

History 5984: Public History
Fall 2009
T 2:00-5:00 p.m.
Moyer Room, Major Williams Hall
Virginia Tech

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Course Description:

Introduction to the theoretical, interpretive, controversial, and practical issues facing public historians. Focus on interpretations and specific issues surrounding the presentation of history in museum exhibits, documentary films, photographic collections, community history projects, the Internet, and a variety of other public venues.

Course Objectives:

- Identify and explain the major theoretical and interpretive frameworks that define public history, i.e., structuralism, social archaeology, memory, and place
- Assess and critique the various approaches to public history, i.e., oral history, digital history, photography, film, urban venues, and material culture
- Use digital technologies (.html, powerpoint, 2D and 3D environments, and hypermedia techniques) in the presentation of public history content
- Research, organize, and critique a public history exhibit

Required Course Readings:

Brennan, Bonnie and Hanno Hardt, eds. PICTURING THE PAST: MEDIA, HISTORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY. Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 280.

Cohen, Daniel J. and Roy Rosenzweig. DIGITAL HISTORY : A GUIDE TO GATHERING, PRESERVING, AND PRESENTING THE PAST ON THE WEB. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, 316.

Davis, Natalie Zemon. SLAVES ON SCREEN: FILM AND HISTORICAL VISION. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, 176.

Drehle, David Von. TRIANGLE: THE FIRE THAT CHANGED AMERICA. Grove Press, 2004, 352.

Linenthal, Edward. PRESERVING MEMORY: THE STRUGGLE TO CREATE AMERICA'S HOLOCAUST MUSEUM. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, 352.

Matos-Rodriguez, Felix V. and Pedro Juan Hernandez. PIONEROS: PUERTO RICANS IN NEW YORK CITY 1896-1948. Arcadia Publishing, Bilingual Edition, 2001, 128.

Tilley, Christopher. READING MATERIAL CULTURE: STRUCTURALISM, HERMENEUTICS AND POST-STRUCTURALISM (SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY). Wiley-Blackwell, 1991, 372.

VIRTUAL JAMESTOWN (<http://virtualjamestown.org>)

Walkowitz, Daniel J. and Lisa Maya Knauer, MEMORY AND THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION ON PUBLIC SPACE. Raleigh: Duke University Press, 2004, 336.

Class Format; 2 parts):

2:00-3:50: devoted to the readings and assignments outlined below

4:00-4:50: for professional development, to include guest lecturers by faculty or professionals in public history and peer reviews of your presentations

Assignments and Grading:

Active participation in class discussions: 40%

Research, organize, and critique a public history exhibit: 40 %

Journal of Class Activities (due at time of final exam; use a spiral notebook): 20 %

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Assignments:

Week 1: Introduction to course, objectives and requirements, grading, and assignments (25 Aug)

Discussion: What do you know about public history?

“Introduction, chapter 18 in Presenting the Past, Benson, Brier and Rosenzweig, eds. [student assigned to this week will distribute]

Introduction to Dreamweaver tutorial on creating a Web site:

http://www.teacherclick.com/dreamweaver8/t_3_1.htm

Week 2: What is Public History? (1 Sept)

“What is Public History?” from Public History Resource Center website

http://www.publichistory.org/what_is/definition.html

“Roundtable on Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life,” in The Public Historian 22 (2000) [student assigned

distributes; if unavailable, substitute Scholar Rosenzweig article. If both available, read both]

AND--For each of the following journals, 1) read at least two articles or reviews related to public history (exhibits, films, projects, etc) and 2) browse at least four sample issues from the past 20-30 years, to get a sense of how public history issues have been in and out of focus for historians in this period: *American Historical Review*; *Culturefront*; *History Workshop Journal* (concentrate on early issues, mission statement); *Journal of American History*; *Radical History Review*; *The Public Historian*; and one other journal of your choice.

Week 3: Theoretical Issues in Public History and Conceptualizing Public Presentations (8 Sept).

Christopher Tilly, Reading Material Culture: Structuralism, Hermeneutics and Post-structuralism

Walkowitz and Knauer, Memory and the Impact...ch 8.

Daniel J. Walkowitz, "The Cultural Turn and a New Social History: Folk Dance and the Renovation of Class in Social History," Journal of Social History (Spring 2006), 781-801 (See Scholar).

From your journal reviews, lets explore what public presentations might be developed

Week 4: Public Exhibits. **Meet at the Taubman Museum, Roanoke with Scott Crawford** (15 Sept)

Linenthal, Edward. Preserving Memory: The Struggle To Create America's Holocaust Museum

At least two exhibit reviews from each: Radical History Review; Journal of American History; The Nation; Oral History Review and two other journals of your choice.

Week 5: The Urban Landscape (22 Sept)

Felix V. Matos-Rodriguez and Pedro Juan Hernandez. Pioneros: Puerto Ricans In New York City 1896-1948

Philip Ethington, "Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge," American Historical Review 105 (December 2000). [Text essay also on scholar]

Week 6: Project Work (29 Sept)

Week 7: Public History on the Internet (6 Oct)

Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig. Digital History : A Guide To Gathering, Preserving, And Presenting The Past On The Web

Virtual Jamestown (<http://virtualjamestown.org>). Also explore in depth *Valley of the Shadow* Civil War Website (<http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/>)

Crandall Shifflett, "The Problem of Design and Navigation: A Case Study from Virtual Jamestown," Digital History, University of Nebraska, 2008.
<http://digitalhistory.unl.edu/essays/shifflettessay.php>

Gary Kornblith, "Venturing into the Civil War, Virtually: A Review," Journal of American History 88 (June 2001) [See Scholar]

Week 8: Public History as Visual History (13 Oct)

Brennan, Bonnie and Hanno Hardt, eds. Picturing The Past: Media, History And Photography

Crandall Shifflett, "Seeing the Past: Digital History as New Model Scholarship," Merlot Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, Vol. 3, No. 1 (March), 58-66. Retrieve at http://jolt.merlot.org/currentissue_Mar07.html [Also on Scholar]

ASSIGNMENT: Demo at least five images that might work in your final project, with historical questions and details about provenance.

Week 9: Student Demos (20 Oct)

Week 10: Public History and Memory (27 Oct)

David Von Drehle, Triangle: The Fire That Changed America

View Ric Burns et.al., New York – watch the Triangle fire part (episode 4) of this ten-part documentary

Week 11: Film and Public History (3 Nov)

Natalie Zemon Davis, Slaves On Screen: Film And Historical Vision

Sonya Michel, "Feminism, Film and Public History," in Presenting the Past (Student assigned distributes)

View: "Black Robe" and "The Mission"

Week 12: Student Presentations (10 Nov)

Weeks 13 – 14: Student Presentations of Projects (17 Nov. & 1 Dec)

Week 15: Student Presentations & Class Evaluation (8 Dec)