HIST 300: Introduction to Public History

Dr. Amanda Van Lanen
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Office Hours: MW 10:30am-noon
            T 1:30-2:30pm
Meets: Tuesday, 3-5:30pm
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Course Description:
There are other career options available to historians, and many of these careers fall under the heading of “public history.” While historians have long worked with museums, archives, government agencies, and private corporations, Public History did not emerge as an identifiable field until the 1970s. Forty years later, most Americans (including other historians) have little understanding of the field or exactly what public historians do. The simplest, but least informative definition of public history is that instead of producing historical scholarship for other academics, public historians produce scholarship through the public. To that end, public historians practice history in a variety of settings including archives, museums, historical societies, federal agencies, and corporations. They manage records, interpret historic sites, preserve historic buildings, edit documents, record oral histories, manage cultural resources, film documentaries, and perform public policy research, to name just a few.

The National Council on Public History defines Public History as “a movement, methodology, and approach that promotes the collaborative study and practice of history; its practitioners embrace a mission to make their special insights accessible and useful to the public.” Over the course of the semester, we will learn how the work of public historians relates to work done by academic historians. First and foremost, public historians are well-trained historians who are highly skilled in research methodologies. Secondly, public history is collaborative and interdisciplinary, drawing on the work of architects, archeologists, anthropologists, city planners, librarians, marketing and business specialists, computer scientists and others.

Public historians acquire and utilize skills, while actively engaging the public as his or her primary audience. This heightens most public historians’ ethical sensitivity. Whose history do we document and preserve? Should the source of funding influence the content of an exhibit? Should we talk about potentially controversial topics in history, and if so, how? How do we make history exciting and meaningful for many Americans who have been taught to believe that history is simply a compilation of very dry and boring facts?

Service Learning: Service learning integrates community service with learning and academic reflection. This is also one of the major goals of public history – to meet community needs through the study of history. This semester, our final project will be a service learning project that meets this definition. We will be working with the Nez Perce County Historical Society to create exhibit plans that may eventually be used to create new and relevant exhibits for the community.
Course objectives:
1. To identify the intellectual, ethical, and professional issues that public historians confront.
2. To evaluate the ways in which public historians shape public perceptions of the past and the ways in which public perceptions of the past shape the field of public history.
3. To explain important historical developments in the field of public history.
4. To apply skills in public history practice through service learning field experience.
5. To describe the many aspects of employment in the field of public history.

Readings:
- Selected articles available on Blackboard or on library reserve

Course Requirements:

Writing Assignments: Over the course of the semester you will be required to write several short reading responses and longer think pieces that address course readings. All course readings should be cited using Chicago/Turabian style notations (aka footnotes). More information about the specific assignments is provided in the course schedule.

Quizzes: Unannounced reading quizzes will also be given over the course of the semester. These are to ensure that everyone is keeping up with the assigned readings. If you come to class prepared to discuss the readings, you will do fine on the quizzes.

Comprehensive Exam: The exam will be a combination of essay, identification, and matching. The exam will cover the major legislation, court cases, and events that have impacted public history, and it will cover the major career components discussed in class.

Attendance and Participation: Active participation is essential. This includes attendance, attentiveness, thoughtful discussion, and respect for others’ ideas. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and being prepared to discuss the topics on the class schedule. Points in this category will be awarded based on the following three criteria: (1) class attendance, (2) class participation, including contributing to class discussions and raising issues or questions for discussion, (3) asking questions to or responding to questions asked by others. I will allow one unexcused absence during the semester. After that, I will subtract 5% from your final course grade for each additional unexcused absence. You are responsible for notifying me before class when you will not be able to attend. Unprepared attendance may be treated as an absence.

Course Project – Service Learning: This semester, we will be working with the Nez Perce County Historical Society to create exhibit plans.

The project is a group project that requires everyone to participate actively as a member of their team. Teams will divide up tasks and responsibilities, and everyone is expected to pull their weight. An important characteristic of public history work is that public historians are often required to work on a team, so this assignment will test not only your ability to work and think as
a public historian but to also to perform as a member of a team. The student team will develop a schedule to complete this project, and all students must meet this schedule for the project to be successful. Please note that you will be required to meet with team members outside of class.

Each team will create an exhibit plan for the museum. More information about completing this project will be posted to Blackboard.

In addition to the team produced exhibit plan, each student will individually write a minimum 750-word statement that (1) describes what work you personally completed for the team, (2) reflects on what you learned about public history through the project, and (3) evaluates your performance as a team member. It will be helpful to keep a journal of your activity as we go along.

Project grades will be assessed on my observations of your work throughout the semester, on the final project evaluation you write, and on the quality of the work that you performed for the project.

Course Policies:

Assignment Submission: Papers are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise specified on the schedule. Assignments should be uploaded through Blackboard OR submitted in hard copy. Late work is not accepted except by prior arrangement with the instructor.

Communication: Since the course involves a significant team-based project, it is important to maintain communication with your instructor and your fellow classmates. Email is the best way to contact me, and I will be sending course announcements via email. It is important to check your LCSC email regularly. I will also be posting updates on Blackboard. Please be sure to send email to the correct address – alvanlanen@lcsc.edu - I am not responsible for email sent to the wrong address.

Academic Honesty:

Any assignment completed without total academic integrity will receive a zero. If a second violation occurs, the student will be assigned an F for the course.

The LCSC Policy on Academic Honesty can be found here: http://www.lcsc.edu/student-affairs/student-code-of-conduct/academic-dishonesty/

Disability Accommodations: Students requiring special accommodations or course adaptations due to a disability and/or a health-related issue should consult their course instructors and the LCSC Student Counseling Center immediately (RCH 111, 792-2211). Official documentation may be required in order to provide an accommodation and/or adaptation.

Additional LCSC information
Click here for the current syllabus addendum: http://www.lcsc.edu/provost/syllabusaddendum/
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<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>A = 92%-100%; A- = 90%-91%</td>
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<td>30%</td>
<td>B+ = 88%-89%; B = 82%-87%</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>B- = 80-81%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>C+ = 78%-79%; C = 72%-77%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>15%</td>
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<td>Final Course Project</td>
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Course Schedule (schedule is tentative and subject to change)

Week 1: Tuesday, August 25
   Topic: Introduction – What is Public History?

Week 2: Tuesday, September 1
   Topic: A History of Historic Preservation in the United States
   Readings:
   - Burcaw, chapters 1-4; 18
   Assignment: Write a 400-600 word reading response for either the Wallace or Patterson article. In your response, identify the author’s main argument and provide your thoughts on the reading.

Week 3: Tuesday, September 8
   Topic: Federal Preservation Efforts
   Readings
   - Excerpt from Kathleen S. Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). On Blackboard
   Assignment: You will be assigned a Supreme Court case that deals with historic preservation. Write a 400-600 word summary of your case and its importance to historic preservation. Be prepared to share your findings in class.

Week 4: Tuesday, September 15
   Topic: Field Trip to Nez Perce National Historic Park
   Assignment: After our field trip, write a 400-600 word response about the visit. What did you learn from the field trip?
Week 5: Tuesday, September 22  
**Topic:** The National Register and Architectural History  
**Readings:**  
- “A Citizen’s Guide to Section 106 Review” on Blackboard  
- *National Register Bulletin* on Blackboard

Week 6: Tuesday, September 29  
**Topic:** Museums Part 1 – Tour Nez Perce County Historical Society  
**Readings:**  
- Burcaw, chapter 5, 9-11  
**Assignments:**  
- In a 400-600 word response, identify one or two of the problems facing museums, according to Ackerson, and propose a solution.  
- Take careful notes during our visit to the historical society in preparation for the review due Tuesday, October 13.

Week 7: Tuesday, October 6  
**Film:** *The Rape of Europa*  
**Readings:**  
- Burcaw, chapter 6-8, 21  
**Assignments:**  
- Take online quiz on Burcaw chapters 6-8, 21 – due Tuesday, October 6 by midnight  
- After watching the film, please submit a 400-600 word response that addresses the ethical considerations of restoring European art. Response due Friday, October 9 at midnight.

Week 8: Tuesday, October 13  
**Topic:** Museums Part 2  
**Readings:**  
- Burcaw chapters 12-15  
- Larry Cebula, “Open Letter to the Curators of the Baron Von Munchausen Historic Home” (On Blackboard)  
- Patricia Pangloss, “You as a Professor should stop bringing into the 21st century all this negativism.” (On Blackboard)  
**Assignments:**
• The class will be divided into two groups. Each person will write a 400-600 word defense of their assigned position. Last names starting with A-L should defend the Smithsonian’s decision to withdraw the Enola Gay exhibit. Last names starting with M-Z should defend the need to keep the exhibit intact. We will have a debate in class.

• Write a 4-6 page (double-spaced, 12 point font) review of the Nez Perce County Historical Society. In your review, consider both the exhibits and care/storage of artifacts. Use Burcaw and other course readings to identify what the historical society is doing well and what they need to improve.

**Week 9: Tuesday, October 20**

Topic: Archives, Libraries, and Corporations
– Guests Samantha Franklin, librarian and archivist and Dr. Marc Entze, editor and consulting historian

Readings:


Assignments: Visit and explore the National Archives website (nara.gov) and an archive website of your choice. In a 400-600 word reading response, discuss what you learned about these specific archives and archives in general from the websites. Also, come prepared with questions for our guests.

**Week 10: Tuesday, October 27**

Project Work Day: Work on group project – submit work update to Dr. Van Lanen by midnight.

**Week 11: Tuesday, November 3**

Topic: History in the Media

Readings:

• Vivien Ellen Rose and Julie Corley, “A Trademark Approach to the Past: Ken Burns, the Historical Profession, and Assessing the Popular Presentations of the Past,” *The Public Historian* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 49-59. (On Blackboard)


Assignment: Write a 4-6 paper (double-spaced, 12 point font) that addresses the following issue - Pick a historically based film or television show of your choice (not a
documentary). What are the notable historical accuracies/inaccuracies in the film? Thinking as a historian, how does your chosen film/episode impact popular perceptions of history? Do you think the presentation of history in the film does more harm or more good in terms of increasing public interest in history? Why? Cite any sources used.

**Week 12: Tuesday, November 10**

**Topic:** History in a Digital Age

**Readings:**

- The 9/11 Digital Archive Website (on Blackboard)

**Assignment:** Explore the 9/11 Digital Archives. The Internet and social media are making it easier for the collection of history to be crowd sourced. In a 400-600 word paper, discuss the pros and cons of the crowd-based creation of digital history. What role do you think historians should play in this process?

**Week 13: Tuesday, November 17**

**Topic:** History in the Digital Age cont.

**Readings:** TBA

**Assignment:** We will be doing a hands-on workshop working with Google Earth and other software to create interactive files.

Tuesday, Nov. 24 – Thanksgiving Break

**Week 14: December 1**

Exhibit and Resume Workshop – Bring copies of your resume and exhibit text for peer and instructor evaluation.

**Week 15: December 8**

Final Project Portfolios due

Presentations by teams of exhibit proposals

Final Exam – Thursday, December 17 at 3:00pm