Public History is:

* A set of theories, methods, and practices that guide the identification, interpretation & presentation of historic resources, with and for the public.

* A way of working—a scholarly demeanor that means talking with people, and not to or at them.

* A set of venues in which historians work beyond classrooms: museums and historic sites, federal and state agencies, historic preservation organizations, public policy institutes, documentary film studies, and other places where historical insight is put to work in the world.

* A state of mind.

Why Public History Matters

Historians and historical insight have, arguably, never been in greater demand. From the history and role of monuments in contemporary society; to the contexts surrounding immigration, mass incarceration and other public policy issues; to the past, present and future of our National Parks, historians are called upon daily to help Americans understand how the urgent issues of our day are part of longer historical trajectories.

Responding to—and anticipating—those needs demands the special skills sets of Public History.

Public historians are constantly grappling with difficult issues. 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 do we engage listeners, and not alienate them?

How do we make history exciting and meaningful to the many Americans who have been taught to believe that history is simply a compilation of very dry and boring facts? These are questions public historians strive to answer every day.
The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the world of public history – both the ideas and questions that make it tick, and the practical, on-the-ground concerns that confront public historians in a variety of professional settings. The course will turn on five key concept areas that inform the world of public history: History and Memory; Shared Authority and/or Inquiry; Agendas and Audiences; Ethics; and Economics and Entrepreneurship.

By the end of the semester, you will have read some of the most significant past and contemporary literature in the field of public history, and, through discussions in and beyond the classroom, have formed your own understanding of what constitutes public history. Through our shared readings, forays into the community, conversations with guest speakers, and through your own public history fieldwork, you will also have a clearer idea of what it means to work in a variety of public history settings in terms of both theory and practice.

This Course: offers students three critical experiences:

Expansion of Professional Knowledge and Skills: readings, activities, & guest lectures will expand, broaden, and deepen, your knowledge of historical methods are used in a variety of professions; you will learn specific occupational terminology that more traditionally trained historians do not learn until after entering a public history profession.

*Experiential Learning: Both individually and in groups, you will apply what you are learning as you learn. Before the class ends you will have not only studied public history: you will have practiced public history.

*Career Exploration: You will discover the different professional fields, collectively referred to as public history that are open to students of history and related humanities fields.

Public historians acquire objects for museums, make sure they are cared for properly, create exhibitions to interpret their meaning for audiences, and share them with researchers.
PUBLIC HISTORIANS often find themselves in situations where people disagree. Tact, diplomacy, humility and patience are among our most important tools. In this class, we will cultivate these important skills, learning to listen actively and with empathy, to present our own ideas in ways that invite careful consideration, and to manage disagreement skillfully. The skills you cultivate in talking with classmates will help you become more effective communicators with the off-campus audiences you will encounter in life.

ALSO, Because Public History is by definition History that happens beyond the classroom, we necessarily welcome a number of guest speakers to discuss their experiences. These visitors are integral to the class and you’re required to attend, and to take notes, just as you would on any other class day. But please do more than merely this. Preparing thoroughly for class and listening intently to the presentation may serve you well individually (should you in the future want to seek an internship or even employment with the speaker), but also reflects on your school as a whole. For some speakers, their encounter with you will form the whole of their opinion of UMass and the students here. Be attentive, be polite, ask good questions and leave them with the impression that they will be glad to meet more UMass students in the future.
Short Writing Assignments

#1: Drawing on all of the readings, exercises and discussion, in an essay of 800 words, answer this question: What is Public History and how does it relate to other kinds of history writing and history education?

#2 & #3: Reviews (800 words) of an exhibition, and a website. Some guidelines: Good reviews involve a little journalism. Don’t forget to include at the top the name of the museum or website’s creator(s). As in any review, the question is not about what you “liked” or didn’t like, but rather an evaluation of what the creators sets out to do, and how well the work achieves those aims. Are the aims appropriate and useful? What was most and least effective? (a hand-out will be provided; please also see Schrag, “How to Write A Review,” at http://historyprofessor.org/reading/how-to-write-a-review/).

Grading

20% Participation

30% Short Essays (10% each)
  -What is Public History?
  -Website Review
  -Exhibit Review

25% Team Presentation

25% Team Project

Team-based assignment:

Over the course of the semester the class will complete a significant project for the Springfield Museums, which has acquired the boyhood home of author Ted Geisel (a/k/a/ Dr. Seuss).

Book-length Readings:

- Michel Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*
- Dan Cohen, *Digital History* (online)
- Andrew Hurley, *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities*
- Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation*

Other readings will be distributed in class or through the class website.
UMass Academic Honesty Policy

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty.

Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct.” “Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. The procedures outlined below are intended to provide an efficient and orderly process by which action may be taken if it appears that academic dishonesty has occurred and by which students may appeal such actions.

Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent.

http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/downloads/AcademicHonestyPolicy.pdf

UMass Disability Statement

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to making reasonable, effective and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and help create a barrier-free campus. If you are in need of accommodation for a documented disability, register with Disability Services to have an accommodation letter sent to your faculty. It is your responsibility to initiate these services and to communicate with faculty ahead of time to manage accommodations in a timely manner. For more information, consult the Disability Services website at http://www.umass.edu/disability and http://www.umass.edu/disability/students.html
Schedule

TUES SEPT 4: Introduction: What is Public History?


THURS SEPT 6: Discussion: What is Public History? (cont’d)

- Choose 3 blog posts from the History at Work blog: http://ncph.org/history-at-work/
- Review the program for the 2018 National Council on Public History meeting at ncph.org. What do you see? What kinds of issues and topics do public historians talk about when they gather together?

TUES SEPT 11: Discussion: Why, when and how do people care about the past? Who owns the past? What is the nature of historical authority?

- Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History

1ST SHORT WRITING IS DUE: What is history? What is public history? [in your essay, refer at least once to each of the assigned readings to date]
THURS Sept 13: VISIT TO GEISEL HOUSE. Why interpret childhood homes?

- Please browse Wikipedia entries for Dr. Seuss and his publications
- Breuggeman, *Born in the USA*, selections.

<<<September 17 is the last day to drop classes.>>>>

PART I:
HISTORY, MEMORY, AND THE STUFF IN BETWEEN

TUES Sept 18: Who owns the past? What is the nature of historical authority?

- Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagran* [selections]

THURS Sept 20: Public History’s Many Pasts


TUES Sept 25: VISIT TO HISTORIC DEERFIELD

2nd short writing (Exhibit review) due!
PART II:

SHARED AUTHORITY, SHARED INQUIRY, AND HISTORY 2.0

THURS Sept 27: Where does historical authority reside? How, can, and should it be shared?


THURS Oct 6: NO CLASS MEETING: Workshop Day: Field Service Project

TUES Oct 9 – NO CLASS MEETING, Monday schedule at UMass

THURS OCT 11: FIELD TRIP: The Eric Carle Museum

TUES Oct 16: The Dialogic Museum


THURS Oct 18: History and New Media

- Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, Digital History: A Guide
  

  NOTE: This is indeed a book, and is book-length. Budget adequate time.

  3rd short writing (Website Review) due!
PART III: Agendas, Audiences, Ethics

TUES Oct 23: Are Museums Neutral? Can they be? Should they be?

  - Ruth J. Abram, "History is as History Does: The Evolution of a Mission-Driven Museum," 19-42

THURS Oct 25: Confederate Statues to Slavery on Campus: Tracking History Over Time

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Re: campus slavery projects: [readings will be updated closer to September]

TUES Oct 30: Public Historians and Ethical Decision-making

- Lilly School of Philanthropy’s Donor Bill of Rights: https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/giving/donor-rights/index.html
- Society of American Archivists Core Values Statement: https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics

Part IV: ECONOMICS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THURS Nov 1: Historic Preservation


Peruse the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System for Amherst, Mass, and also, if you are a MA resident, your home town: mhc-macris.net/
TUES Nov 6: Preservation, Development, and Gentrification


THURS Nov 8: No full class meeting; this week you will meet in your teams.

THURS Nov 13: Is Heritage Tourism Ethical?


TUE Nov 15: Progress Reports/check-in on Team Project

<<<Thanksgiving Recess, Nov 18-26>>>>

PART V: THE FUTURE OF THE PAST

TUES NOV 27: History in the National Park Service

  This is book-length: budget adequate time.
- Browse the blog National Parks Traveler

THURS Nov 29: Museums Next?

See these blogs (read 3 entries each):

- Museum 2.0 [http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/](http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/)
- Center for the Future of Museums [http://www.aam-us.org/resources/center-for-the-future-of-museums](http://www.aam-us.org/resources/center-for-the-future-of-museums)
  (see also TrendsWatch)
- Uncatalogued museum: [http://uncatalogedmuseum.blogspot.com/](http://uncatalogedmuseum.blogspot.com/)

TUES Dec 4: Immersion Excursion (TBA)

THURS Dec 6: Team Project Presentations

TUES Dec 11: Final class meeting