

Public History: Theory, Method, and Practice

506:301:01, 512:392:01, & 050:301:01

Mondays, 3:55 – 6:55PM
Art History Hall, Room 100

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Office Hours: 1 – 3PM Mondays, or by appointment
Ruth Adams Building 205E

Course Description

The study of history is not confined solely to the classroom, nor is it the exclusive property of academics. Interpretations of the past are produced by diverse individuals in a variety of different public settings, forms, and venues, and in an ever-growing range of digital mediums.

This course offers an introduction to the theories, methods, practices, and politics of “public history,” while providing students with opportunities to explore firsthand the possibilities and challenges that come with producing and disseminating histories outside of the traditional format of the written essay. Through readings, workshops conducted by professionals in the field, site visits, and individual and collaborative projects, students will learn how public history has developed as a field and how it continues to change.

This class also emphasizes the ways in which historical knowledge may enhance community viability and civic engagement. Public history is a collaborative endeavor, where practitioners must balance their own research interests and agenda with the wishes of community, archival, and professional stakeholders. To this end, students will create their own projects and accompanying programming, working both with classmates, and with outside partners.

Theory / Practicum

Public history focuses on bringing historical narratives, interpretations, and themes to the attention of the general public. Accordingly, this class will combine its study of public history method and theory with “practicum” components designed to give you firsthand experience in public history practice.

Students will be required, as their major assignments, to complete both an individual exhibition project, and to work on a group project. Unlike traditional classes, this work

is designed to emulate what you might encounter if you employed at a museum, app design firm, or historical society.

History Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:

Students who study history at Rutgers can expect to develop an understanding of the following concepts:

- 1.) How individuals are shaped by their own past and by the past of their society and institutions;
- 2.) The role of human agency in bringing about change in society and institutions;
- 3.) The operation of large-scale forces responsible for causing change over time;
- 4.) The role of diversity and difference in shaping human experience;
- 5.) The nature of cause-and-effect relationships in human affairs as they have played out over time and as they continue to operate in the present.

Students who study history at Rutgers can also expect to develop the following practical skills:

- 1.) The ability to read and understand a variety of literary forms, including primary sources, as well as secondary sources written in academic prose;
- 2.) The ability to analyze information effectively and to construct cause-and-effect relationships from disparate data sources;
- 3.) The ability to write persuasively and communicate effectively;
- 4.) The ability to work independently and to conduct independent research.

American Studies Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:

Students will learn to synthesize interdisciplinary sources and methods in order to analyze consumption as a form of politics, ideology, and citizenship. Students will learn to use scholarship in history, politics, literature, and art in order to understand the significance of consumption to American culture and history. Students will be able to write well; speak articulately; and think critically, analytically, and creatively.

Learning Goals Specific to this Course:

- Students will learn about the theories and methodologies that inform the practice and study of public history, and the specific issues associated with creating and disseminating historic narratives and interpretations that are intended for public audiences. In particular, the course will explore what it means to engage difficult, critical, and lesser-known histories, and what different publics stand to gain from exhibits and other forms of public scholarship that challenge audiences to consider topics from a critical vantage point.

- Students will learn about the tensions that exist between the production of history for commercial, civic, and entertainment purposes; the funding issues, politics, and market pressures that drive the creation of certain types of narratives; and, efforts to make the past “usable” in legal debates and social activism.
- Students will gain practical skills and experience in how to prepare for and conduct oral histories; how to engage in site visits and ethnographic field work; how to use archives for the purpose of public history; how to curate objects, images, video, audio, and texts from the past, whether in the form of a traditional exhibit or as part of a digital project; and, how to collaborate with partners and balance the interests of different stakeholders

Required Readings:

- Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), ISBN # 9780674045859.
- Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), ISBN# 9780262581523

In addition to the above books, all of the assigned chapters, articles, and primary sources that appear in the syllabus are posted as .pdf files on the course’s SAKAI site under the heading “Resources.” You are required to complete these readings as well.

Assignment and Grading Overview

Additional information on the assignments will be provided in separate handouts.

Oral History Assignment / Exhibit - 20%

- Working in the University Archives and Special Collections, each student will be responsible for research and selecting an image or document relating to Rutgers' history, which will be blown up to poster size for display in Van Dyck Hall. Each student will also be responsible for conducting an oral history with a Rutgers faculty member, who will be asked to comment on the meanings behind the image or document being displayed.

Group Project with Rutgers 250 App Development - 25%

- Working in groups of three or four, each student group will create an interpretive walking tour that can be used as part of the Rutgers 250 App that is currently being developed. Students will be responsible for working with Vivek Seth and his team of programmers, and Tom Frusciano and staff members at the Rutgers University Archives and Special Collection, to provide site-specific historical content and interpretations. Each tour will be organized around a theme geared at the core audiences of incoming undergraduate students and alumni.

In-Class Presentation on Digital History Project or Website (**Monday, March 2**) - 5%

In-Class Midterm exam - 15% (**Monday, March 9**)

Final Exam - 20% (**Take Home**)

Seminar Participation and Attendance - 15%

- This is a seminar, and the expectation is that you will both attend all the classes, and regularly participate.

Grading Scale:

92-100=**A**; 87-91=**B+**; 81-86=**B**; 77-80=**C+**; 70-76=**C**; 60-69=**D**; 0-59=**F**

Note: there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

Class Policies

Please make sure that you are receiving and checking SAKAI announcements via email.

I regularly use the site to update class information, assignments, etc. **You are responsible for keeping up-to-date with class information and making sure that you are connected.**

Attendance in the seminar is mandatory.

Each student is allowed one unexcused absence during the semester (although you are still responsible for any materials we have covered). Each additional unexcused absence will result in deductions from your participation grade.

If you have to miss class due to sickness, an emergency, or another excused reason, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Unexcused late assignments will receive a deduction.

Please do not text, use the internet, chat online, etc. during our seminar. If you do you will be marked as absent for that class.

Special Accommodation Requests:

All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention during the first two weeks of class. Full disability policies and procedures are available for review at: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

Academic Integrity Policy:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity. I take plagiarism very seriously, and will do all I can to fail you if you are caught violating this policy.

Honor Pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy

By accepting this syllabus and enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for knowing the above policies and the possible penalties – including suspension and expulsion – should you violate the Honor Pledge.

Take an interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

Readings correspond to the day they will be discussed and need to be completed before class. You are required to bring readings to class with you, since we will refer to the text directly. Failure to bring readings to class will result in deductions from your participation grade.

The Politics of Public Memory (Part One)

January 26

- "Lisa the Iconoclast," *The Simpsons*, Season 7, Episode 16 (1996)
- Meline Toumani, "The Last Witness," *Harper's*, November 2014

February 2

Visit from Rutgers250 App team - 4:00-5:00PM

- Kelman, *Misplaced Massacre*, chs. 1- 3

February 9

Archival Research Tutorial with Tom Frusciano and Staff Members of the University Archives and Special Collections

Please note: We will be meeting in the University Archives and Special Collections in Alexander Library

- Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, *Report on Slavery and Justice* (2006)
- Brown University response to *Report on Slavery and Justice* (2007)

February 16

- Kelman, *Misplaced Massacre*, ch. 4 - end

History Programming: The Opportunities, Possibilities, and Obstacles Associated with Producing History for the Public

February 23

- Seth Bruggeman, "The New Labor History Museum: A Status Report," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 9 (2012): 133-49.
- Jennifer Tyburczy, "All Museums Are Sex Museums," *Radical History Review* 113 (Spring 2012): 199-211.
- Amy M. Tyson and Azie Mira Dungey, "'Ask a Slave' and Interpreting Race on Public History's Front Line: Interview with Azie Mira Dungey," *The Public Historian* 36 (2014): 36-60.
- Kevin Murphy, "Walking the Queer City," *Radical History Review* (Spring 1995): 195-201.
- Richard White, "What is Spatial History?"
<http://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29#24>
- Emily Thompson, "The Roaring 'Twenties: an interactive exploration of the historical soundscape of New York City," *Vectors*,
<http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/index.php?project=98> (please explore this website before we meet as a class)

March 2

In-class presentations on a digital history project, exhibition, or website

March 9

Midterm Exam

Public History Methodologies

March 23

Oral History workshop with members of the Rutgers Oral History Archives

- Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different?" in eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 32-42.
- Mark Tebeau, "Listening to the City: Oral History and Place in the Digital Era," *Oral History Review* 40, no. 1 (2013): 25-35.

March 30

- Ian Tyrell, "Going Public: Public and Applied History, 1890-1930" in *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 153-169.
- Ivan Illich, "To Hell With Good Intentions," Speech Delivered in Cuernavaca, Mexico, April 20, 1968
- Gregory Jay, "The Engaged Humanities: Principles and Practices for Public Scholarship and Teaching," *Journal of Engagement and Community Scholarship* (2010): 51-63.
- Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, "Teacher Education and the Purposes of History," in *Teaching History for the Common Good* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 244-66.

April 6

Meeting with Rutger 250 App Team
In-Class Work on Group and Individual Projects

April 13

In-class movie screening: The Cave of Forgotten Dreams, dir. Werner Herzog (2010)

- Ann Cvektovich, "In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture," in *Camera Obscura* (2002)

The Politics of Public Memory (Part Two)

April 20

Hayden, *The Power of Place*, Part One

April 27

Hayden, *The Power of Place*, Part Two

<p><u>Saturday, May 2 - Optional Class Field Trip to Lower Manhattan, to see 9/11 Museum and Memorial; Irish Hunger Memorial</u></p>
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May 4

- Adam Gopnik, "Stones and Bones: Visiting the 9/11 memorial and museum," *The New Yorker*, July 7, 2014
- Micki McElya, "Remembering 9/11's Pentagon Victims and Reframing History in Arlington National Cemetery," *Radical History Review* (2011): 51-63.
- Stephen Brier and Joshua Brown, "The September 11 Digital Archive: Saving the Histories of September 11, 2001," *Radical History Review* (2011): 101-9.