

History 659 -- Fall 2005

Public History: The Politics and Practice of History in the Public Sphere

Wednesdays 1:30 – 4:00
Herter 746

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Office Hours: by appointment

This seminar will introduce students the key theoretical and practical issues addressed by historians who work to bring history to a wider public. These themes include: the politics of presenting history to the public, history in popular culture and commerce, the history and theory of historical museum exhibits, and the politics and practice of historic preservation, oral history, and monuments. It is aimed at graduate students who may consider work in the varied fields of public history.

Readings

The books for this course can be purchased at Food for Thought Books on North Pleasant Street. Readings marked "ERESERVE" are available at <http://ereserves.library.umass.edu/> The password is "history." You can read the articles on your screen or print them out. Readings marked "EMAIL" will be sent to you via email, usually in pdf form. You will need Adobe Reader (free) or Adobe Acrobat to read these, available at adobe.com (although Reader is probably already on your computer). From time to time, I may also distribute other brief articles in class or via email.

Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*
Knauer and Walkowitz, *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*
Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*
Mitchell, *Up In the Old Hotel*
Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*
Till, *The New Berlin : Memory, Politics, Place*
West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*
White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*

Recommended:
Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*

Course Requirements

1. Class Attendance and Participation

A lecture class in which one doesn't say a single word all semester might actually be enjoyable and intellectually stimulating, depending on the quality of the readings and lectures. A seminar, however, depends on the regular, informed, energetic participation of its members. I am strongly committed to encouraging everyone to participate in class discussions.

2. Weekly Commentaries

In order to spark discussion, I would like each of you to email me, by midnight the night before class, a brief (no more than one page) series of questions or commentary about the topic and/or readings for that week. This might be a brief review of a reading or readings, or perhaps a discussion of something you saw in the newspaper that seemed germane to the topic of that class. The weekly questions and comments will not be graded, but you must do them (i.e. **not** submitting them will affect your grade).

3. Short Papers

There are several short (2-4 pages) papers described below. Papers are due at the beginning of class.

4. Group Projects

The heart of the course is the group project which you will spend the semester working on with two or three others. Each is a real public history project and not "make work." Indeed, at least one of the projects is extremely timely: your work might help protect an historic building from demolition. The others are important contributions to the public understanding of an aspect of history in western Massachusetts. Each group will produce a final project that will be of great use to institutions and individuals who you will be assisting. You should read through the project and be prepared today to list which projects you would like to work on, in order of preference. I will decide the groups within a day or two and email the entire group and urge you to plan a group meeting immediately. You will present your findings at a public history student conference on **Friday, December 9**; the final drafts of the projects will be due **December 16, by 5 pm, no extensions**. Along with the document you will produce with the group, each of you will write a 5 to 7 page paper reflecting on the experience – the complexities, the frustrations, the excitement – of the group project. That paper is also due on December 16 by 5 pm.

The projects are as follows:

1. New Technologies In an Old Museum: An Interpretive Plan for using new Technologies for the Emily Dickinson Museum

Contact: Jane Wald (413) 253-5272; jhwald@emilydickinsonmuseum.org

The Emily Dickinson Museum, which now comprises both the Homestead, where Emily Dickinson lived most of her life, and the Evergreens, the adjacent home of her brother, Austin, is engaged in a year-long planning effort to chart both the restoration of the buildings, and the interpretive program for the new museum. Your job will be to present a series of options to the museum board about how cutting-edge technologies for interpretation -- from handheld audio tours to video projections, to computer screens to sound installations -- might be used as the museum transforms itself. The project will have two components: surveying the ways other museums -- and in particular house museums -- have employed these new technologies, and propose ways some of these technologies might be employed by this particular museum.

2. Saving Holyoke's Skinner Building

Contact: Joseph Krupczynski, 413-626-4105; josephk@art.umass.edu

The Skinner Coffee House has served the Holyoke Community for over a century. Established by Belle and Katharine Skinner in 1902, the Coffee House was originally used by women employed at the William Skinner & Sons Silk Mill for educational, social, and service activities. The Coffee House, long in disrepair, is now threatened with imminent demolition. The goal of this group will be to raise public awareness about the importance of this building, in order to prevent its demolition, as well as attract the interest of potential uses and rehabilitation funds.

This is not primarily a research project. In fact, much of the research on the Skinner Building was undertaken by a previous group of students in the public history program. You can view some of their work, which became an exhibition at the Wistariahurst Museum in Holyoke, at http://www.holyoke.org/wistariahurst_files/SCHhome.htm Rather, this is a project of historic preservation activism.

3. An Oral History of Workers at UMass-Amherst

Contact: Rob Cox, Special Collections and Archives; 5-6842; rscox@library.umass.edu

The University of Massachusetts was a relatively small state agricultural college until after World War II. In just two decades, beginning in the 1950s, Massachusetts Agricultural College became the University of Massachusetts, an important national research university. The stories of those who worked at UMass during the years of its transformation -- those who built the buildings, kept the grounds, served the food, managed departments, have never been documented. Many of those workers are retired so the institutional memory is disappearing. The goal of this project is twofold: to participate in planning this the oral history project -- developing the rationale and scope of the project, considering methods for interviewing, devising a common set of questions -- and to undertake a sample set of interviews. This group will have the chance to shape an important oral history project, and will help to expand the history of his institution. It also may be the beginning of a Massachusetts Oral History Center, based at UMass.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY READINGS

9/7 Introduction: What is Public History?

Max Page, "Radical Public History in the City," *Radical History Review* 79 (2001) 114-116, at http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/radical_history_review/v079/79.1page.html

9/14 Why Remember?

Readings:

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*, Part I

Carl, Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered at Minneapolis. December 29, 1931.

From the *American Historical Review*, Volume 37, Issue 2, p. 221-236 at

http://www.historians.org/info/AHA_History/clbecker.htm

Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, chapter by David Lowenthal, "The Heritage Crusade and Its Contradictions"

George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language* (1946) at

<http://www.resort.com/~prime8/Orwell/patee.html>

Assignment: Walk the downtown section of Amherst (see map) and list all the ways the past is visible. Bring the list to class.

9/21 The Study of Memory

Readings:

White, *Remembering Ahanagan*, Part II

Knauer and Walkowitz, *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, Introduction

Nora, "Between Memory and History," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), pp. 7-25

EMAIL

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, chapters 1 and 2, to be distributed in class

Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *Public Historian* 18 (Spring 1996): 7-23 **ERESERVE**

Rosenzweig and Thelen, book introduction, afterthoughts, and statistical findings of *Presence of the Past*, at <http://chnm.gmu.edu/survey/>

Assignment: Complete the survey for Rosenzweig and Thelen, *Presence of the Past*, at <http://chnm.gmu.edu/survey/> and get me a copy of your survey before class.

9/28 Museums in the United States I

Visit to Historic Deerfield

Meet at the front of the Flynt Center at Historic Deerfield at 1:30 pm.

Reading:

Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*

Please spend some time at www.historic-deerfield.org and

<http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu>

10/5 NO CLASS -- Rosh Hashanah

10/12 Historic Preservation

Readings:

Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, Introduction, chapters 3, 7, 8, 10

Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan*, chapter 4 **EMAIL**

Knauer and Walkowitz, *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, chapters by Meade, Czaplicka, Carter

Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 1877

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1877/spabman.htm>

The Venice and Burra Charters -- www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html

English Heritage. *Power of place: the future of the historic environment*, 2000.

(<http://www.englishheritage.org.uk/default.asp?wci=WebItem&wce=122>), part 1

National Register of Historic Places -- <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/about.htm> and

http://www.nationaltrust.org/why_preserve.html?cat=7

Definitions of “preservation,” “preservationist,” and “restoration” in the Oxford English Dictionary, available at <http://dictionary.oed.com.silk.library.umass.edu:2048/>

National Park Service materials:

National Register evaluation guidelines & eligibility criteria

www.achp.gov/nrcriteria.html

Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/standards/

National Register, process for listing

www.cr.nps.gov/nr/listing.htm

Browse Massachusetts Historical Commission materials:

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/hppidx.htm>

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/kn3.pdf>

10/19 No Class -- Sukkot -- Class rescheduled for 10/24

Monuments and Memorials

Readings:

Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*

Knauer and Walkowitz, essays by Ross, Zerubavel, Seltz

Harriet Deacon, “Remembering Tragedy, Constructing Modernity: Robben Island as a National Monument,” in Nuttall and Coetzee, eds., *Negotiating the Past*

ERESERVE

Jay Winter, “Remembrance and Redemption , A Social Interpretation of War Memorials,” *Harvard Design Review* **EMAIL**

Assignment: Take note of (and seek out) as many monuments and memorials on the UMass campus as you can. Bring that list to class.

10/26 NO CLASS SIMCHAT TORAH

11/2 Visit to Mashantucket Pequot Museum

John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Creating a Dialogic Museum: The Chinatown History Museum Experiment," in *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine **E-RESERVE**

Max Page, "The Man Who Made Modern America: Alexander Hamilton," review of the New-York Historical Society exhibition, *Journal of American History*, June 2005. **EMAIL**

Faith Davis Ruffins, "Culture Wars Won and Lost: Ethnic Museum on the Mall, Part I: The National Holocaust Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian," *Radical History Review* 68 (Spring 1997): 79-100. **EMAIL**

Edward Rothstein, "Who Should Tell History: The Tribes or the Museums?" *New York Times*, December 21, 2004 **EMAIL**

Pequot Museum at <http://www.pequotmuseum.org/>

National Museum of the American Indian at <http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

Alexander Hamilton Exhibition at <http://www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/>

A review by UMass Professor Alice Nash at <http://www.common-place.org/vol-01/no-01/lessons/>

11/9 Oral History

NOTE: The Oral History Association has its annual meeting in Providence, RI this year, November 2 to 6. I would recommend trying to attend one or more days.

Guest Speaker (tentative): Annelise Orleck, Dartmouth College, author of *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War On Poverty*

Readings:

Mitchell, *Up in the Old Hotel*, "Professor Seagull" and "Joe Gould's Secret"
Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, introduction, chapters 1 **ERESERVE**

The 9/11 Tapes: <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/nyregion/nyregionspecial3/?8dpc>
Sherna Gluck, "What's So Special About Women? Women's Oral History," in Dunaway and Baum, *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (1996), 215-230. **ERESERVE**

Ronald J. Grele, "Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History," in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (1998), 38-52. **ERESERVE**

Look over the following

The New England Center for Oral History, at <http://www.ucc.uconn.edu/~cohadm01/neaoh.html>

Judith Moyer's "Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History" at: http://www.dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html

Oral History guidelines at http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/pub_eg.html#Foreword

11/11 All Day Trip to New York City

Please plan ahead for this trip. We will leave very early -- perhaps 7 a.m. -- in order to be at the Tenement Museum at 11 a.m. We will also visit the slavery exhibition at the New-York Historical Society.

Assignment: Write a review (2 to 4 pages) of the Tenement Museum and/or the slavery exhibition.

11/16 Screening History: Documentary Films and History on the World Wide Web

Readings:

O'Malley, and Rosenzweig, "Brave New World or Blind Alley? American History on the World Wide Web," *Journal of American History* (June, 1997), at

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/bravenewworld.php>

"Process of Making a Historical Film: A Midwife's Tale" at

<http://www.dohistory.org/film/index.html>

Visit at least two of the following websites:

--George Mason University Center for History and New Media at

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/>

--New Deal Network <http://newdeal.feri.org/index.htm>

--Who Killed William Robinson site at the University of Victoria

<http://web.uvic.ca/history-robinson/>

--Journal of Multimedia History <http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/>

--American Memory: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ammemhome.html>

--Sweatshop Exhibition, Smithsonian: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/sweatshops/>

--Lizzie Borden <http://ccbit.cs.umass.edu/lizzie/index.html>

--Memorial Hall Museum at Deerfield <http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu>

--Bayeux Tapestry www.ealdormere.sca.org

Documentary Films:

--*When We Were Kings*

--*Eyes on the Prize*

--*Coney Island*

--*Buena Vista Social Club*

--*At the River I Stand*

--*Uprising of '34*

--*Divided Highways: The Interstates and the Transformation of America*

--*The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till* (a new documentary that should be out this fall)

Assignment: Visit and evaluate (in 2 to 4 pages) two or more of the preceding websites, as well as two or more of the following documentary films. (Obviously, you are not expected to

watch the full *Eyes on the Prize* series, just one episode). Your goal is to find common theme that can link the four documents together.

11/23 Case Study: The Civil War on Screen and Stage

Guest Michael Coblyn, Professor Art, UMass

Readings:

David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, chapters

Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, chapter 6, "The Farb of the Heart" **ERESERVE**

Doris Baizley, *Shiloh Rules*, excerpts to be distributed in class

Richard Rubin, The Ghosts of Emmett Till, New York Times Magazine, July 31, 2005,
email

Assignment: View the first and last episodes of Ken Burns, *The Civil War*, on reserve.

11/30 The Holocaust as Case Study

Guest: Jill Oglie, UMass PhD student and staffperson for the Civic Engagement Initiative, National Park Service

Visit The Civic Engagement Initiative at <http://www.nps.gov/civic/> and the International Coalition of Historic Site museums of Conscience (<http://www.sitesofconscience.org/>) including the 2003 Conference Report.

Readings:

Karen Till, *The New Berlin : Memory, Politics, Place*

Phillip Gourevitch, "Behold Now Behemoth: The Holocaust Memorial Museum: One More American Theme Park," *Harper's*, July 1993. **ERESERVE**

Cynthia Ozick, "Who Owns Anne Frank?," *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997
ERESERVE

Max Page, "The Life and Death of a Document: Lessons from the Strange Career of *The Diary of Anne Frank*," *The Public Historian*, Winter 1999 **EMAIL**

12/7 NO CLASS

12/9 Public History Student Conference, 1 to 5 pm

12/14 Final discussion and evaluation of presentations