

## HIST389: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC HISTORY

**HIST389-011 | Fall 2012**  
**TR 10:30-11:45AM | Enterprise Hall 174**  
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/staff/joan/h389/>

### INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Joan Fragaszy Troyano  
Research Assistant Professor

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Research 1 Room 484, Mailbox Room 462

Office Hours: Thursday 9:30-10:30am; by appointment

\*Please allow 24 hours for response to email; 48 hours over the weekend\*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Where do Americans learn history? How does it differ from the history taught in university classrooms? What does the American public think about history and want from history? What, and who, influences public understandings of the past? Throughout the semester we will use these questions as way to explore public history as a concept and as a practice. This is a seminar course that requires regular attendance, thorough preparation, and active participation in discussions.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In order to familiarize students with the field of public history, this course will provide:

- An introduction to the range of influences on public understandings of the past
- An introduction to the variety of sites that present history to the public
- The opportunity to practice writing collaboratively and for a public audience
- The opportunity to provide feedback on the writing of colleagues
- The opportunity to explore a career path of interest
- An expanded understanding of historical professionalism

### REQUIRED READINGS

Required books will be available on reserve at the Johnson Center library, so please do not feel obligated to purchase any or all of them. Additional readings will be available through the JSTOR database or as PDF files.

- Bodnar, John E. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Horton, James O. and Lois E., eds. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. New York: New Press, 2006.
- Kitch, Carolyn L. *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Loewen, James. *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*. New York: Touchstone, 2000.
- Rosenzweig, Roy, and David P. Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

### ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

- Class participation and attendance (10%)
- Weekly Writing Assignments (20%)
- Essay, including peer review (20%)
- Book review and presentation (5%)
- Review of public history project, with partner, including peer review and presentation (30%)
- Exploration of potential career path (15%)

\*Please note that this syllabus is subject to change\*

## HIST389: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC HISTORY

### **ABOUT WRITING IN THIS CLASS**

One of the goals of this course is to help you develop writing skills that are transferrable to a variety of professions, including: an awareness of audience; and the ability to briefly summarize material in writing and oral presentations; to provide feedback to others; and to write collaboratively. Specific instructions will be provided for all assignments, and additional resources will be available on the course website and provided in class.

### **COURSE WEBSITE**

This course will use a public class website (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/staff/joan/h389/>). The weekly schedule, assignment details, and links to course resources, and some readings will be posted on the website. You will be responsible for posting your weekly writing assignments and comments on our class website. If any instructions or readings that need timely attention (within 24 hours) are posted, you will receive an email notification.

### **TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

Please turn off all cell phones during class. Laptops may be used for notetaking only, and this allowance is subject to change.

You will be required to turn in an electronic copy of each formal assignment in the course Dropbox folder that is linked from the course website and a direct email. Make sure that you name your files according to the following format to avoid confusion: LastName\_CourseNumber\_Semester\_AssignmentName\_Version

For example:                   Troyano\_H389\_F2012\_Essay\_FirstDraft.doc  
                                      Troyano\_H389\_F2012\_Essay\_PeerReview\_Smith.doc

Please do not use special characters in your file name such as "#" or "-".

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Seminar courses require active participation from each class member as well as the professor. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade, and six or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

### **STUDENT ACCOMMODATION POLICY**

Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or need should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. The Office of Disability Services will help you to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. *All academic accommodations must be arranged through the Office of Disability Services.* For more information, contact ODS at (703) 993-2474 or go to the office in Student Union Building Student Union Building I (SUB), Room 2500. More information is available online at: <http://ods.gmu.edu/students/services.php>.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

All course work must be completed in accordance with the GMU Student Honor Code. By enrolling in this course, you assume the responsibilities of an active participant in the GMU scholarly community. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include but is not limited to suspension or dismissal. The complete Student Honor Code is available in the catalog, and online here: [http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/0304/apolicies/#TOC\\_H11](http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/0304/apolicies/#TOC_H11). Should you ever have a question *please* speak with me individually.

**ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS**

1. Weekly Writing Assignments (20%)

Each week you will have a brief writing assignment due as a blog post. Each assignment will have a specific question for you to address that will help you prepare for class either by exploring the readings, reflecting on your reactions to the material, or identifying new materials related to course content. These are not formal essay responses, but you will want to carefully consider your style and content. You are responsible for reading your classmates' blog posts and providing one comment each week. The posts are due by 8am Tuesday morning and the comments are due by 8am Thursday morning.

2. Essay, 3 pages plus Peer Review (20%):

Are Americans more interested in national history, national mythology, or personal experience? How do public historians attempt to manage public expectations of certain stories, topics, or sites?

- First draft due in class Week 6: Tuesday, Oct. 2
- Peer review letter due in class Week 6: Thursday, Oct. 4
- Final draft due in class Week 7: Thursday, Oct. 11

3. Book Review, and Presentation, 2 pages (5%)

Choose a book from the suggested reading list provided in class. Write a review of the book in which you summarize and evaluate the author's argument. You will also make a presentation of your review to the class on the assigned week.

- Presentation and final draft due in class on assigned week, Weeks 8-10

4. Public History Project Review, 6-8 pages written with a partner, plus Peer Review and Presentation (30%)

Choose a public history project (e.g. exhibit, monument, library, museum, historic house) in the area and write an evaluation. You should consider questions including: What is it? What is the method of presentation? Is there a digital component, and if so, how does it relate to the physical version? How is the method of presentation useful for the topic? Who is the intended audience and what makes you think that? How would you determine if it is a successful project?

- First draft due in class Week 11: Thursday, Nov. 8
- Second draft due in class Week 12: Tuesday, Nov. 13
- Peer review letter due in class Week 12: Thursday, Nov. 15
- Final draft due by class time Week 13: Tuesday, Nov. 20
- Presentations in class Week 14: Tuesday, Nov. 27 and Thursday, Nov. 29

5. Final Project: Exploration of Potential Career Path, 4 pages (15%)

Choose a potential job in the field of public history of interest and investigate this career path. You should identify an organization, either locally or somewhere you'd like to live, that employs public historians in this type of work. Have an informational interview with someone in that position: what do they do? How do they spend their time? What training or education did they need? What do they like about their job? What are the challenges? What advice do they have for someone interested in that type of work? Your report should include an overview of the career path, the person and organization interviewed, their answers, and your response to this exploration. What difficulties might you face in this type of work?

- Presentations in class Week 15: Tuesday, Dec. 4 and Thursday, Dec. 6
- Final draft due in mailbox Week 16

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1            Introduction to the Course: Academic History and Public History**

8/28/12            Topics, Goals, Expectations, and Assignments

8/30/12            Readings: Loewen, *Lies Across America*, pp. 25-29 (available as PDF)

**Week 2            Americans and their Past: Heritage, Myth, Memory, and Public History**

9/4                Readings: Bodnar, *Remaking America*: Prologue-Chapter 2

9/6                Readings: Bodnar, *Remaking America*, Ch. 7

**Week 3            What Do People Want from History?**

9/11               Readings: Rosenzweig & Thelen, *Presence of the Past*: Introduction, Chapters 1- 4

9/13               Readings: Rosenzweig & Thelen, *Presence of the Past*: Chapter 5 - Afterwards

**Week 4            Why Public History?**

9/18               *Presence of the Past* Survey Results

9/20               Readings: Horton, *Slavery and Public History*: Chapters 1-2

**Week 5            What History is Told?**

9/25               Readings: Selections from Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past and Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). (PDF)

9/27               Readings: Horton, *Slavery and Public History*: Chapter 8

**Week 6            Why Does Public History Matter?**

10/2               **Due: Essay Draft; In-class Peer Review**

10/4               **Due: Peer Review Letter**  
Readings: Horton, *Slavery and Public History*: Chapter 3

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### **Week 7      Who Creates Public History?**

10/9      NO CLASS

10/11      **Due: Essay Final Draft**

Readings: Selections from James B. Gardner and Peter S. Lapaglia, *Public History: Essays from the Field*. (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger Publishing Company, 2004). Available in Library Reserve.

### **Week 8      Learning History from Physical Spaces**

10/16      Readings: Loewen, *Lies Across America*, pp. 15-50; 443-452; 459

10/18      **Due: Book Review Presentations Group 1**

Readings: TBD

### **Week 9      Learning History from Popular Culture**

10/23      Readings: Selections from Kitch, *Pages from the Past*

10/25      **Due: Book Review Presentations Group 2**

Readings: Roundtable on Ken Burns' "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," *The Public Historian* Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 9-29. Available through JSTOR

### **Week 10      Learning History from Museums**

10/30      Selections from Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991). (PDF)

11/1      **Due: Book Review Presentations Group 3**

Readings: Selections from Amy K. Levin, ed., *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007). (PDF)

### **Week 11      Creating and Critiquing Public History**

11/6      Readings: Selections from *The Public Historian* journal. Available through JSTOR.

11/8      **Due: Draft of Public History Review Project; In-class Peer Review**

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### **Week 12      Learning History Online**

- 11/13      **Due: Revised Draft of Public History Project Review**  
Readings: Roy Rosenzweig and Daniel Cohen, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*: “Introduction” and “Exploring the History Web” (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/>)
- 11/15      **Due: Peer Review Letter**

### **Week 13      Individual Meetings**

- 11/20      **Due: Final Draft of Public History Project in Mailbox**  
\*No class: sign up for individual meetings\*

### **Week 14      Public History as a Practice**

- 11/27      Readings: selections from *The Public Historian* and *Perspectives on History*. Available through JSTOR.  
Presentations: Public History Project Reviews
- 11/29      Readings: selections from *The Public Historian* and *Perspectives on History*. Available through JSTOR.  
Presentations: Public History Project Reviews

### **Week 15      Public History as a Profession**

- 12/4      Presentations: Career Explorations
- 12/6      Presentations: Career Explorations  
Course Wrap up, and Evaluations

### **Week 16      Final Project Due in Mailbox 12/13/12**