INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC HISTORY

Fall 2017 Instructor: Ellen Noonan
Wednesdays 4:55-7:35 pm  ellen.noonan@nyu.edu
KJCC Room 607

Public historians build bridges between the work of academic historians and the interests of diverse public audiences. Through intensive reading, discussion, writing, and visits to local history museums and sites, this course will explore how the field of public history came into being and how it has evolved; where and how history is made and consumed; and the intersections and collisions of academic history with commemoration and popular history-making.

Your Responsibilities

• Complete weekly class preparation (readings, media analysis) as required and arrive prepared to participate in class discussion and exercises
• Visit September 11 Museum before October 18th class session
• Visit New-York Historical Society exhibit The Vietnam War before December 6 class session
• Complete a 5-7 page reflection on the history of the field of public history
• Complete a 5-7 page analysis of a visit to a historic house museum
• Complete a book report on a book selected from the list provided
• Complete a 25-30 page paper and public presentation about a topic in the history of New York City and how it has been interpreted and commemorated in public settings.

Assignment Due Dates

• History of the field reflection — Wednesday, September 20th
• Historic house analysis — Wednesday October 25th
• Book report — Rolling, no later than Friday, November 10th
• Final project draft — Friday, November 3rd
• Final project final written submission — Friday, December 8th
• Final project in-class presentation — Wednesday, December 13th

Readings

We will read two books in their entirety; both titles (along with the Meringolo, Stanton, and Burns books and the book report choices listed at the end of the syllabus) are on course reserve at Bobst. All chapters and articles will be available for download on the NYU Classes site for this course.

• Franklin D. Bagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums (Routledge, 2016)
Grading

- Class participation — 30%
- History of the field reflection — 10%
- Historic house write up — 15%
- Book report — 15%
- Final project — 30%

I evaluate class participation based on your positive and engaged contributions to class discussion and in-class activities. In addition to making your own observations and arguments, I expect you to listen and respond to what your classmates are saying; all of this requires you to do the reading carefully and have the ability to articulate both large arguments and specific examples and details. Taking notes on the readings is an excellent practice—the act of the note-taking will help to cement the ideas and information in your mind, and you will have a reference during class discussions.

I evaluate written work based on both the ideas you express and the clarity, readability, and accuracy with which you express them. I will make edits and comments about grammar, usage, and style as a way to help you all improve as writers over the course of the semester. You should leave enough time to draft and revise; as you revise, pay close attention to whether each sentence is expressing its idea in the clearest possible way and edit accordingly.

Housekeeping

- If you are very sick or have a genuine emergency that will prevent you from attending class, you must contact me in advance; you must also let me know in advance if unusual circumstances require you to arrive late or leave early. Except in the most urgent situations, missing class will affect your participation grade.
- Digital devices (laptops, tablets, phones) are welcome in class, but only if you are using them to take notes or otherwise participate. Please resist the urge to check email or social media—if I get the impression that you are repeatedly doing so during class time, it will count against your class participation grade.
- Accuracy always matters; take care with the grammar, spelling, and punctuation of all written work. Read it out loud and proofread carefully—you'll always find something to be fixed or improved.
- Assignments turned in after the due date will be penalized by half a grade (e.g., an A will automatically drop to an A-) unless you have obtained advance permission from me.
- If you are experiencing technical difficulties with preparing for class (for example, a website that is down or audio that you can't get to play on your browser), please let me know in advance rather than coming to class without having completed the assignment.
- Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
Schedule

September 6—History and the Public

September 13—The History of Public History, Part I: National Park Service

September 20—The History of Public History, Part II: Out of the Academy
Guest: Steve Brier

September 27—Sources of Connection and Authority
October 4—History Museums

October 11—Historic Preservation
- Place Matters (www.placematters.net)

October 18—Public History and Public Memory
- Visit National September 11 Memorial and Museum (free Tuesdays 5pm-closing, other times $18 student admission) (closed to the public on September 11, 2018)
October 25—Historic House Museums
  • *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*

November 1—Community History Collaborations
Guest: Rebecca Amato

November 8—Case Study Part I: The Vietnam Wars

November 15—Case Study Part II: War at Home
  • *Hearts and Minds* (Peter Davis, 1974) available via nyu.kanopystreaming.com

November 22—NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 29—Case Study Part III: War and Memory in the U.S. and Vietnam

December 6—Case Study Part IV: Public History Interpretations
• The Vietnam War exhibit, New-York Historical Society (opens October 4)
• The Vietnam War (Ken Burns and Lynn Novick) (premieres September 17 on PBS)
I encourage you to watch the entire film as it airs if you can; the DVD will be available at NYU’s Avery Fisher Center beginning sometime in October; once I have seen the film I will select 1-2 episodes for our class discussion.

December 13—Final Project Presentations

Book Report options
• Ari Kelman, A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek (Harvard University Press, 2013).
• Jessie Swigger, History is Bunk: Assembling the Past at Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village (University of Massachusetts Press, 2014)
• Edward Linenthal, Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields (University of Illinois Press, 1993)
• Tiya Miles, Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era (University of North Carolina Press, 2015)
• Edward Linenthal, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum (Columbia University Press, 1995, 2001)