

**NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC HISTORY I**

G57.1750  
FALL 2010  
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-5 and By Appointment

**Purpose**

Provide an introductory overview to the public history field in its diverse venues and manifestations.

Consider the ways in which historians have engaged various publics, with particular emphasis on public constructions of history.

Dissect such major theoretical constructs in the field as memory, heritage, community, and commemoration.

Discuss current issues, trends, and theories that continue to change the nature of public history.

Gain a basic understanding of the issues surrounding such public history work as museum exhibits, house and site interpretations, historical societies, historic preservation, and digital projects.

Examine sites where public history work occurs.

Introduce such public history methodologies as oral history, material culture, and archival documentation that historians use to communicate their work.

Develop a sense of basic legal and ethical issues facing public historians who work outside academia.

Supplement the theoretical component of the course with a variety of assignments that analyze the ways in which public historians carry out their work and their responsibilities.

## **Assignments**

Write a 3-4 page essay that evaluates Ronald Rudin's Acadie project and discusses its relationship to the roles, responsibilities, and methodologies of public historians. Due: September 15.

Write a 3-4 page paper that discusses the 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina web sites, examining the roles of public historians in documenting national tragedies and disasters. Due: October 6.

Write a 3-4 page paper that analyzes a particular historic house or site, focusing on the history, major accomplishments, issues, and programming challenges that the house or site faces. Due: October 27.

Write a 800-1000-word review of an exhibit. Due: November 10.

Write a short (700-800 words) description and interpretive analysis of a material culture object of your choice that might be used in an exhibition. Due: December 1.

Prepare a research packet around a particular building as assigned by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. Assignments distributed on October 20. Final project due on: December 15.

Post two or three weekly discussion questions to Blackboard, as assigned.

## **Assignment Time Line**

**September 15** – 3-4 page essay that evaluates Ronald Rudin's Acadie project and discusses its relationship to the roles, responsibilities, and methodologies of public historians.

**October 6** – 3-4 page reflective paper that discusses the 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina web sites, examining the roles of public historians in documenting national tragedies.

**October 20** – distribution of final research assignment and project.

**October 27** – 3-4 page paper that analyzes a particular historic house or site, focusing on the history, major accomplishments, issues, and programming challenges that the house or site faces.

**November 10** -- 800-1000 word review of a history exhibit.

**December 1** – 700-800 word description and interpretive analysis of a material culture object that might be used in an exhibition.

**December 15** – Final project due.

## **Classroom and Grading Policy**

There will be no incompletes in the course.

If you are absent for a class session, you will be responsible for submitting a 4-5 page paper that analyzes the readings for that week, due the following class session.

Assignments are due by the end of class on the dates listed above. They may be submitted electronically or (in the case of papers) turned in at the end of class.

Blackboard postings should be submitted by 5 P.M. on the Monday before class.

Please observe page limits, pay attention to comments on written work, and take comments into consideration.

Grades are determined according to the following criteria: Class Participation and Blackboard Postings (15%); Ronald Rudin Paper (10%); 9/11 and Katrina Site Review (10%); Historic Site House Analysis (15%); History Exhibit Review (15%); Material Culture Analysis (10%); Final Research Project (25%).

## **SEPTEMBER 8 - INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

There are several public history resources that all students should be familiar with.

The National Council on Public History constitutes the major professional association that engages most public historians. The web site: HYPERLINK "<http://www.ncph.org>" <http://www.ncph.org>, contains a wealth of information concerning job opportunities, professional conferences and workshops, publications and other resources. Students should also subscribe to the H-Public listserv (a discussion group), which provides similar services.

Other more specialized web sites also exist that concern various aspects of the public history movement. Historic preservation students at several universities banded together to establish PreserveNet in 1994, which is based at Cornell University and which contains news, job postings, calls for advocacy and internship opportunities for preservationists. This site can be accessed at: HYPERLINK "<http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu>" <http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu>.

The American Association for State and Local History, which seceded from the American

Historical Association in 1940, constitutes the organization of choice for many local historians, historic site managers, and history museum workers. It also publishes numerous handy how-to-do-it manuals and can be found at: HYPERLINK "http://www.aaslh.org" <http://www.aaslh.org>.

The Society of American Archivists, which also broke away from the American Historical Association in 1936, serves as the principal North American organization for the archival profession at: HYPERLINK "http://www2.archivists.org" <http://www2.archivists.org>.

The Oral History Association, established in 1966, maintains a consciously international focus and generates scholarship concerning the relationship between human memory and history. It publishes a journal, *Oral History Review*, operates the H-Oral listserv, and has an informative web site at: HYPERLINK "http://www.oralhistory.org" <http://www.oralhistory.org/>.

The Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, founded by the late Roy Rosenzweig and administered by Daniel Cohen, constitutes the principal source of information for historians interested in digital projects and also operates the History News Network. This excellent resource is located at: HYPERLINK "http://www.chnm.gmu.edu" <http://www.chnm.gmu.edu>.

The National Coalition for History is a Washington-based, non-profit educational organization that provides leadership in history-related advocacy, acting as a clearinghouse for news and information concerning history legislation and political developments. All students should read its updates and subscribe to its RSS feed. Information concerning the organization may be found at: HYPERLINK "http://www.historycoalition.org" <http://www.historycoalition.org>.

## **SEPTEMBER 15 - PUBLIC HISTORY: DEFINITIONS AND PROJECTS**

Required Readings: Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian's Journey Through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009);

National Film Board of Canada, *Life After Ile Ste-Croix*, a film by Leo Aristimuno, produced by Robert Rudin (available for viewing in the Avery Fisher Center at Bobst Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor);

“Remembering Acadie website at the following URL: <http://rememberingacadie.concordia.ca/>

National Council on Public History, “What Is Public History?” at the following URL: HYPERLINK "<http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history/>" <http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history/>

Assignment: Write a 3-4 page essay that evaluates Ronald Rudin's Acadie project (encompassing a book, film, and website) in light of the National Council on Public History's discussion concerning the roles, responsibilities, and methods of public historians.

## **SEPTEMBER 22 - NATIONAL HISTORY AND MEMORY**

Required Readings: Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009);

David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory,” *Public Historian* (Spring 1996), pp 7-23 (E-JOURNAL);

“Roundtable Responses to David Glassberg's ‘Public History and the Study of Memory’, *Public Historian* (Spring 1997), pp. 31-72 (E-JOURNAL);

Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux des Memoire,” *Representations* (Number 26, Spring 1989), pp. 7-24 (E-JOURNAL)

## SEPTEMBER 29 - LOCAL HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

Required Readings: "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth," *The Public Historian* 31:4 (November 2009), pp. 11-66 (E-JOURNAL);

"Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" at the following URL: HYPERLINK "http://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/index.html" <http://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/index.html>;

Joseph Anthony Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) "Introduction: The Concept and the Practitioners of Local History" and "Chapter One: A Place Called Home" (E-BOOK);

Leon Fink, "When Community Comes Home to Roost: The Southern Milltown as Lost Cause," *Journal of Social History* 40:1 (Fall 2006), pp. 119-145 (E-JOURNAL);

Carol Kammen, "Local History's Past," in *On Doing Local History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), pp. 11-41 (BLACKBOARD);

PhilaPlace: Sharing Stories from the City of Neighborhoods," at the following URL: HYPERLINK "http://www.philaplace.org/" <http://www.philaplace.org/>

Maine Memory Network, at the following URL: HYPERLINK "http://www.mainememory.net/" <http://www.mainememory.net/>

## OCTOBER 6 - TRAGIC LANDSCAPES

Required Readings: Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003);

The September 11 Digital Archive at the following URL: HYPERLINK "http://www.911digitalarchive.org" <http://www.911digitalarchive.org>;

Hurricane Digital Memory Bank at the following URL: HYPERLINK "http://www.hurricanearchive.org" <http://www.hurricanearchive.org>

ASSIGNMENT: Write a reflective essay (3-4 pages) examining the two web sites

that discusses the interplay of history and commemoration in documenting national tragedies, considering some of the theoretical points discussed in Foote.

**OCTOBER 13 - HISTORIC PRESERVATION PAST**

Required Readings: Stephanie E. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005);

Randall Mason, "City Hall Park: Hearth of Official Civic Memory," in *The Once and Future New York: Historic Preservation and the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 121-175 (BLACKBOARD);

**OCTOBER 20 - HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUTURE**

Required Readings: Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating A Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997);

Ned Kaufman, "Moving Forward: Futures for a Preservation Movement," in Kaufman, ed., *Race, Place, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge, 2009) (BLACKBOARD);

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

Guest presenters: Sheryl Woodruff and Elizabeth Solomon, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

**OCTOBER 27 - HISTORIC HOUSES**

Required Readings: Seth C. Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens:

University of Georgia Press, 2008);

Patricia West, "Inventing a House Undivided: Antebellum Cultural Politics and the Enshrinement of Mount Vernon," in *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1999) (BLACKBOARD);

Patrick H. Butler III, "Past, Present and Future: The Place of the House Museum in the Museum Community," in Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (AltaMira Press, 2002), pp. 18-42 (BLACKBOARD);

Benjamin Hufbauer, "Reinventing the Presidential Library: The New Displays at the Truman Museum," in *Presidential Temples* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), pp. 139-175 (BLACKBOARD)

ASSIGNMENT: Write a 3-4 page paper that analyzes a particular historic house or site, focusing on the history, major accomplishments, issues, and programming challenges that it faces.

### **NOVEMBER 3 - HISTORIC SITES**

Guest Presenter: Lisa DiCaprio, School of Continuing and Professional Studies, New York University, will discuss public memorialization, as well as two projects that she has organized on the "disappeared" of Chile and the ten year commemoration of Srebrenica (see article below), during the first half of the class.

Required Readings: Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006);

Lisa DiCaprio, "The Betrayal of Srebrenica: The Ten Year Commemoration," *The Public Historian* (August 2009), pp. 73-95 (E-JOURNAL);

"Sites of Conscience: Opening Historic Sites for Civic Dialogue," *Public Historian* (February 2008), articles by Sevchenko and Russell-Ciardi; Madikida, Segal, and van den Berg; Baiesi, Gigli, Monicelli, and Pellizzoli; Russell-Ciardi; Layne; Guembe; and Munk, pp. 9-79 (E-JOURNAL)

### **NOVEMBER 10 - HISTORY MUSEUMS**

Required Readings: James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public*

*History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The Free Press, 2006)

Ruth B. Phillips and Marl Salber Phillips, “Contesting Time, Place, and Nation in the First Peoples’ Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization,” in Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer, ed., *Contested Histories in Public Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009) (BLACKBOARD)

ASSIGNMENT: Write an 800-1000 word review of a history museum exhibition.

## **NOVEMBER 17 - ORAL HISTORY**

Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) (also available as an E-BOOK through Bobst Library);

“Oral Histories of the American South” on the *Documenting the American South* website at: HYPERLINK "http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/" <http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/>

## **NOVEMBER 24 - HAPPY THANKSGIVING**

## **DECEMBER 1 - MATERIAL CULTURE**

Required Readings: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001);

Leora Auslander, Amy Bentley, Halevi Leor, H. Otto Sibum, and Christopher Witmore, “AHR Conversation: Historians and the Study of Material Culture,” *American Historical Review* (December 2009), pp. 1355-1404 (E-JOURNAL)

ASSIGNMENT: Write short (700-800 word) description and interpretive analysis of a material object of your choice that might be used in an exhibition.

## **DECEMBER 8 - THE ARCHIVE**

Required Readings: Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002);

James M. O’Toole and Richard J. Cox, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts*

(Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006), “The History of Archives and the Archives Profession,” pp. 45-86 (BLACKBOARD)

**DECEMBER 15 - WRAP-UP**

Final projects due this week, which will include a public presentation at a site to be determined by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.