Acknowledging our presence in the ancestral Doeg, traditional Piscataway and Patawomeck homelands.

**Contact**

**Professor:** Dr. Gabrielle Tayac (she/her/hers)
**Email:** gtayac@gmu.edu (preferred communication) Expect 24-hour response weekdays, 48-hour on weekends.
**Text/Phone:** 703-963-0331 (urgent only)
**Office Hours:** Thursdays 3-4 or by appointment

**Logistics**

**Time/Days:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:45pm EST
**Two Main Locations:**
January 25 and 27 – Horizon 1012
Remainder of Course – Horizon 3225 This room is the Public History Lab, in the History Department Suite 3200, just outside of the faculty/staff kitchen.

**Overview**

Public history activates the past into our present, illuminating memories that may not be our own yet still seek to make sense of our identities. Creating stages for this dynamic, collaborative practice in such venues as museums, historic sites, monuments, and podcasts takes concerted action. Indeed, opening space to uplift diverse or submerged histories takes more than a moment – it takes a movement. And that movement must matter with meaningful connections and relevance across boundaries. In other words, the call is to invite attention, spark interest, and encourage investment in a multi-sensory educational setting. Public history incorporates critical scholarly research with community engagement. The field develops a dialogue, a relationship, and an innovative enterprise.

This semester, we focus on decolonizing museum practices through indigenous lenses. Native peoples’ voices center research. Ethics and content balance to shape learning. You are taking on the mantle of emerging curators. First, you are set into motion with four guides, highly regarded indigenous museum professionals based at the Smithsonian. Next, exhibit teams simulate an internship-like experience and create prototype exhibits to raise awareness about indigenous sacred places. Throughout, individual inquiry and processing opportunities illuminate your process.

**A Mutually Accountable Class Ethic**

This is a hands-on course that requires your in-person presence and collective accountability. Consider it to be a lab or studio experience, much like an internship. You are responsible to your
team, to the material, and to me as your professor – and the responsibility is mutual. I carefully
designed the sequence so that you can have a cumulative set of skills leading to a product
outcome. The topic, Sacred Places, comes from an actual project with traditional culture bearers,
policy makers, and community advocates who have asked for my involvement as a public
historian. Your prototype exhibits are real, helping this group including the Morningstar
Institute, the NDN Collective, and Native Organizer’s Alliance gather more information about
how a more general audience can understand case studies.

Together, we will create a supportive intellectual community in safe, compassionate, and brave
space. These are still unstable times, marked with the pandemic, that I hope to see keep
brightening. I hope you will be inspired by the movements, scholars, and communities who
accompany us this semester. Meanwhile:
- Please reach out to me as soon as you are feeling overwhelmed. We will work
together to optimize your learning and wellbeing.
- Mason Counseling is also an important resource, don’t hesitate to contact them
https://caps.gmu.edu/
- Exchanging emails/contacts with 2-3 classmates can ensure that you can keep up
with work.
- Inform your group about any absences and arrange for make-up work as well –
please don’t be a no call, no show.

You are true history makers and activators. Welcome to the journey!

Course Guidelines (Adapted from Dr. Suzanne Smith)

Readings/Assignments
- All weekly assigned readings (including texts, videos, websites) should be done before
Tuesday’s class session, except for our first week. Generally, assignments are due before
Tuesday unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. When we have guests, you must be
prepared to engage with them in an informed way for a productive, respectful session.

Course Changes
- The syllabus is subject to change. Any changes in the course material or schedule will be
announced as soon as possible for your planning purposes. I will notify you via
BlackBoard email announcements at least a week ahead of the change. BlackBoard
Learning Modules will reflect the changes. Given continuing COVID uncertainties,
adjustments might need to be made. Also, there may be a need to rearrange speakers due
to unforeseen circumstances. I also am aware that class projects might need more or less
time in the lab space.

Course Technology:
- Activities and assignments in this course will use the Blackboard learning system,
available at https://mymason.gmu.edu. Students are required to have regular, reliable
access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or
Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem,
DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second]
download speed or higher. You can check your speed settings using the speed test on this
website.

Course Materials and Privacy:

- All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by
federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or
image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class. Any violation of this
policy will be directed to the appropriate GMU university administrators.

Mason E-mail and Communication policies:

- Mason requires that Mason email be used for all courses. I will be sending messages
to your Mason email and you are responsible for making sure you have access to these
messages. 
- You may forward your Mason email to other accounts but always use your Mason e-
mail when communicating with me to allow verification of your identity.
- You are required to check your Mason email account regularly and to keep your mailbox
maintained so that messages are not rejected for being over quota.
- When you email me, you can expect a response within 24 hours except on weekends
when my response may be delayed for up to 48 hours.
- When you email me, please remember to include HIST 397 at the beginning of the
subject heading to alert me that I have received a message from one of my students.

General Class Policies:

1) Attendance and Punctuality: Please make every effort to be in class, especially with
group project sessions, and arrive in class on time. That said, I’d rather that you come to
class late than not at all.

2) GMU Mask Mandate: All GMU students, faculty, and staff are required to wear
masks indoors, including in classrooms and laboratories, regardless of vaccination
status. Any student refusing to wear a mask, will be asked to leave the classroom. For
COVID safety policies see https://www.gmu.edu/safe-return-campus

3) Alternative Assignments: I will not be giving alternative assignments due to absence
this semester. You must contribute to your group assignment and complete in class exercises. If you have a serious personal or health emergency, please let me know and we will meet with me to plan your work sequence.

4) Honor Code: All of George Mason University's academic policies and honor code apply
to this course. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information
from another person without giving proper credit. Self-plagiarism involves recycling
papers from previous coursework. If you have any doubts about what constitutes
plagiarism, please see me. Violators will be brought before the University's Honor Committee for disciplinary action. For details, see: For details, see: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/.

5) **Disability Accommodations**: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations are arranged through that office. All documentation for disability accommodations needs to be shared with the instructor by the second week of class.

**Grading Policy and Scale**

Late assignments will lose a full 10 points every day overdue and will not be accepted a week after the due date except for excused purposes. Please be in communication with me if you need support so that we can work together to optimize your success in this class. Most assignments should be submitted on BlackBoard (BB). Be prepared that there are tactile pieces that you might have to carry, store, and document. The Project Package Dossier will only be graded if the cumulative assignments building it are submitted on schedule.

500-470 = A  
469-450 = A- 
449-435 = B+ 
434-415 = B 
414-400 = B- 
399-385 = C+ 
384-365 = C 
364-350 = C- 
349-335 = D+ 
334-315 = D 
314-300 = D- 
299-000 = F

**Graded Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Participation</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog Post</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thought Paper</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiry Papers (3 x 10)</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytical Essay</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Logs (5 x 5)</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Package Indigenous Partner Plan</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Package Big Idea</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Package Sources and Quotes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Package Objects</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Package Images</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Package Exhibit Script Outlines</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Project Package Exhibit Panel Public Test  15
Exhibit Charette Presentation  50
Project Package Final Dossier  50
Individual Final  90
500 Points Total

**Required Texts**


Additional materials are listed in the syllabus. These can be accessed online through Mason libraries or the provided links.

**Schedule**

**Week 1** Activating History

1/25 Public History and Meaningful Connections

1/27 Museums before Movements
Note: Please complete readings/videos before Thursday class this week, BUT for subsequent weeks complete readings before Tuesday classes.

Assignment Due 1pm on 1/27: Blog Post On Tuesday, you shared an idea or an issue that you would like others to know about. In 100 words, recall how you first came to care about that idea or issue. that you now feel is important. Briefly, what factor(s) inspired your interest?


Watch: Nina Simon’s Ted Talk The Art of Relevance [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTih-l739w4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTih-l739w4)

Opening NMAI [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2bKv6_i3mI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2bKv6_i3mI)

**Week 2** Practicing History for Everyone

2/1 Interpretation

2/3 Ethics and NAGPRA

Reading: LoneTree Chap 1, Simon Preface and Chapter 1
Assignment: Thought Paper (250 words) at 1pm, 2/1. Select one quote from Lonetree and one quote from Simon. In 250 words, consider how public history in museums had to change in order to represent marginalized communities in society.

Week 3 Curators

2/8 Special Guest: Chris Turner, NMAI Curator and Researcher

2/10 In Class Exercise: Tiny Desk Exhibit

OPTIONAL 2/12 Field Trip to NMAI! 11am-1pm. You can also go to NMAI to view exhibits Americans and Nation to Nation on your own before Week 6. There is a virtual option posted on BlackBoard. This visit will be part of your Week 6 essay assignment.

Reading:
Lonetree Chapter 3

Assignment: Inquiry Paper #1 Due 1pm, Tuesday. Write three questions based on this week’s readings for Professor Turner to help you learn more about a curator’s role in creating social change through public history. For each question, write two or three sentences that link your inquiry to the reading. All readings should be included in your inquiry, although each question can be based in just one reading.

Week 4 Museum Education

2/15 Education and Public Programs; Exhibit Groups Assigned

2/17 Special Guest, Renee Gokey, NMAI Educator

Assignment: Inquiry Paper #2 Due 1pm, 2/15. Write three questions based on this week’s readings for Ms. Gokey that will help you learn more about an educator’s role in creating social change through public history. For each question, write two or three sentences that link your inquiry to the reading. All readings should be included in your inquiry, although each question can be based in just one reading.

Reading:
Simon Chapter 2
Peruse: Native Knowledge 360 https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/about/native-knowledge-360

Week 5 Museum Resources: Administration and Collections
2/22 Special Guest: Rosemaria Estevez, Supervisory Administrator SI Libraries and Archives

2/24 Archives and Collections

Assignment: Inquiry Paper #3 Due 2/22 Write three questions based on this week’s readings for Ms. Estevez that will help you learn more about an administrator’s role in creating social change through public history. For each question, write two or three sentences that link your inquiry to the reading. All readings should be included in your inquiry, although each question can be based in just one reading.

Reading:
Lonetree Chapter 2
What Keeps Art Museums Running – and How Might the Pandemic Change That?
Peruse: Indians in the Post Office https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/indians-at-the-post-office

Week 6 Bringing It Together: Project Management

3/1 Evaluations

3/3 Special Guest: Travis Helms, Smithsonian Project Manager

Reading: Simon Chapter 3, also see table pp190-191; Lonetree Chapter 4

Assignment: Analytical Essay (1000 words) Due 1pm on 3/1. Prompt will be posted on BlackBoard two weeks before due date. Your essay will incorporate readings, class, and NMAI visit. It will also include inquiry for the project manager role.

Week 7 Launching Sacred Places Project

3/8 Introducing the Project - Prototypes

3/10 The Big Idea

Reading:
Serrell The Big Idea pdf on BlackBoard


Sacred Places Project Package on BlackBoard, will be posted by Week 4
Assignment: Project Package Indigenous Partner Plan
Exhibit Team Log #1

Week 8 NO CLASS Spring Break
Work on bibliographies

Week 9 Objects

3/22 Object Searches

3/24 In Class Graded Group Work on Project Plan Big Idea

Reading: Simon Chapter 4

Assignment:
Project Package Sources and Quotes Due 5pm 3/25
Exhibit Team Log #2
In Class Graded Group Project Package Big Idea Submission Due 3pm 3/24

Week 10 Images

3/29 Image Searches

3/31 No Class – Independent Group Work on Objects

Assignment: Project Package Objects Due 5pm 4/1
Exhibit Team Log #3

Week 11 Exhibit Scripts

4/5 What is an exhibit script?

4/7 Group Work Images

Reading: Model Exhibit Script on BlackBoard

Assignment: Project Package Images Due 5pm 4/8
Exhibit Team Log #4

Week 12 Prototype Testing

4/12 Group Work on Test Panel

4/14 Prototype Test Panel Out in Horizon Hall
Assignment: Project Package Exhibit Script Outlines Due 5pm 4/15
Exhibit Team Log #5

Week 13 Revisions
4/19 Group Work on Prototypes
4/21 Group Work on Prototypes
Assignment: Project Package Test Results and Revisions

Week 14 Group FINAL Exhibit Charette
4/26 Group Work
4/28 Exhibit Presentations
Assignment: Project Package Group Dossiers Due 1pm Thursday, 4/28

Week 15 Closing the Circle
5/3 Debrief
5/5 Closing the Circle

Week 16 FINAL DUE 5/17 11:55pm
Individual Papers, 1500 words, Prompt posted Week 6.