

Class meetings: Thursday 5:30-8:15 p.m., Pafford 204

Office hours: Monday and Thursday, 1:30-4:30; Wednesday, 12:30-1:30 at the AHC, if scheduled, and by appointment. All office hours will be in the Center for Public History, Pafford 207, 678-839-6141

Course description

This course is designed to introduce students to the theory and practice of public history. While historians have been involved with the public for many years, the practice of public history has become increasingly professionalized since the 1970s, marked by the development of the National Council on Public History (NCPH).

The National Council on Public History defines public history “a movement, methodology, and approach that promotes the collaborative study and practice of history; its practitioners embrace a mission to make their special insights accessible and useful to the public.” The NCPH website goes on to say that public history is “where historians and their various publics collaborate in trying to make the past useful to the public... That is, public history is the conceptualization and practice of historical activities with one’s public audience foremost in mind. It generally takes place in settings beyond the traditional classroom. Its practitioners often see themselves as mediators on the one hand between the academic practice of history and non-academics and on the other between the various interests in society that seek to create historical understanding. Public history practitioners include museum professionals, government and business historians, historical consultants, archivists, teachers, cultural resource managers, curators, film and media producers, policy advisors, oral historians, professors and students with public history interests, and many others.”

Working in the field of public history is challenging but extremely rewarding. Public historians are expected to be good historians, proficient in historical research and well-versed in historical scholarship, but also to possess the skills and knowledge of how to present history to the public. A growing public of scholarship has emerged on the practice of public history, providing ideas on how best to accomplish our goals while also examining ethical issues and challenges that we face. To provide a broad introduction to the field, this class will survey public history scholarship, explore the issues in public history practice, and examine career opportunities in the field while also offering hands-on, practical experience through developing a grant proposal and completing a “real-world” public history project.

Course objectives

1. To identify and understand the intellectual, ethical, and professional issues that public historians confront.
2. To develop an understanding of the ways in which public historians shape public perceptions of the past and the ways in which public perceptions of the past shape the field of public history
3. To understand important historical developments in the field of public history.
4. To provide field experience and develop skills in public history practice.
5. To help students understand the many aspects of employment in the field of public history.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to turn in their own work. Adopting someone’s words or ideas as your own is a serious violation of academic honesty. A student who turns in any work that is plagiarized from another source (whether a book, article, on-line source, or another student in the class), the student will receive an automatic “F” as the final class grade. If two students turn in the same work, both students will receive an

“F.” The History Department has adopted the American Historical Association’s statement on plagiarism. Please visit our website at <http://www.westga.edu/~history/statementonplagiarism.pdf> so that you are familiar with the definition of plagiarism.

Required Readings

Books:

Andrew Ferguson, *Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe’s America*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007. *

James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia, *Public History: Essays from the Field*.

David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.*

James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. New York: New Press, 2006.*

Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.*

Articles and book chapters are available either on “e-reserve” on the library home page (password—*public*) under our course name and number or on J-STOR

Course Assignments and Grades

Grant proposal (25 points):

Each student will write a grant proposal for the Georgia Humanities Council. Students will design a project, identify a potential sponsoring organization, and prepare a “mock” grant proposal, complete with humanities scholars and budget. Each grant must meet the guidelines required by the Georgia Humanities Council grant program. Arden Williams, program officer at the Georgia Humanities Council, will come to class to talk about the grant program. For more information on GHC and its grant program, visit the GHC website at www.georgiahumanities.org

While this is a “mock” grant, if you envision a project that you would like to undertake or if you are involved with an agency or organization that would like you to develop a grant proposal, you are more than welcome to write a “real” grant proposal that you could submit to the GHC for funding.

Class project (20 points):

All students will participate in a real-life public history project for the Ingram Library. The Ingram Library is about to undergo extensive renovations, and the Library Director, Ms. Lorene Flanders, is interested in promoting the history and development of the library as it moves into the future. We will meet with Library representatives involved in this project, including Lorene Flanders and Catherine Hendricks; design a realistic project that we can complete during the course of the semester; and present that project to the Library staff on our final class day.

The project is a group project that requires everyone to participate actively as a member of the team. The class will divide up the tasks and responsibilities and everyone is expected to pull their weight as team members. An important characteristic of public history work is that public historians are often required to work on a team, so this assignment will test not only your ability to work and think as a public historian but to also to perform as a member of a team. The student team will develop a schedule to complete this project, and all students must meet this schedule for the project to be successful. Please note that you will be required to meet with team members outside of class.

At the end of the semester, each student will write a minimum 1000-word statement that (1) describes what work you personally completed for the team, (2) reflects on what you learned about public history

through the project, and (3) evaluates your performance as a team member. This statement is due on the final exam date. Project grades will be assessed on my observations of your work throughout the semester, on the final project evaluation you write, and on the quality of the work that you performed for the project.

Journal (25 points)

Students will write a minimum of 500 words each week reflecting on the readings for that week and bring these journal entries to class each Thursday. The journals will be informal. I prefer word-processed, but neat handwriting will also be accepted. I will provide a question to write about each week. No late journals will be accepted. No journals will be due on October 29, November 12, December 3, or December 10.

Public History interview (10 points)

Each student will find a public historian practicing in or near his or her home community, interview that individual to learn more about his or her involvement in the field, and write a minimum 1000-word paper on what you learned. Please ask the public historian questions such as (1) what background and training does s/he have, (2) what his or her job entails, (3) what s/he likes and dislikes about his or her job, (4) what aspect of his or her training best prepared him or her for the position, (5) why s/he works in the field of public history, (6) what s/he considers some of the most pressing issues among public historians today, (7) what challenges s/he faces, and (8) what rewards s/he experiences in the job.

Resume (5 points): Students will write a resume geared towards employment in the field of public history. Each student will create a resume that is tailored to a particular aspect of public history that you choose (museum educator, archivist, historic preservationist, etc). On the designated class day, students will bring two copies of their completed, copy-edited resumes for a collaborative workshop to strengthen those resumes. A revised resume will be due on the final exam date.

Class participation and attendance (15 points):

Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and being prepared to discuss the topics on the class schedule. Points in this category will be awarded based on the following three criteria: (1) class attendance, (2) class participation, including contributing to class discussions and raising issues or questions for discussion, (3) asking questions to or responding to questions asked by our guest speakers.

Because this class only meets once a week and much of what I hope we learn will come through class discussions and guest speakers, excessive absences will lower your final course grade. If you miss three or four classes, your final grade will be lowered by one letter grade; if you miss five or six classes, your final grade will be lowered by two letter grades; missing more than six classes will lower your final grade by three letter grades.

Class Schedule

Note: Readings listed for each class meeting are due on the class day referenced. Additional readings may be assigned. Writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed. *This schedule is subject to change.*

- August 13: Introduction to class;
Guest speaker: Dr. Keith Hebert, former historian at the Georgia historic preservation office
- August 20: Defining the field: What is Public History?
Read: in *Public History*: 3-42; “What is Public History,” accessible at <http://www.ncph.org/WhatisPublicHistory/tabid/282/language/en-US/Default.aspx>
- August 27: Using History
Discussion of Ingram Library history project
Read: Ferguson, *Land of Lincoln*
- September 3: Understanding the “Public” in Public History I
Read: Carl Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian” *American Historical Review* 39 (1934): 219-231 [available on JSTOR]; Rosenzweig and Thelan, “The Presence of the Past: Patterns of Popular History-Making,” on e-reserve
- September 10: Humanities and Public History; Community History
Read: *Public History*, pages 203-214
Review the Georgia Humanities website, particularly the section on “Grantmaking” at www.georgiahumanities.org
Guest speaker: Arden Williams, Georgia Humanities Council
- September 17: Understanding the “Public” in Public History II
Read: Rosenzweig and Thelan, “Afterthoughts,” on e-reserve;” Cameron and Gatewood, “Excursions into the Un-Remembered Past: What People Want from Visits to Historic Sites,” *The Public History* 22 (3) (Summer 2000): 107-127 [available on JSTOR]
Due: Interview with a public historian
- September 24: History Wars
Read: Linenthal and Engelhardt, “Introduction: History Under Siege” and “Anatomy of a Controversy,” on e-reserve; and additional readings to be announced
- October 1: History and Memory: The Holocaust
Guest: Dr. Tim Schroer, UWG History Department
Read: Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*
- October 8: Museums, Parks, and Historical Societies
Read: *Public History*, pages 141-156, 187-202, 231-356
- October 15: No class, fall break
- October 22: Slavery and Public History
Read: James and Lois Horton, *Slavery and Public History*

- October 29: Cultural Resource Management and Historic Preservation
Guest speaker: Terri Lotti, Georgia Department of Transportation
Read: *Public History*, 129-140;
Due: Rough draft of grant proposal
- November 5: Archives, Editing, Film, Business and Consulting
Read: in *Public History*, pages 45-128, 217-230, 371-396
- November 12: Resume workshop
Due: Your resume
- November 19: Memory and History
Reading: Glassburg, *Sense of History*
- November 26: Thanksgiving break, no class
- December 3: Grant proposal presentations
Due: Grant proposal and one-page executive summary to present to class
- December 10: Final exam--Class project presentations
Due: Class projects, your written evaluation of your work on the team, and your revised resume