

HIS/IAR 626 – The Practice of Public History

Fall 2009, Tuesdays, 3:30-6:20 p.m.

Classroom: MHRA 1304

Professor Benjamin Filene

office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:00 and by appointment: MHRA 2137

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Course Description:

This course is not an instructional in how to claw your way to the top; rather it's an introduction to what it is like to work to within a public history institution and what it takes to thrive in one.

“You gotta serve somebody,” croaks Bob Dylan. Everyone at every level of every organization is simultaneously a leader and a follower. This course is about understanding both sides of that relationship and how to do productive and fulfilling work from both ends.

The course starts from a few key premises:

- The day-to-day, nuts-and-bolts parts of an institution's work take on life only when you understand the goals these practices were created to achieve. The policies, procedures, and programs that fill professional manuals and “how to” books exist to achieve big-picture goals for institutions.

- Fundamentally, these goals involve relationships—relationships between
 - an institution and its constituencies (“Reaching Audiences”)
 - an institution and other institutions (“Reaching Partners”)
 - an institution and its employees (“Reaching Colleagues”)

The course is structured around the theory and practice involved in building these three kinds of relationships. Throughout, the course links practical skills—writing a mission statement, creating a marketing plan, writing a budget—with discussion of the broader purposes these tools are intended to accomplish.

Student Learning Outcomes

Through a mix of classroom- and project-based work, you will gain:

- a richer understanding of the role of history in public life;
- a working knowledge of the processes and procedures that sustain public history institutions
- the ability to recognize the values underlying such processes and procedures;
- a richer understanding of how museums and sites establish sustainable niches in their communities; and

- an awareness of the dynamics involved in the interpersonal relationships that drive public work.

As well, you will hone a set of skills that you will need to thrive in the workplace:

- **evaluating and analyzing primary and secondary sources** thoughtfully, with attention to argument and point of view;
- **speaking** with passion, clarity, and respect;
- **writing** clearly and persuasively;
- **collaborating** with energy, sensitivity, and an awareness of how much you can learn from community members and your peers; and
- **experimenting** fearlessly to build your skills.

Teaching Methods

This seminar depends on active and engaged discussions that allow you and your classmates, individually and collectively, to wrestle with what it means to become a practicing public historian. The classroom will be a setting for engagement with multiple voices—not only the professor’s but those of the students, our community partners, and historical “informants” revealed through a range of sources. You are expected to complete reading assignments before every class meeting and to arrive ready to share personal opinions on the material. Class sessions will regularly involve informal full-group discussions, oral presentations, small-group conversations, and on-the-spot analyses of primary sources. As detailed below, class participation is a significant part of your grade. In addition, you will engage with the course content through formal and informal writing assignments that invite you to apply the approaches we are discussing to original work in your own voice.

Beyond regular readings, discussions, and writings, the best way to learn about public history work is to do some. You will be involved in designing, collaboratively, a history project that will be practical, relevant, and engaging to real local institutions and public audiences. This semester will focus on planning online projects that will document and share the stories of the mill villages that sustained the Cone Mills factories in Greensboro. Next semester (HIS/IAR 627) we’ll implement those plans and create these projects!

Assignments and Evaluation

You will be evaluated on

Class participation—15%: attending class, doing the reading, completing the Information Interview assignment (see below), writing thoughtful and on-time weekly responses to the reading (see below), speaking up in discussions, and helping to foster a sense of shared exploration within the classroom

***Weekly responses:** Each week, short, informal reactions to that week's readings (roughly a couple of paragraphs) will be due. These must be posted on our class's Blackboard Discussion Board by 8:00 a.m. each Tuesday.*

Information interview: After reading in *Museum Careers* (Schlatter) conduct an interview with a museum professional and then give a 10-minute in-class presentation about it to the class: students sign up for dates—September 9-November 11

Assignment #1—10%:

Website review—due September 22:

an evaluation of sites that could serve as instructive models for your online mill village projects

Assignment #2—20%:

“Institutional Personality Assessment”—due October 20:

an analysis of the clarity and coherence of a local institution’s mission, brand, marketing, fund-raising, and interpretive program

Final Project and Presentation—30%:

Grant application for mill villages project—due December 3

Note: Each student’s grade for the collaborative final project will be determined by the quality of the product and presentation and, as well, by each individual’s contributions to the project. Each student will be asked to assess the contributions that each team member (including they themselves) made to the project and to the collaborative process.

Final paper—25%:

Reflection essay on the final project—due December 11

Grading scale:

A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-: 80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76

If things go awry...

...it’s your responsibility to tell me—right away. If papers are late without direct, prior approval from me, I deduct ½ a letter grade per day—no exceptions. If your project is dead-ending or your peer collaboration imploding, please do tell me *before* it’s too late to resolve the issues.

Required Books

Collins, Jim. *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great; Why Business Thinking Is Not the Answer*, 2005.

Deutsch, Jennifer and Tamara Real. *Just Who Do Your Customers Think You Are? A Guide to Branding Your Organization* (Michigan Museums Association), 2002.

Genoways, Hugh and Lynne M. Ireland. *Museum Administration: An Introduction*, 2003.

Lundin, Stephen C., Harry Paul, and John Christensen. *Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*, 2000.

McLean, Kathy. *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*, 2005.

Nahmias, Leah and Al Lees. "The Public Humanities Toolbox: Engaging Communities Online," 2008 [copy provided]

Rosenzweig, Roy and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, 2000.

Recommended:

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, et. al. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, 2000.

Schlatter, N. Elizabeth. *Museum Careers: A Practical Guide for Students and Novices*, 2008.

Academic Integrity Policy

All students have a responsibility to uphold the standards of "*Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, and Responsibility*" detailed in the Academic Integrity Policy. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, misuse of academic resources, falsification of information, and facilitating of academic dishonesty are treated with utmost seriousness by the history department and dealt with severely by the University administration. The full policy appears in the *Student Calendar/Handbook* and at academicintegrity.uncg.edu.

Per university policy, you will be asked to sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment in this class.

Special Needs

If you require accommodations for special learning needs, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Disability Services, located within the Elliot University Center (334-5770)—and please let me know!

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Whose History? Who's History?

August 25—Introductions

Before first class:

Read about the National Council on Public History's debate about "What Is Public History" (including Cathy Stanton's summary) at the NCPH website:

<http://www.ncph.org/WhatisPublicHistory/tabid/282/Default.aspx>

Read some of the actual Listserv postings about "What Is Public History" from May, June, and July 2007, archived here: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=lm&list=H-Public>.

Come to class with two comments that interested you.

Schlatter, N. Elizabeth. "Introduction: Why Work in a Museum." In *Museum Careers: A Practical Guide for Students and Novices*: 9-15.

Dibble-Dieng, Meadow. "A Modest Proposal." *Brown Alumni Monthly* (September-October 2004): 30-33.

Schlusser, Jim. "'Lintheads' and Proud of It." In *The Beat Goes On: A Celebration of Greensboro's Character and Diversity*, Gayle Hicks Fripp, ed. (2008): 3 pp.

Guillory, Ferrel and Andrew Holton. "We Ain't What We Used to Be." *Durham Herald-Sun* (January 4, 2009): F1, F3. [***BF will hand out***]

September 1: Whose History? Who's History?

Guest speakers: Paul and Judith Sams, former mill village residents

Rosenzweig, Roy and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (2000): Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, and Afterthoughts (everything *except* Chapters 2-3).

Kelley, Robert. "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects." *Public Historian* 1 (Autumn 1978): 16-28.

Conard, Rebecca. "Facepaint History in the Season of Introspection." *Public Historian* 25 (Autumn, 2003): 9-24.

Mihm, Stephen. "Everyone's a Historian Now." *Boston Globe* (May 25, 2008): 4 pp.

Nahmias, Leah and Al Lees. "The Public Humanities Toolbox: Engaging Communities Online": 1-11.

Brown, Marvin A. *Greensboro: An Architectural Record* (1995): 52-59; 226-227; 244-255.

Browning, Wilt. "Introduction" and "A Death in the Family." In *Linthead: Growing Up in a Carolina Cotton Mill Village*: [i-iii] and 1-9.

Extra class meeting: mill village tour; Wednesday, September 2, 3:30-5:30, departing from MHRA

Reaching Colleagues I

**September 8: Working Collaboratively
and team dynamics**

Fisher, Roger and Alan Sharp. "Lateral Leadership." In *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge* (1998): 14-34.

Schrage, Michael. "Collaboration and Creativity." *Museum News* (March/April 2004): 44-48.

McLean, Kathy. "Problem-Solving in Exhibitions." In *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*: 81-91.

Ayan, Jordan. "Tapping into the Creative Process." In *Aha! 10 Ways to Free Your Creative Spirit and Find Your Great Ideas* (1996): 40-44.

Zenger-Miller, Inc. "The Four Phases of Team Development." In *Building A Foundation of Trust*: 16-17.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, et. al. "Preface." In *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (2000 edition): xvii-xxvi.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd and Robert Korstad and James Leloudis. "Cotton Mill People: Work, Community, and Protest in the Textile South, 1880-1940." *American Historical Review* 91 (April 1986): 245-286.

Reaching Audiences

**September 15: Making Public Institutions Matter
and mission statements**

- Carr, David. "In the Context of the Possible." In *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* (2003): 37-54.
- Anderson, Gail, ed. *Museum Mission Statements: Building a Distinct Identity* (2000 [1998]): 12-24.
- Sevcenko, Liz. "Putting Mission First." In *The Importance of Mission in Guiding Museum Practice* (2003): 9-11.
- Durel, John. "Mission and Profit." In *The Importance of Mission in Guiding Museum Practice* (2003): 21-23.
- Brattain, Michelle. "The Pursuits of Post-Exceptionalism: Race, Gender, Class, and Politics in the New Southern Labor History." In *Labor in the Modern South*, Glenn T. Eskew, ed. (2001): 2-46.
- Glass, Brent D. "Corporatism and Consolidation: 1936-1960" and "Struggle for Survival: 1960-1990." In *The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History* (1992): 78-106.

**September 22: Getting on the Radar Screen
and marketing plans/branding**

Website review due

- Pine, B. Joseph II and James H. Gilmore. "Welcome to the Experience Economy." *Harvard Business Review* (July 1998): 97-105.
- Deutsch, Jennifer and Tamara Real. *Just Who Do Your Customers Think You Are? A Guide to Branding Your Organization* (2002)
- Wilkening, Susan. "Suck It Up: Curated Brand Experiences." *Museum News* (November-December 2007): 7 pp.
- Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 11: 247-272.
- Review <http://remembercliffside.com/> and <http://www.digitalforsyth.org/>

**Extra class meeting: Internship presentations; Wednesday, September 30,
4:00-6:00 p.m., Petty Building, room 219**

**September 29: Preserving (and Deserving) the Public's Trust
and ethics and collections management policies**

- Carr, David. "Museums and Public Trust." In *The Promise of Cultural*

Institutions (2003): 109-131

Chew, Ron. "Taking Action!" *Museum News* (March/April 2004): 38-43.

Boyd, Willard L. "Museums as Centers of Controversy." *Daedalus* 128 (summer 1999): 185-228.

Friedman, Thomas L. "Why How Matters." *New York Times* (October 15, 2008): 2 pp.

Crosson, David. "Museums and Social Responsibility: A Cautionary Tale." *History News* (July-August 1988): 6-9.

Witchey, Holly. "New Technologies, Old Dilemmas: Ethics and the Museum Professional." In *The Digital Museum: A Think Guide*, Herminia Din and Phyllis Hecht, eds. (2007): 189-196.

Gardner, James B. and Elizabeth Merritt. "Collections Planning: Pinning Down a Strategy" (2002). In *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, Gail Anderson, ed. (2004): 292-6.

Vaughan, James M. "Rethinking the Rembrandt Rule." *Museum* (March/April 2008): 2 pp.

Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 10: 223-245.

Optional: Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 8: 175-195.

Reaching Partners

October 6: Collaborating with Communities and civic engagement strategies

One-page project proposals due

Archibald, Robert R. "Friends and Colleagues." In *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* (1999): 155-178.

Archibald, Robert R. "Introduction." In *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* (2002): 1-6.

Hirzy, Ellen. "Mastering Civic Engagement: A Report from the American Association of Museums." In *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* (2002): 9-20.

Sevcenko, Liz, The Reverend Deacon Edgar W. Hopper, and Lisa Chice. "St. Augustine's Episcopal Church and The Lower East Side Tenement Museum." In *History as Catalyst for Civic Dialogue: Case Studies from Animating Democracy*, Pam Korza and Barbara Schaffer Bacon, eds. (2005): 1-25.

October 13—no class (fall break)

Extra class meeting: project advisors meeting, October 14, 15, or 16, tbd

**October 20: Pursuing Outreach vs. "In-Reach"
and diversity hiring plans**

"Institutional Personality Assessment" essay due

Archibald, Robert R. "Everybody's Business." In *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* (1999): 178-197.

Sullivan, Robert. "Evaluating the Ethics and Consciences of Museums." In *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, Gail Anderson, ed. (2004): 257-63.

Chew, Ron. "Community Roots." In *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* (2002): 63-64.

Lusaka, Jane. "Reflecting a Nation: Museum Fellows Program Expands Its Reach." *Museum News* (July/August 2000): 36-39.

Bernard, Pamela J. "When Seeking a Diverse Faculty, Watch Out for Legal Minefields." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (September 29, 2006): B28-31.

"Seek and You Shall Find." *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* (February 16, 2005): D1, D6. [***BF will hand out in class***]

**October 27: Collaborating with Donors I—Listening
and development plans**

In class: 10-second and 1-minute project presentations

Guest speaker: Fred Goss, Director, Greensboro Historical Museum

Falk, John H. and Beverly K. Sheppard. "Attending to the Bottom Line." In *Thriving in the Knowledge Age* (2006): 161-181.

Wolfe, Michael and Robert Ferguson. "New Money, New Demands: The Arrival of the Venture Philanthropist." *Museum News* (January/February 2001): 56-59.

Daniel, Pete. "History with Boundaries: How Donors Shape Museum Exhibits." *OAH Newsletter* 36 (August 2008): 6 pp. *and*
 "A Challenge to 'History with Boundaries.'" *OAH Newsletter* 36 (November 2008): 9 pp.

Jahnke, Art. "Losing the Win-Win Game?" *Museum News* (September/October 1993): 34-35, 50-52.

Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 6: 121-160.

Optional: Jones, Chris. "The Corporate Seduction of Museums." *Chicago Tribune* (February 16, 2003): 6 pp.

November 3: Collaborating with Donors II—Stating Your Case and budgets and grant-writing

-Slogans/logos and solicitation letters due in class (each person chooses to do one or other).

-No Blackboard posting due this week. Come with a question for Dr. Gradin.

Guest speaker: Dr. Harlan Gradin, Associate Director/Director of Programs & Community Development, North Carolina Humanities Council

Radock, Michael. "Words to the Wise." *NSFRE Journal* (winter 1990): 19-24.

Hoffman, Marilyn. "Writing Realistic Grant Budgets." *Museum News* (January/February 1980): 48-53

"Five Steps to Easier Proposal Writing": 2-9.
[BF will hand out in class]

Staff, Grizzard. "13 Proven Elements to Make Your Direct Mail Sizzle": 2 pp.

Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 5: 91-119.

Reaching Colleagues II

**November 10: Building a Vision
and board management**

Gardner, Howard. “Preface to the Paperback Edition,” “Preface,” “The Leader’s Stories,” **and** “Lessons from the Past, Implications for the Future.” In *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (1996 [1995]): ix-xv, 41-65, and 285-306.

[Kegan, Robert]. “Encouraging Leaders: New Models for Leadership in Museums: An Interview with Harvard Psychologist Robert Kegan.” *Museum News* (November/December 2003): 34-39.

Kotter, John P. “What Leaders Really Do.” *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1990): 103-111.

Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 3 (excerpt): 39-55.

**November 17: Managing Change
and strategic planning**

Full Draft of grant materials due

Collins, Jim. *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great; Why Business Thinking Is Not the Answer*, 2005.

Falk, John H. and Beverly K. Sheppard. “Preface and “A World in Transition.” In *Thriving in the Knowledge Age* (2006): vii-xi and 3-25.

Bridges, William. Introduction and Chapter 1. In *Managing Transitions: Making the Best of Change* (2003 [1991]): ix-xi; 1-10.

Franco, Barbara and Laura Roberts. “The Change Cycle”: 2 pp.

Roberts, Laura. “Reinterpretation and Change: The Amos Smith House” and “Is It All History? The Burlington History Museum” (2004): 2-12.

Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 4: 75-90.

**November 24: Leading from Below
and human resources/personnel management and finding your niche**

[Receive comments on grant materials from BF]

Fisher, Roger and Alan Sharp. “Engagement” and “Choose to Help.” In *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You’re Not in Charge* (1998): 136-57; 200-4.

Lundin, Stephen C. Harry Paul, and John Christensen. *Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*, 2000.

Durel, John. "Qm2 Work Style Assessment" (2004): 4 pp.

Bryan, Charles F., Jr. *Museum News*. "Am I A Historian?" *History News* (summer 2002): 5-8.

Genoways and Ireland, Chapter 7: 161-173.

December 1:

In-class final project presentations; Celebration!

Thursday, December 3: *Revised grant applications due*

December 8: no class ("Reading Day")

Friday, December 11: *Final papers due* (no final exam)