

University of Houston--Fall 2006
Readings in Public History 6381 Section 05565

Instructor: Dr. William H. Kellar
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Required Books

James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia, eds. *Public History: Essays from the Field*
Phyllis K. Leffler and Joseph Brent, *Public and Academic History: A Philosophy and a Paradigm*
Martin V. Melosi and Philip V. Scarpino, eds. *Public History and the Environment*
Sanford Levinson, *Written In Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*
Benson, Brier, and Rosenzweig, eds. *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*
Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, *A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory*

Articles: I will assemble a packet that you may borrow to photocopy.

Learning Outcomes:

This course will provide an introduction to several aspects of Public History. We will explore the variety of professional opportunities open to public historians, the tension that sometimes develops between academe and public history, ethical issues, controversies, and practical application of public history skills. History has become "big business" in Hollywood, on PBS, the History Channel, Discovery, A&E as well as for network television, publishing companies and the tourist industry. Since few Americans actually learn much about our history in school, how do people acquire historical knowledge? How is "history" presented to the masses? Who "owns" our history? Why do "they" decide what is presented and how the stories are told? Where do public historians fit into all of this? What responsibilities do we, as public historians, have to our nation, our profession, our audience, and ourselves? We will examine the ways in which history is preserved and presented, along with the standards, motivating factors, and reasoning that dictates what is "told" in history and what is not.

Our theme for the semester is the exploring the issues in different areas of public history. We will explore many questions as we discuss this theme. The goal is not to find hard and fast answers but to examine the issues, read the ideas expressed by the experts in public history, and draw such conclusions as will prepare us for a future as both historians and consumers of history.

- Students will demonstrate mastery of a variety of historical skills
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of methodologies relevant to community needs different from those of public, private or higher education
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of a specific area of public history (oral, community, or corporate history, museums, archives, or related institutions)

Weekly Assignments:

Each week we will discuss the topics based upon the readings listed below. Each student should prepare a set of summary notes on the readings in which major and supporting themes are identified, as well as major issues, general author information, and critical comments. Each student will take the lead in the discussion of one article every week. Periodically, I will invite

speakers to discuss their public history activities with us. Clearly, the quality of each class depends upon the energy generated from well-prepared students who participate in the discussions.

Written Assignments (See Calendar for due dates):

- Weekly Readings Review—2-3 pages, typed, double-spaced
- 1 Lab/presentation (Visit/Evaluate two Houston-area History Museums)
- 1 Research Paper/presentation

Weekly Readings Review: Every week students will turn in a 2-3 page review of the articles assigned for the next week. The format should follow the book review model found in historical journals. Your reviews, however, should not be boring to read. Identify the thesis of the article, supporting information and the author's conclusion/recommendation. Also comment on the nature of the problem(s) or controversies discussed by the author and explain how the article would be helpful to you as a public historian. I will call upon each student to lead the initial discussion of one article every week. This will take some organizing, which we will accomplish during the first class.

Lab: Visit and evaluate two Houston-area History Museums (See attached form for this exercise.)

Research Paper: Each student will write a paper of 20-25 pages, typed, double-spaced, (12 font) with title page and a bibliography in correct form. Our purpose is to explore the challenges facing historians who venture into the public arena. Our focus this semester will be a Community History based upon key people in the history of UH. Each student will choose one person in the "Coffee Can Lottery" as the subject of their biography/public history project and will design one "type" of public history presentation for the information. We will discuss details in class but your paper will have two parts, a biography of your UH person (chosen in the class lottery) and a detailed discussion of a public history issue; either the problems and pitfalls that you encountered in your research or a type of project that you will design to present the biographical information. Your discussion must include references to the issues related to public history, and the hazards, problems, and pitfalls, as well as the benefits of this "type" of public history as discussed in our semester readings. Your research for the biography will include material from newspapers, magazines, journals, books, oral history interviews, and any other available sources. Your paper should be scholarly but readable to the general public. One of our goals is to produce UH biographies that are publishable in the *Houston Review*. This is a different kind of research paper and provides an opportunity to get "into the shoes" of a public historian and apply the information from the readings. Each student will present a brief summary of her or his findings and conclusions to the class at the end of the semester, on November 30.

Grading: Students must complete all requirements. I do not give "Incomplete" grades. Grades will be calculated as follows: Class Attendance/Participation/Weekly Reviews—300 points, Museum Lab Exercise—300 points, and Research Paper—400 points

Calendar

August 24: Introduction to Readings in Public History

Discuss syllabus, readings, and requirements.

August 31: Public History—An Overview

ALL Phyllis K. Leffler and Joseph Brent, *Public and Academic History: A Philosophy and a Paradigm*

1-Patricia Mooney-Melvin, "Professional Historians and the Challenge of Redefinition" *Public History*, 3-22.

2-Constance B. Schulz, "Becoming a Public Historian," *Public History*, 23-42.

3-Gerald George, "The Perils of 'Public History: An Imaginary Excursion into the Real World'" (Handout)

September 7: Community History (*Also, one-page outline and bibliography of proposed research topics/ Identify the two museums you will visit)

4-Michael Frisch, "The Memory of History," *Presenting the Past*, 5-17.

5-Gertrude Fraser and Reginald Butler, "Anatomy of a Disinterment: The Unmaking of Afro-American History," *Presenting the Past*, 121-132.

6-Linda Shopes, "Oral History and Community Involvement," *Presenting the Past*, 249-263.

7-Diaz and Russell, "Oral Historians: Community Oral History and the Cooperative Ideal" *Public History*, 203-216.

September 14: History Museums/Archival Management/Cultural Resources Management-Part 1

8-Michael J. Devine, "Administrators: Students of History and Practitioners of the Art of Management," *Public History*, 43-56.

9-Roy H. Tryon, "Archivists and Record Managers" *Public History*, 57-74.

10-Debra Newman Ham, "Museum Curators and Specialists" *Public History*, 169-186.

1- Anne Woodhouse, "Museum Curators," *Public History*, 187-201

September 21: Archival Management/Cultural Resources Management-Part 2

Tour of John P. McGovern Historical Resource Center—Guest speaker: Elizabeth White. Class will meet at 5:30 P.M. at the HRC 8272 El Rio Dr., Suite 190

September 28: Historic Preservation

2- Candace Falk, "Documentary Editors: Not as Boring as It Sounds," *Public History*, 87-102.

3- Antoinette J. Lee, "Historic Preservationists and Cultural Resources Managers: Preserving America's Historic Places," *Public History*, 129-140.

4- Mark Howell, "Interpreters and Museum Educators: Beyond the Blue Hairs," *Public History*, 141-156.

5-Michael Wallace, "Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation," *Presenting the Past*, 165-199.

ALL-Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* and supplementary articles.

October 5: Museums—Lab Day—Class will not meet today

If you have not yet visited two of the local historical museums for this lab, please do so today.

October 12: *Museums— Artifacts and History

Also: Lab Evaluation Presentations*

6-Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States," *Presenting the Past*, 137-161.

7- Charles A. D'Aniello, "Librarians and Bibliographers," *Public History*, 157-168.

8- George W. McDaniel, "At Historic Houses and Buildings," *Public History*, 231-256.

9- William S. Pretzer, "At Historic Sites and Outdoor Museums," *Public History*, 257-278.

10- Robert B. Patterson, "In Local Historical Agencies, Museums and Societies" *Public History*, 295-306.

October 19: Issues in Public History

Project Outlines Due Today

Media and Visual History, Part I

1-Edward Countryman, "John Ford's Drums Along the Mohawk: The Making of an American Myth," *Presenting the Past*, 87-102

2-Eric Breitbart, "The Painted Mirror: Historical Re-creation from the Panorama to the Docudrama," *Presenting the Past*, 103-117

3-Sonya Michel, "Feminism, Film, and Public History," *Presenting the Past*, 293-304

ALL-Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, *A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory*, Frontmatter and at least skim pp.1-154.

October 26: Media and Visual History

Discuss project outlines

ALL-Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, *A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory*, Frontmatter and at least skim pp.1-154. ALL-Roberts and Olson, *A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory*, 154-348.

Each student will lead a brief discussion on one section of 154-348

View and discuss portions of *Davy Crockett*, John Wayne's *The Alamo*, and *The Crossing*.

November 2: Historical Consulting/Corporate and Institutional History/ Professional Ethics

4-Diaz and Russell, "Oral Historians: Community Oral History and the Cooperative Ideal" *Public History*, 203-216.

5-Janelle Warren-Findley, "Contract Historians and Consultants," *Public History*, 75-86.

6-Elizabeth W. Adkins, "In Businesses and Corporations: Serving as the Corporate Memory," *Public History*, 371-384.

7-Philip L. Cantelon, "As a Business: Hired, Not Bought," *Public History*, 385-396

8-Joseph A. Pratt, "Warts and All?: An Elusive Balance in Contracted Corporate Histories about Energy and Environment" Handout from *The Public Historian*, Winter 2004.

9-Daniel J. Walkowitz, "Corporate History, or Giving History the Business," *Presenting the Past*, 225-236.

November 9: Public Policy History--Environmental History

ALL: Martin V. Melosi and Philip V. Scarpino, eds. *Public History and the Environment* 10, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

6, Sylvia K. Kraemer, "Historians and Making Policy," *Public History*, 217-228.

Recommended:

Barbara Franco, "In Urban History Museums and Historical Societies," *Public History*, 307-324.

Charles F. Bryan, Jr., "In State Historical Agencies, Museums, and Societies: A Constant State of Change," *Public History*, 325-344.

Lonnie G. Bunch III, "In Museums at the National Level: Fighting the Good Fight," *Public History*, 345-356.

Jesse H. Stiller, "In Federal History Programs: Ensuring the Future," *Public History*, 357-370.

November 16: Independent Study--No Class Today

November 23: **Thanksgiving Holiday—No Class Today**

November 30: Last Day of Class--Papers/Presentations Due Today

3. **Extent, variety, and appropriateness of objects displayed**

4. **Scholarly Content**

5. **Balance of images and ideas, objects and narrative**

6. **Function of design in the exhibit**

7. Sources of funding/Major donors



8. Institutional support

9. Did the museum fulfill its stated purpose? Explain

10. Concluding Thoughts: Did you enjoy your visit? Would you recommend this museum to others? Whom? Why?