

HIST 502: Applied Historical Research – Spring 2015

Tuesdays, 4:30 to 7:15 p.m. • Library 194

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m.; Thursdays, 9-11:00 a.m.; and by appointment

Course website: <http://502.doinghistory.com>

Introduction

What is public history, and in what ways does it differ from academic history? Should “the public” be the audience for, participants in, or creators of programs and projects that fall under the banner of “public history”? What role should—and do—professional historians take in public history? How do historians working outside the academy make a living? How do they fund their projects?

These are but a few of the questions we will address in this course.

This is a course about methods, controversies, ideas and ideologies, and the ways history gets deployed in everyday life in the United States. We’ll learn from changing cultural landscapes, consider the politics of museum practice, and survey the pleasures and perils of historic preservation in the U.S. We’ll also plan our own digital public history project. Along the way, we will meet practicing historians and think through what it means to practice and preserve history in an increasingly digital world.

Learning goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify significant contemporary projects in public history practice
- identify contemporary issues in, and explain several major methods of, historic preservation
- address the necessity of considering identity politics in public history
- plan, and make the case for funding, digital history projects
- make an argument about the place of “the public” in public history

Course materials (available at the campus bookstore, via online bookstores, and in some cases via Albertsons Library’s ebook platform)

- Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds. *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*
- Thomas King, *Our Unprotected Heritage: Whitewashing the Destruction of Our Cultural and Natural Environment*

- James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, eds. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*
- Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (read it free online at <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read/>)
- Norman Tyler, Ted Ligibel, and Ilene Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*
- iBook: Dr. Madsen-Brooks is drafting an ebook, and will pilot parts of it throughout the semester. Sections of the book will be used during class throughout the semester; she will provide instructions on how to access each version of the book.

In addition, you will need to purchase or borrow an iPad or similar mobile device. This course is part of the MAHR program's mobile learning initiative, in which participating faculty explore the utility of mobile devices to the teaching and learning of public history and the digital humanities.

Participation

The day-to-day requirements of this class are simple: do the required reading, reflect on it, and come to class prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion. (I promise to do the same.)

Your presence in class is very important. Participation in course discussions constitutes a significant portion of your grade (10%). To receive an A for your participation, you must participate meaningfully in class just about every day. Merely attending class will earn you a C- for participation.

A note about digital devices: In most courses, I ask students to turn off digital devices during class, unless they need to use them as an accommodation for a disability. In this seminar, however, on several days we'll be exploring digital history, so in many cases you'll find a laptop, a tablet, or other wireless-enabled mobile device useful or even necessary. That said, I prefer that when we meet for our seminar, students use their computers and phones only for course-related activities. Using them for outside activities—e.g. checking e-mail, updating Facebook, or texting—tends to divide our attention, so I appreciate your restraint.

Writing

The quality of your writing—both its clarity and the depth of thought expressed in it—contributes significantly to your final grade in this course. It is imperative, then, that you schedule sufficient time to conduct the research required for each project, write a solid first draft, and conduct several revisions. I recommend you form a writing group with two or three other students to swap papers or projects at least a few days before they are due.

Late assignment policy

In the historical professions, deadlines matter. Exhibitions must open on time. Grant proposal deadlines aren't negotiable. Collaborative public history endeavors—like building digital tools and organizing festivals—require everyone to contribute in a timely manner so that work may

proceed on schedule. The same holds true for this class. **Assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due.** Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (e.g. a B becomes a B-) after the beginning of class, and I will deduct an additional 1/3 grade for each 24 hours that pass before you turn in the paper.

That said, I'm not heartless. If you have an emergency or anticipate not being able to turn in your paper on time, come see me and we'll see if we can work something out.

Please note: **Technological failure does not constitute an emergency.** Hard drives fail, servers go down, file transfers time out, and files get corrupted. You must plan for such contingencies: keep backups of your files, have extra ink cartridges handy, know where the local wifi hotspots are in case your home internet connection goes down. Technological issues are not excuses for late work. Please protect yourself (and your grades) by managing your time and backing up your work.

Grade distribution

- Class participation: 10%
- Public history career introduction (blog post): 15%
- Reflections on assigned readings (on blog), plus comments on others' reflections: 25%
- Digital public history project proposal: 30%
- Major grant proposal to fund digital public history project: 20%

Grading scale

At the end of the course, I enter letter grades into Blackboard, and Blackboard converts letter grades into percentages (so, for example, a student who received a B- on every assignment would end the course with a final percentage of 81%). Students with the following cumulative percentages will receive the associated final course grades:

A+: 97-100	A: 93-96	A-: 90-92
B+: 87-89	B: 83-86	B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79	C: 73-76	C-: 70-72
D+: 67-69	D: 63-66	D-: 60-62
F: 59 and below		

Plagiarism

A student commits plagiarism not only if she turns in someone else's work as her own, but also if she borrows others' ideas or phrases without giving them credit. We can discuss this in class if anyone has any questions. Any student who plagiarizes or cheats on any assignment may receive a grade of zero on the assignment and an F in the course and may be subject to academic discipline by the university.

I am interested in *your* thoughts and *your* creative and analytical work. Please share them with me!

Accommodations

I need to hear from anyone who has a disability that may require some modification of seating, assignments, or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please see me after class or during my office hours.

Talk to me

I will be available during my office hours to address your concerns with the class and assignments. I encourage you to come see me if you feel you have not been offered a chance to participate in class discussion, you are troubled by a particular assignment, you would like to talk more with me about an issue raised in class, or you have concerns about your performance in the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please complete each set of readings before class on the date shown.

January 13: Introduction

January 20: Shifting paradigms

- *Letting Go*, pp. 7 - 155

January 27: Shifting paradigms, continued

- *Letting Go*, pp. 156 - 321

February 3: Difficult topics in public history

- *Slavery and Public History*

Feb. 10: Difficult topics + museums as social institutions = Museums address Ferguson

- See links on website.

February 17: Museums as social institutions, continued

- *The Participatory Museum*: Read pp. i - 126; skim the rest, focusing on topics or case studies of interest to you.
- During the week, visit one of Boise's museums and identify (a) existing participatory elements of its exhibits or programming and (b) opportunities to further integrate participatory elements.
- **Public history career introduction due** (post on blog by Monday 2/16 at noon)

February 24: Historic Preservation, part I

- Tyler et. al., *Historic Preservation* chapters 1, 2, 3 (in chapter 3, skim pp. 63-102 and read pp. 103-119).

- “Teaching Preservation: What’s Endangered in Boise?”
<http://blog.preservationnation.org/2010/06/08/teaching-preservation-whats-endangered-in-boise/>

March 3: Historic Preservation, part II

- Tyler et. al., *Historic Preservation* chapters 4 (skim), 5, 6 (skim), 7 (read through p. 220; skim 221-235), 9, 11.
- Explore <http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/> -- especially <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nhl/index.htm>

March 10: To be determined by student interest

March 17: The public’s practice of history, analog and digital

- See links on website.

March 24: Spring break. Class does not meet.

March 31: Careers and entrepreneurialism

- See links on website.

April 7: Ethical dilemmas, Part I: deploying history for political ends

- See links on website.

April 14: Ethical dilemmas, Part II

- King, *Our Unprotected Heritage*
- Optional: Browse Tom King’s blog, CRM Plus: <http://crmplus.blogspot.com/>

April 15-18: National Council on Public History conference. Watch social media (especially Twitter and blogs) to find current issues in public history.

April 21: To be determined by student interest

April 28: To be determined by student interest

- **Digital public history project plan due**

Tuesday, May 5: Final exam (5:30-7:30 p.m.)

- **Digital public history project presentations**
- **Grant application due**