, document, and preserve? How do we resolve the tension between memory and history? Should the source of funding influence the content of an exhibit? How do we talk about potentially difficult or controversial topics in history, and if so, in what way and to whom? Can authority be shared? How do we make history learning exciting and memorable?

Course Objectives
1. Experience public history through first-hand participation, observation, class activities, online materials, and discussion with guest speakers.
2. Engage in debates about issues of representation and presentation of public history.
3. Explore careers in public history and learn what advanced training is required.
4. Apply course content by creating public history.
5. Practice speaking succinctly and clearly in class discussions and presentations.
Required Texts

Required Course Material (Readings, websites, videos)
All required materials are listed on this syllabus. Most are accessed through the library as e-journals. A few essays are on reserve in the library; they are marked with an “R” on the syllabus. Additional resources are located on the Moodle site.

Public History Resources
The two most important resources are these:

- The National Council on Public History is the major professional association for public historians and its website contains information about job opportunities, professional conferences and workshops, and publications. See especially the blog History @ Work [http://publichistorycommons.org/](http://publichistorycommons.org/)
- The Public History Resource Center is not kept up to date but it offers good definitions of the field and the nature of jobs in it. [http://www.publichistory.org/](http://www.publichistory.org/)

Other specialized sites deal with particular aspects of public history.

- The American Association for State and Local History is the organization that unites the history museum community, including local historians, archivists, and historic site managers. [http://about.aaslh.org/home/](http://about.aaslh.org/home/). Its publication is *History News*.
- The Association of Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums is a professional organization for people involved with outdoor museums, historical farms, and agricultural and folklife museums. [www.alhfam.org](http://www.alhfam.org)
- The Society for Industrial Archaeology is organized for people interested in preserving, documenting, and interpreting our industrial past (such as bridges, dams, mills). [http://www.sia-web.org/](http://www.sia-web.org/)
- Center for History and New Media showcases projects and methods of research, teaching, and public presentations in a digital mode. [https://chnm.gmu.edu/](https://chnm.gmu.edu/)
- Updated resources and professional opportunities for historic preservationists can be found at Preservenet. [http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu/](http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu/) and at the National Trust for Historic Preservation site [http://www.preservationnation.org/](http://www.preservationnation.org/)
- The Society of American Archivists serves as the principal North American organization for the archival profession. [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org)
- The Oral History Association generates scholarship and discussion about the practice of oral history and the relationship between memory and history. [www.oralhistory.org](http://www.oralhistory.org)

Course Requirements and Assignments
Prepare for each class by doing the assigned reading, video viewing, and web reading or browsing. Attend every class and participate in class discussions and activities. Class participation is 25% of your grade.
Short Essays
Write 4 responsive or reflective essays of 2-pages each (Times New Roman, 12 pt, 1-inch margins) that respond to or reflect on assigned readings, guest speakers, and classroom discussions. The topics are these:

1. Material Culture. Evaluate this quote as you reflect on your work with artifacts: *Why do precisely these objects which we behold make a world?*” – Henry David Thoreau  **Due Week 3 on Sept. 24**

2. Website review: Critique a historic site or history program website. What did its purpose seem to be? What history was presented and how? What assumptions were made about the audience? Was there anything omitted that is important to understanding historical significance? How well does the presentation engage you? Did the presentation evoke an emotional response? What would you have done differently if you had been the creator of the website?  **Due Week 7 on Oct. 20**

3. Difficult or Controversial Topics: Do public historians have a responsibility to address difficult subjects? Who decides on the point of view? How is the public involved? What sensitivities are required? What strategies do public historian use to present complicated issues?  **Due Week 9 on Nov. 5**

4. Story Corps Experience: Write a two-page reflection on the process of interviewing.  **Due Week 13 on Dec. 1 or Dec. 3**

Group Project
Public historians rarely work alone. In that spirit, you will work with a small group of your classmates to research and present a current topic in public history. Early in the semester, you will choose an area of public history practice that intrigues you, and you will be matched with similarly interested students. At the end of the semester your group will conduct a half-hour class on the topic and you will submit a 5-page paper on your investigation. The topics to choose from are:

- history documentary films
- history portrayed in select feature films
- gender and sexuality in public history
- history in children’s picture books (up to age 8)
- politics and presidential homes and libraries
- repatriation of remains of indigenous persons

Your grade will be an average of the grade achieved by the team and the grade assigned to your paper (5 pages) which you write during the research and development for the presentation. In the paper, you will describe how you focused the topic, conducted research and made decisions about your presentation. How was your decision-making informed by course readings, class discussions, guest speakers, and discussions within the group. What was difficult? What perspectives or points of view challenged you? In
other words, the paper will provide a brief summary of the work undertaken by each individual and how it compares with the ideas of other public historians. More details on this will follow later in the semester.

**Deadlines** for graded work are firm. Late work will be accepted, but for each day the work is late, the grade will decrease 3 points.

**Grading**

25% Class Participation

40% 4 Short Essays (10% each)

- Material Culture Reflection
- Website Review
- Difficult or Controversial Topics
- Story Corps Reflection

25% Team Project and paper

10% Quiz during last class

**Course Etiquette**

This semester we will host several guest speakers who will discuss their work and careers as public historians. These visitors’ perspectives are integral to the class; you are required to attend, take notes, and ask questions. Preparing thoroughly for class and listening intently to the presentation may serve you well personally if you would like to seek an internship or even employment with the speaker. Moreover, your conduct reflects on UMass as a whole. Be attentive, polite, and inquisitive and leave them with the impression that they will be glad to meet more UMass students in the future.

**Academic Honesty**

“The composition of any paper must be entirely the student’s own work. If the exact words of another work are used, even to a limited degree, quotation marks must be used and reference given. If information or ideas are taken from another work, not by direct quotation, the student must be careful to phrase it entirely in his/her own words, always with credit given to the source of information. Failure to do this is plagiarism and is equivalent to cheating on examinations. Submission of a paper which is copied—in whole or in part—from another work, or which contains fictitious footnotes, will be cause for the failure in the course.” -- History Department

**Disability Services at UMass**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to making reasonable, effective and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and to help create a barrier-free campus. If you are in need of accommodation for a documented disability, register with Disability Services to have an accommodation letter sent to your faculty. It is your responsibility to initiate these services and to communicate with faculty ahead of time to manage
accommodations in a timely manner. For more information, consult the Disability Services website at [http://www.umass.edu/disability](http://www.umass.edu/disability) and [http://www.umass.edu/disability/students.html](http://www.umass.edu/disability/students.html)

### Class Schedule with Readings and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 8 Introduction to the Course</td>
<td>The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the activities and practices of public historians and to examine concerns they face in their work. In-class writing: Describe your best and worst experience with history.</td>
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| Sept 10 History and the Public | Discussion: What does history mean to each of us? To others? Who owns the past? Read:  
    - Select 2 quotes from the readings and be prepared to talk about why they matter. |
| **Week 2**                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Sept 15 Material Culture I    | In-class activity: Analyzing artifacts from the Amherst History Museum Read:  
  - Connecticut 50 Objects 50 Stories [http://chs.org/50objects/#](http://chs.org/50objects/#) (Browse) |
| Sept 17 Material Culture II   | **Field trip to the Amherst History Museum**, Meet at 67 Amity Street, Amherst [http://amhersthistory.org/](http://amhersthistory.org/) Marianne Curling, consulting curator, will be our guide. Read  
  - Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute “Taking Care” (browse) [http://www.si.edu/mci/english/learn_more/taking_care/](http://www.si.edu/mci/english/learn_more/taking_care/)  
  - Basic Guidelines for the Preservation of Historic Artifacts (pdf in Moodle) |
| Week 3 | Lecture & Discussion: How is history “collected?” Whose history is represented? What is the “history” of history collecting? Read:  
- How does the Smithsonian collect artifacts?  
- Browse Collections by Subject  
[http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/subjects](http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/subjects)  
- “Save our African American Treasures” event video  
- Explore the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Follow “Folk Music” and “Song and Story and Other Narrative Forms”  
- Artifact Donations FAQ Chicago History Museum  
| --- | --- |
| Sept 22 Collecting History | Discussion: How have history institutions changed in the past decade? Have the principles of interpretation changed? Read:  
- Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 25-75, 90-100  
- Are Freeman Tilden’s 6 Principles of Interpretation relevant today?  
- **Material Culture Essay Due by midnight. Submit in Moodle.** |
| Sept 24 Interpretation in 2015 | **Guest Speaker** Rhys Simmons, Director of Interpretation, Old Sturbridge Village  
Read  
- What is Living History?  
- Rare animal breeds at Colonial Williamsburg  
[http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/volume2/january04/techtips.cfm](http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/volume2/january04/techtips.cfm)  
- Old Sturbridge Village animals. Be sure to watch the video showcasing the lambs.  
Assignment:  
- Assignment:
| Oct 1  
Slavery | Discussion: Is it possible to interpret slavery and the lives enslaved persons?  
Read/View  
- Guide to Sites, Museums, and Memory  
- Boston Middle Passage Ceremonies and Markers  
  [http://bostonmiddlepassage.org/](http://bostonmiddlepassage.org/)  
- Richard Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Well: Interpretive Media in the  
  “Slavery in New York” Exhibition,” *The Public Historian* 35.3 (August  
  2013): 8-45.  
- Mt. Vernon’s Slave Quarters, Tour with Curator and Archaeologist, C- 
  Span, 28 min.  
  interpreter’s perspective on eighteenth-century slavery”  
- Colonial Williamsburg Slave Interpreter talking with visitors  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaaXqI2r98s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaaXqI2r98s)  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiRBmQFi8_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiRBmQFi8_o)  
- *Washington Post* March 6, 2013 article, read comments as well:  
  [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/slavery-is-a-tough-role-hard-sell-at-colonial-williamsburg/2013/03/08/d78fa88a-8664-11e2-a80b-3edc779b676f_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/slavery-is-a-tough-role-hard-sell-at-colonial-williamsburg/2013/03/08/d78fa88a-8664-11e2-a80b-3edc779b676f_story.html) |
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 8</td>
<td><strong>First-Person Interpretation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Guest Speakers:</strong> Barbara Mathews, Public Historian at Historic Deerfield and Dennis Picard, Storrowtown Village</td>
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<td><strong>Read</strong></td>
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<td>• Museum Audience Insight: First or Third, Costume or No? <a href="http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2008/07/first-or-third-costume-or-no.html">http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2008/07/first-or-third-costume-or-no.html</a></td>
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**Assignment:**
- Bring to class a link to digital history project that impresses you.
- Is it possible to create good public history with a cell phone?

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<th>Week 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 13</td>
<td><strong>No class</strong></td>
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<td>Oct 15</td>
<td><strong>Educational software</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Guest Speaker:</strong> Dave Hart, Executive Director, Center for Computer-Based Instructional Technology, UMass Amherst</td>
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**Assignment:**
- Groups should have identified project focus and individual responsibilities

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<th>Week 7</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 20</td>
<td><strong>History, Memory and Nostalgia</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Discussion:</strong> What roles do history, memory, and nostalgia play in the presentation of public history?</td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong></td>
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**Assignment:**
- Website Review due
| Oct 22 Archives | **Field Trip and Guest Speaker:** Meet at UMass Special Collections and University Archives, 25th floor Du Bois Library. Guest Speaker: Rob Cox, Director of SCUA.  
Read:  
- Visit: [http://scua.library.umass.edu/umarmot/](http://scua.library.umass.edu/umarmot/)  
- Browse website of the Society of American Archivists: [http://www2.archivists.org/](http://www2.archivists.org/)  
  Read under “The Archives Profession” |
| Oct 27 The Culture Wars | Discussion: The Culture Wars with example of Enola Gay exhibit and implications for today.  
Read:  
- Tony Capaccio and Uday Mohan, “Missing the Target,” *American Journalism Review* (July/August 1995)  
  [http://ajrarchive.org/Article.asp?id=1285](http://ajrarchive.org/Article.asp?id=1285)  
Assignment  
- What constraints on public history are operating today? What sensitivities are required?  
- Look up 2 public history programs or exhibits on challenging or emotional topics. How are they funded? |
| Oct 29 Sites of Conscience | Discussion: How do memorials and sites of conscience make meaning and what role do they play in society?  
Read/View:  
- Edward T. Linenthal, Podcast at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, talking about memorials. (7 min) [http://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/antisemitism-podcast/edward-t-linenthal](http://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/antisemitism-podcast/edward-t-linenthal)  
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<th>Week 9</th>
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<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>Groups meet and consult with professor&lt;br&gt;2:30-5:00 groups scheduled in half-hour blocks&lt;br&gt;Assignment: <strong>Essay on Difficult or Controversial Topics Due</strong></td>
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<th>Week 10</th>
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<td>Week 11</td>
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| **Nov 17**  
Archaeology | **Guest Speaker:** Eric Johnson, Director of Archaeological Services, Department of Anthropology, UMass Amherst  
Read:  
- [http://www.umass.edu/archservices/](http://www.umass.edu/archservices/)  
| **Nov 19**  
Public History in the Community | Discussion: What is the value of community programs? Do they offer something no other institution can? Is there such a thing as shared authority?  
Read 4 (student’s choice):  
- Smithsonian Institution Office of Policy and Analysis, “A study of Visitors to a Series of Public Programs at the National Museum of the American Indian,” 2013. pdf  
- “Baltimore ’68: Riots and Rebirth” [http://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/index.html](http://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/index.html);  
| Week 12 | 
| **Nov 24** | Class discussion on oral history (compare Story Corps with oral history) |
### Oral History

Read/Listen:
- “Oral Histories of the American South” on the *Documenting the American South* website at: [http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/](http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/)

Assignment: Download the Story Corps app.

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<tr>
<td>Nov 26</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> Conduct an interview through Story Corps “The Great Thanksgiving Listen.”</td>
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<td><a href="https://storycorps.me/about/the-great-thanksgiving-listen/">https://storycorps.me/about/the-great-thanksgiving-listen/</a></td>
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<td>Week  13</td>
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<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>Student Presentations- 2 groups</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> Reaction to Story Corps Paper Due for non-presenters</td>
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<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>Student Presentations- 2 groups</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> Reaction to Story Corps Paper Due for those who presented Dec. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week14</td>
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<td>Dec 8</td>
<td>Student Presentations- 2 groups</td>
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<td>Dec 10</td>
<td>Conclusions: The Public History Hall of Fame Quiz (short answers)</td>
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<td>Dec 14</td>
<td><strong>Final Project Paper due by midnight</strong></td>
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