**Master Syllabus for University Studies**

**HST 392 01 Public History in America**

**Instructor: Gail Fowler Mohanty, Part-time lecturer**

**Course Overview:** An introduction to the nature and applications of public history by looking at how history is told through museum and historical society exhibits and collections, oral histories, local history and historical landscapes and buildings. Public History refers to historians who work in institutions such as museums, historical societies, corporations, preservation offices and other cultural resource agencies. By using such organizations and their missions as a point of departure for this study of public history in the United States, students are introduced to the historical origins of public history, ideas about community collaboration and the field, and how public history relates to communities, cultural memory and history inside the academy. Representatives of local institutions will visit the classroom to discuss educational programming, material culture and exhibit development or making local history materials available within historical societies, museums and manuscript repositories. In addition the class will meet at least once at a regional history museum. Students will also participate in a semester project for a local history museum or historical society. Semester Projects will and have involved cataloguing objects, inventorying collections, transcribing oral history, researching information for an exhibit, and putting a collection of World War II letters into acid free materials, organizing them as produced and developing finding aids for the collection. The evaluative devices selected for this course enable students to explore how to apply traditional historiographic techniques in appealing ways within different environments and for diverse audiences associated with public history.

**Course Specific Learning Outcomes:**

* To learn and understand the history of the field of public history.
* To become familiar with key intellectual debates in public history.
* To introduce students to how historical information may be presented to audiences in a variety of ways.
* To enable students to apply some of the methods presented in the course’s brief 3-5 page papers and as a project for a local public history institution.
* To use local resources to demonstrate application of methods and theories discussed in class.
* To present their findings and deliverables both to their fellow students and to the public history institution.

**This class would fulfill the following University Studies Learning Objectives for service engagement:**

1. Identify the needs and resources of the communities to which they belong. Representatives of the Public history organization meets with the class to present a description of needs and opportunities for the class. The professor distills these tasks into a series of projects to be divided up among the students.

2. Apply knowledge and skills gained through academic study to real problems and/or opportunities within their communities. The projects center on skills students have already developed as history majors by taking HST 115 or 116 and HST201. In addition the faculty member provides students with a series of tasks and readings which enable them to build their academic skill tool box and begin applying them to their particular term projects.

3. Describe the connections between learning on campus and the issues and needs of broader academic, professional or civic communities. We are providing students with experience and small non-profit organizations with a workforce to achieve goals such as inventorying collection, cataloguing objects, performing historical research that results in the backdrop for an exhibit etc.

4. Articulate the value of engagement to other members of their communities.  The value is that organizations are able to achieve goals and they learn that our students can offer them the skills to perform certain types of tasks. Our students gain because they see how what they have learned in the history classroom can be applied to other environments and produce concrete results.

**Service Learning requirement –**

This class could be part of Cluster 5 B and fulfill student service learning requirement as well as being a great opportunity for history majors.

**Examples of Texts and Readings:**

Alderson, William T. (editor) *Mermaids, Mummies and Mastodons, The Emergence of the American Museum*

Arthur Asa Berger, *What Objects Mean: An Introduction to Material Culture*

Donnelly, Jessica Foy, *Interpreting Historic House Museums.*

Hugh Eakin, A Reporter at Large Treasure Hunt: How a rare Statue of Aphrodite became a focus of the fight over antiquities and led to the fall of a Getty Museum Curator: *The New Yorker* December 17, 2007 pages –62-75.

George, George and Carol, *Starting Right: A Basic Guide to Museum Planning*

Glassberg, David *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*

Harvey, Miles, *The Island of Lost Maps,* pages 135 –180.

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

Stephen Lubar *History from Things*

Max Page and Randall Mason, (editors) *Giving Preservation a History*

Alderson, William T. (editor) *Mermaids, Mummies and Mastodons, The Emergence of the American Museum*

**Articles:**

Mary H. Blewett, *The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell Massachusetts, 1910-1960.*pages 31-69.

C. Alan Brinkley, “Historians and their Publics*,” Journal of American History* 81(1994): 1027-1030.

Adrienne D. Hood, “The Practice of [American] History: A Canadian Curator’s Perspective” *The Journal of American History* 81(1994): 1011-1019.

David Kyvig, “Introducing Students to Public History,” *The History Teacher* 24 (1991):445-454.

J Edward T. Linenthal. “Committing History in Public” *Journal of American History* 81(1994): 986-991.

Lubar, Steven, “ Machine Politics: The Political Construction of Technological Artifacts” in *History from Things* Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery editors pages 197-214

Also Lubar, Steven “In the Footsteps of Perry: The Smithsonian Goes to Japan.” *The Public Historian* v. 17(3)1995: 25-59.

Jules David Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?”in *History from Things* Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery editors pages 1-19.

Henry Petroski. “Little Things can mean A lot” Chapter 5 in *The Evolution of Everyday Things*  pages 78-91

David Kyvig, “Introducing Students to Public History,” *The History Teacher* 24 (1991):445-454.

Donald A. Ritchie, “Oral History/Public History Connection” in *Public History: An Introduction* Howe and Kemp editors pages 57-69

**Examples of Assignments that relate to Service learning component.**

**Exhibit Review –** relates to the class but allows students to look at a variety of exhibits critically – if students are involved in exhibit preparation as part of their service learning project it allows them to begin to understand what goals exhibits need to achieve visually and textually. This results in a five-page paper fulfilling exhibit review specifications – see attachments.

**Artifact Cataloguing paper –** prepares students for cataloguing any number of artifact classes and often relates to artifacts from specific collections and contributes to the term project. Each student catalogues their object using a form provided for them and in addition produces a brief paper on the artifact class. For instance my students have catalogued and researched about 200 artifacts for the Wareham historical society. See attachments(rubric attached to show how these essays are evaluated – if the service learning is collection cataloguing this rubric would be used for that)

**Education Program Review -** students choose an educational program In a public history institution to review – they may go to the museum and participate in one or there are many on-line curriculum available. This results in a 3-5 page critical essay that enables students to understand what makes a valuable museum education program. See attachment.

**Term Project –** this is the key to the service learning element of the class – Each student will participate in a project that will help a local public history institution to achieve a goal.

Evaluation of Past Projects:

1. If cataloguing the cataloguing of at least 3 objects of the same artifact class (for instance 3 Winsor Chairs would be accompanied by a 7 page paper discussing the history of the object class – chairs in America) Rubric for cataloguing is rubric for that initial brief paper plus see attached research paper rubric)
2. Archival Project: materials provided by faculty member including acid free folders, archival paper clips, acid free separator papers, Hollinger Storage box 1 cubic foot size) Deliverables are the collection organized etc. Finding aids. Brief company history or biography of writer (see rubric – research paper)
3. Tours – brochure, researched information about each location and sources used to create materials
4. Research for an exhibit script – deliverable a 7-10 page research paper – rubric research paper attached.

**Past Projects:**

Cataloguing artifacts for Wareham Historical Society

Cataloguing, sorting, storing in acid free materials, transcribing and developing finding aids for Wiley Correspondence during WWII

Research for Allen’s Pond Sanctuary exhibit development project

Rochester Historical Society (requested) inventory of collection

Walking tour for Wareham Historical Society

Bus Tour for Wareham Historical Society

Self-Guided tour of Tremont Nail Company factory Wareham, Massachusetts

**In- Class Presentations:**

Each student presents the information and work behind the deliverable of their Term project so that classmates learn about the skills necessary to complete the particular assignment given the presenter. It also gives students an opportunity to present their research before their peers and requires that individual students be responsible for their own projects guided by the faculty member. (See attachment –evaluation by students, and faculty uses same form to evaluate presentation)

**Evaluative Essay:** Each student develops a five page double spaced essay describing and reflecting on their experience working with the local agency and using skills acquired in taking academic classes . The essay assesses how the engaged learning experience has changed the way the students think about their academic studies and perhaps the kinds of outcomes that might result from academic research aimed at engaging the general public.

**Course Outline**

**Class 1** **Introduction to the class**

**Handouts: How to write an exhibit review, List of local History Museums, Syllabus, Semester Project Handout and Proposal sheet and specifications**.

**Reading**:

on blackboard

David Kyvig, “Introducing Students to Public History,” *The History Teacher* 24 (1991):445-454.

Lecture: **What is Public History? A beginning of a definition and a relationship to the academy.**

**Class 2 What is Public History?**

**Lecture: Why Study Public History?**

**In Class discussion of what public history is and how it relates to Academic history**

**Readings:**

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

Articles on Blackboard

C. Alan Brinkley, “Historians and their Publics*,” Journal of American History* 81(1994): 1027-1030.

Adrienne D. Hood, “The Practice of [American] History: A Canadian Curator’s Perspective” *The Journal of American History* 81(1994): 1011-1019.

Edward T. Linenthal. “Committing History in Public” *Journal of American History* 81(1994): 986-991.

**Classes 3** - **Who does Public History?**

Why do people become historians?  What is the relationship between who they are, the reasons they become historians, and the subjects they write about?

Readings:

Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History,* pages 3-78

Donnelly pages 18-42

On Blackboard

Round Table: Self and Subject,” *Journal of American History* 89 (June 2002): 17-53. actually eight very brief essays – see posted separately in readings for this class period.

**Class 4: Setting up Semester Projects for Students**

Visit by representatives from one or two public history institutions to talk about their project and their needs.

**Handout: Semester Projects: A list and a description**

## Class 5– A History of Public History

**Assign the Semester Projects** – the variety of projects allows students some choices and by the end of the class period each student has selected what they will be doing for their semester project.

Lecture: A History of Public History

In-Class discussion

**Exhibit Review – Due**

**Classes 6 and 7– The Stuff of History (learning history from Material Culture)**

**Project Proposals due:**  This is a check of understanding about what needs to be accomplished by each student for the institution.

**Readings:** Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums,*  pages 61-80; 111-127

On Blackboard:

Jules David Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?”in *History from Things* Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery editors pages 1-19.

Henry Petroski. “Little Things can mean A lot” Chapter 5 in *The Evolution of Everyday Things*  pages 78-91

**Class 8 - In Class Activity: How little things can mean a lot as well as big things**

**Handout: Object History Paper specifications – Object options presented in class and students select which ones to use for the Object History paper -**

## Class 9 – The Stuff of History

## Guest Speaker: Kate Irvin, Curator Costumes and Textiles, Rhode Island School of Design Museum

**Class 10 The - Stuff of History**

**Readings:** Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museum***,** pages 81-10; 128-143.

## On Blackboard

Lubar, Steven, “ Machine Politics: The Political Construction of Technological Artifacts” in *History from Things* Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery editors pages 197-214

Also Lubar, Steven “In the Footsteps of Perry: The Smithsonian Goes to Japan.” *The Public Historian* v. 17(3)1995: 25-59.

**Class 11 – The Stuff of History**

**Readings:**  Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museum,* pages 144-167

**On Blackboard**

Jules David Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?”in *History from Things* Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery editors pages 1-19.

Henry Petroski. “Little Things can mean A lot” Chapter 5 in *The Evolution of Everyday Things*  pages 78-91

## Object History Paper Due

**Class 12 – Stuff of History**

**Reading on Blackboard**

“The Great and Renowned Kelly Sock Collection” pages 127-131 from *A Cabinet of Curiosities an Inquiry into Museums and their prospects* by Stephen E.Weil.

**Handout: Short Paper 3 – Educational Program review and list of on-line and local educational programs.**

**Class 13 -Educating the Public**

**Readings:** Donnelly pages 210-310

## Prior to class look at the following on the web

<http://wintercounts.si.edu/index.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/118trail/118trail.htm>

(teaching about historic places with lesson plans.)

<http://www.1704.deerfield.history.museum/voices/stories.do>

in the web page listen to some of the examples of Oral tradition.

## Class 14 - Educating the Public

## Readings: Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museum,* pages 168-209.

**Class 15 – Educating the Public**

Guest Speaker: C. Morgan Grefe, Director of Newell D. Goff Center for Education, Rhode Island Historical Society How Local History informs National History: A Rhode Island Example.

**Readings:**  Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museum,* pages 168-209.

**Short Paper 3 due Education Program Review**

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**Class 16 – Oral History**

**Visit Oral History Collections at the Library –Judith Farrar, University Archivist.**

**Handout – Suggested Questions for the Librarian.**

**Readings on Blackboard**

Donald A. Ritchie, “Oral History/Public History Connection” in *Public History: An Introduction* Howe and Kemp editors pages 57-69

Mary H. Blewett, *The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell Massachusetts, 1910-1960.*pages 31-69.

**Class 17 –Local History**

Before class – look at this site

<http://www.plimoth.org/education/olc/index_js2.html>

You are the historian – investigating the First Thanksgiving.

**Readings:**

Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History* pages 217-328.

**Class 18 Local History**

**Draft Semester Project – written material due**

**Sign up for in-class presentations of semester projects.**

**Readings:**

Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, pages 163-184.

**Class 19 – Ethics of History**

**Readings: on Blackboard**:

Hugh Eakin, A Reporter at Large Treasure Hunt: How a rare Statue of Aphrodite became a focus of the fight over antiquities and led to the fall of a Getty Museum Curator: *The New Yorker* December 17, 2007 pages –62-75.

Miles Harvey, *The Island of Lost Maps,* pages 135 –180

**Class 20 and 21 History in Film**

**Semester Project**

**Remaining classes are reserved for in-class presentations of semester project.**