

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY | PUBLIC HISTORY PROGRAM

Approaches to Public History

G57.1757.001 (GSAS)
G65.1757.001 (Draper)

Spring Term 2010: Wednesdays, 4:55-7:35pm, SJCC Room 607

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30pm, or by appointment via phone/Skype

DESCRIPTION

This course explores the merging of form and content in creating public history projects. It is structured as a blend of theory and practice, featuring reading-intensive reviews and hands-on experience of some of the major methods in public history, including oral history, film (historical documentaries), and Web-based media. It also investigates issues surrounding historians and education, public policy history, and program/institutional leadership. Guest presenters from some of New York City's foremost historical and cultural institutions provide insights on issues facing contemporary leaders in public history.

AIMS OF THE COURSE

This course is designed to enable you to . . .

- understand in a general way the methodologies public historians use in order to communicate and collaborate with various publics;
- be conversant with public history's methodological literature in educational programming, oral history, documentary film and video production, and policy research;
- hear practicing public historians discuss their experience with these approaches to public history;
- evaluate model public history projects, writing and presenting about the theoretical and methodological complexities inherent in administering such undertakings;
- gain some hands-on experience putting public history methodologies (such as conducting oral history interviews) into practice; and
- select one particularly interesting approach to public history within the general theme of "New York Neighborhoods" and develop a proposal for a substantial research project based on this methodology.

CLASS TOPICS and ASSIGNMENTS

The Practice of Public History

1/20/2010 - Week 1: Public History and a Sense of Place

Guest Presenter: Marci Reaven, Managing Director, CityLore, and Director, Place Matters project

Required Reading: Marci Reaven and Steve Zeitlen, *Hidden New York* (Rutgers University Press, 2006).

Assignments for Week 1:

- Come prepared to begin the term with questions for our guest, Marci Reaven, by reading excerpts of her book *Hidden New York*, available in print from various booksellers or online via NYU Bobst eBook (search on the book and click on the hotlink for online digital access).
- Visit the City Lore Web site, <http://www.citylore.org> and its Place Matters project, <http://www.placematters.net>.

This session will explore the challenges in matching methodologies and content in creating successful public history projects, including strengths and limitations of each methodology. We will discuss the intellectual path from concept to initial research for the class projects under the general theme of “New York Neighborhoods.”

1/27/2010 - Week 2: Local & Community History Methodology

Required Reading: James Goodman, *Blackout* (North Point Press, 2005).

Assignments for Week 2:

- Explore the following sites to develop a critical understanding of the various approaches to presenting a NYC historical event (the Blackout of 1977).

Wikipedia article:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City_blackout_of_1977

Up From Flames, (<http://www.upfromflames.com/>), created by the Brooklyn Historical Society

The Blackout History Project (<http://blackout.gmu.edu/home.html>), created by the Center for History and New Media, George Mason University

- Post comments and discussion questions based on the Goodman book and the Web sites on the class Blackboard site (by Tuesday noon), with particular focus on the concepts of history, events, and neighborhoods.
- Bring to class preliminary ideas for your project to brainstorm with your peers.

Public History and Education

2/3/2010 - Week 3: Public Historians and Education

Required Readings:

Gary Nash, "Reflections on the National History Standards," *National Forum*, Summer 1977 (77:3), 14-18. (Blackboard)

Cary Carson, "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" *Public Historian*, November 2008 (30:4), 9-27. (Blackboard)

Selections from: William B. Crow and Herminia Din, *Unbound By Place or Time: Museums and Online Learning* (American Association of Museums, 2009). (Blackboard)

Assignments for Week 3:

- Post discussion questions based on the reading(s).
- Find an example of public history education and evaluate it, posting your evaluation online, and submit it to Professor Lonier at the end of class. This might be an educational handout, a physical exhibit that is currently "live," a lesson plan for K-12 educators, a website, a game, a contest, a walking tour, or any other kind of educational material or activity associated with a public history organization. You can choose to evaluate an educational item from a historical organization you have visited or are interested in visiting, or you can choose an item from any of the sample sources below:

National History Education Clearinghouse Web site
<http://teachinghistory.org/>.

Teaching with Historic Places -- Lesson Plans. *National Park Service: National Register of Historic Places*.
<http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/descrip.htm>.

The Valley in the Classroom. *The Valley of the Shadow*.
<http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/teaching/vclassroom/vclasscontents.html>.

Seeking Michigan -- Teach. *Seeking Michigan*.
<http://seekingmichigan.org/teach>.

Immigration History--Lesson Plans, Primary Sources and Activities from The Tenement Museum.
http://www.tenement.org/education_lessonplans.html.

Teacher/Student Resources. *The Henry Ford*.
<http://www.hfmgv.org/education/resources.aspx>.

2/10/2010 - Week 4: The Practice of Public History Education

Guest Presenters:

Ellen Noonan, Project Director and Media Producer, American Social History Project, CUNY; and Marie Scatena, Faculty, Oral History Master's Program, Columbia University and formerly Project Director, Education Department of the Chicago History Museum

Assignments for Week 4:

- Create a lesson plan or other educational activity to introduce a visitor to a New York neighborhood within a Public History context.
- Submit a list of at least three (and no more than five) proposed research projects, with one paragraph for each project listing its pros and cons. Is it something that you would need technical training to carry out? Something expensive? Something that might be interesting to a large group of people? Something that might change public policy for the better
- Visit the U.S. Government Web site on Teaching American History, <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teachinghistory/>
- Visit the National History Day Web site, <http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/>
- Come prepared to ask thoughtful questions of the presenters on public history and education.
- Submit your example lesson plan and your proposed research projects to Professor Lonier at the end of class.

Oral History

2/17/2010 - Week 5: History and Theory of Oral History

Required Readings:

Donna DeBlasio, Charles Ganzert, et al, *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2009).

Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader Second Edition* (Routledge, 2006). (Selections on Blackboard or full text in Bobst Reserve holdings.)

Assignments for Week 5:

- Post discussion questions based on the readings.
- Compile a bibliography of at least five research sources, and post it online. Come prepared to discuss your process and the status of your initial project development, and to submit your five research sources to Professor Lonier at the end of class.
- Read the Tutorial and take the Certification Exam for NYU's UCAIHS Human Research program, <http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihstutorial>

2/24/2010 - Week 6: The Practice of Oral History

NOTE: This class will meet at the Brooklyn Historical Society.

Guest Presenters: Kate Fermoile, Brooklyn Historical Society, VP for Exhibits and Education; and Jenny Pachucki, Oral Historian, 9/11 Memorial Museum.

Assignments for Week 6:

- Explore and evaluate all three of the following oral histories and discuss online:
 - “Oral Histories of the American South”
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp>
 - “Voices From The Thirties: Life Histories from the Federal Writers’ Project,” <http://www.lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/exhome.html>
 - “Remembering Stonewall Radio Documentary,”
http://soundportraits.org/on-air/remembering_stonewall
- Meet at the Brooklyn Historical Society and come prepared to ask thoughtful questions of the presenters

3/3/2010 - Week 7: Oral History Presentations

Assignments for Week 7:

- Conduct a sample oral history interview, transcribe a few minutes, and post your interview and comments on the experience online.
- Come to class prepared to present and discuss your oral history interview, and to submit your brief transcription to Professor Lonier at the end of class.

Film and Media

3/10/2010 - Week 8: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations of History and Film / Media

Required Readings:

Selected readings from special issues of the *American Historical Review* (December 1988) and *The Public Historian* (Summer 2003) on History and Film.
(Blackboard)

Assignments for Week 8:

- Post discussion questions on the readings.
- Turn in a one-paragraph description (abstract) of the project you have chosen to write a proposal for. The paragraph should make a case for the project and briefly describe how it will be carried out in language appropriate for the general public.

3/17/10 - No class. Spring break.

3/24/2010 – Week 9: The Practice of History in Film and Media

Guest Presenters: Gail Freedman, documentary filmmaker and President, Parrot Productions; and Tracy Bunting, Associate Producer, *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe*.

Assignments for Week 9:

- Based on the issues raised in the readings and class discussion in Week #8, write a short (300–500 words) reflection on a movie or television program based on historical material to submit at the end class.
- Come prepared to ask thoughtful questions of the presenters.

3/31/2010 - Week 10: History in Film and Media Presentations

Assignment for Week 10:

- Write a 3- to 5-page outline of a historical documentary you might someday make OR use existing still or moving images to create a storyboard for a historical documentary you might someday make. Come to class prepared to discuss your documentary outline or storyboard, and to submit it to Professor Lonier at the end of class.

Choose any technology you are familiar with to construct the storyboard: PowerPoint can work quite well, but you can also use desktop publishing software. You may also use pen and paper or a flip chart. Your ideas, not the technology, are of primary importance.

Public History Meets Public Policy

4/7/2010 - Week 11: History and Theory of Public Policy History

Required Readings:

Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1988).

Hugh Davis Graham, “The Stunted Career of Policy History: A Critique and Agenda,” *The Public Historian* (15:2, Spring 1993), pp. 15-37. (Blackboard)

“Roundtable: Responses to Hugh Davis Graham’s ‘The Stunted Career of Public History: Critique and Agenda,’” articles by Critchlow and Stearns & Tarr, *The Public Historian* (15:4, Autumn, 1993). (Blackboard)

R. Thomas Dye, “The Rosewood Massacre: History and the making of Public Policy,” *The Public Historian* (19:3, Summer 1997), pp. 25-39. (Blackboard)

Assignments for Week 11:

- Post discussion questions on the readings.
- Turn in an annotated bibliography of 15 historical and/or methodological sources related to your final project.

4/14/2010 - Week 12: Public Policy History Presentations

Assignment for Week 12:

- Research a current public issue (e.g., the redevelopment of Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards) that relates to your New York City neighborhood, and write a 750-word Op-Ed article that presents an informed, persuasive argument discussing how history affects policy in this case. Post your Op-Ed piece online and prepare two thoughtful responses to other student contributions. Come to class prepared to discuss what you've written regarding a public policy issue and your chosen neighborhood, and your comments on other student contributions (print out the other students' Op-Ed pieces so you will have them as reference).
- Refer to <http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Write-an-Op-Ed-Piece&id=3290390> and other sites online for suggestions on writing your Op-Ed article.

4/21/2010 - Week 13: Program Leadership and Funding

Guest Presenter: Jane McNamara, Director of Grants and Programs, New York Council for the Humanities

Required Reading:

Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization* (Harper, 2006).

Assignments for Week 13:

- Post discussion questions on the readings.
- Select three public history institutions and review their Web sites for their mission statements and organizational structures. What can you deduce about their organizational strengths and challenges? Post your analysis online, and come to class prepared to discuss your findings.
- Visit the New York Council for the Humanities Web site and review the organization's mission and programs so that you can ask informed questions of our guest. <http://www.nyhumanities.org/>

4/28/2010 - Week 14: Discussion of Final Projects

Assignment for Week 14:

Come to class prepared to discuss your final project. You will describe your project to the class, and as a class we will discuss it. We will evaluate its rationale (Is this something that needs to be done? Why?), its implementation (Who will do the work? How much will it cost?), and its theoretical resonance (Which of the readings from this semester are relevant? Why and how?).

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

To gain the most from this class, you must take responsibility for your education and participate as an active learner in the class. To create an engaged community, everyone agrees to attend each class and to come fully prepared to participate by completing all the readings. To create a positive environment, each class will begin promptly, and laptop and cell phone use is limited to outside the classroom.

To evaluate your progress in reaching your goals (and to provide you feedback on your learning), a variety of assignments have been created. All build cumulatively toward your final grade, with the final project worth 25% of that mark. The assignments, their due dates, and their relative contribution to your course grade are indicated below.

This class is supported by Blackboard, NYU's online education tool. As part of this class, you will be asked to access files, post work, and provide analysis and comments. These activities will become an integral part of the class, and of your grade.

Blackboard postings are due by NOON the Tuesday before the next class.

Blackboard postings and online discussions; preparation and participation in sessions featuring guest presenters. (15%)

Find an example of public history education and evaluate it, posting your evaluation online. This might be an educational handout, a physical exhibit that is currently "live," a lesson plan for K-12 educators, a website, a game, a contest, a walking tour, or any other kind of educational material or activity associated with a public history organization. **(Due Week 3)** (10%)

Create a lesson plan or other educational activity to introduce a visitor to a New York neighborhood within a Public History context. **(Due Week 4)** (10%)

Conduct a sample oral history interview, transcribe a few minutes, and be prepared to present and discuss your experience in class. **(Due Week 7)** (10%)

Based on the issues raised in the readings and class discussion in Week #8, write a short (300–500 words) reflection on a movie or television program based on historical material. **(Due Week 9)** (10%)

Write a 3- to 5-page outline of a historical film you might someday make OR use existing still or moving images to create a storyboard for a historical film you might someday make. **(Due Week 10)** (10%)

Research a current public issue (e.g., the redevelopment of Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards) related to your project/neighborhood, and write a 750-word Op-Ed article that presents an informed, persuasive argument discussing how history affects policy in this case. **(Due Week 12)** (10%)

Final Project: 25%

Select one of the methodologies covered during the semester and develop a proposal for a substantial project based on that approach to public history that falls under the general theme "New York Neighborhoods." Sample projects might include a museum exhibit, a walking tour of a neighborhood, a Web site, a series of oral history interviews, a written argument for a public policy change, or a historical film (fictionalized or documentary).

The complete proposal will include:

- an initial "brainstorm list" of at least 3 (and no more than 5) projects you might be interested in spearheading, with one paragraph for each project in which you discuss its pros and cons (**due Week 4**);
- a preliminary bibliography of at least five research sources (**due Week 5**);
- a 1-paragraph abstract of your chosen project (**due Week 8**);
- an annotated bibliography of 15 historical and/or methodological sources (**due Week 11**);
- and a substantial 7- to 10- page project proposal including the rationale, methodology, time estimate, budget, potential funding sources (if any), and vendors (if any) for the project.

Final projects are due on the date we would otherwise have a final examination. Be sure to attach brainstorm list, abstract, and annotated bibliography (possibly revised from initial submission).

NOTE: No incompletes will be given in this class.