

HIST 3468: Public History, Memory, and Interpretation



Spring 2024
Mondays from 2:30-5:10pm in HAL 319

Dr. Lauren Turek

Office: Halsell 316

Office Hours: Mondays 12:30-2pm and by appointment

Lturek@trinity.edu

Office Phone: 210-999-7625

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Each year, American museums and historic sites welcome 850 million visitors—a number which is almost twice the annual attendance for major league sporting events and theme parks combined. These sites preserve, protect, and interpret over a billion objects. Through these activities, museums ensure that objects of “value” will be around for future generations to enjoy. Museum curators and other public history practitioners use these objects along with historical documents to tell important stories about our collective past and our current culture. In shaping these stories, they tell visitors what they should think about the artifacts on display, presenting them with a particular slant on history.

This course will serve as an introduction to public history, material and visual culture, and oral history methods by familiarizing students with the work historians do in museums, historic homes, archives, government agencies, private corporations, and the media. We will explore how public historians interpret the past and share their interpretations with the public. We will also learn about the history of museums in the United States in order to assess how and why museums have shaped contemporary culture at times became sites for civic engagement. Students will develop their oral and visual presentation skills while gaining hands-on experience in the field by developing their own exhibitions, using real world case studies to devise solutions to common challenges that museums and public history practitioners face, and assessing the effectiveness and components of existing museum exhibitions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Identify and use the elements of effective oral and visual communication
- Create and deliver effectively structured oral presentations using language correctly and appropriately, as well as using visual media that are effective, appropriate, and well-integrated into the presentation
- Analyze and critique oral and visual components of presentations, as well as respond effectively to questions and comments from audience members
- Understand the principles and complexity of creating historical exhibitions in a public context and develop an awareness of the methods public historians use to plan and construct these exhibitions
- Understand how local, regional, and national values constrain and/or shape how public historians interpret the past and share those interpretations with the public
- Distinguish between a variety of presentation strategies used in exhibit settings, and be able to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses for attracting audiences
- Evaluate the messages embedded in museum contexts
- Understand the historical evolution of museums and historic sites
- analyze major historical events, contexts or processes
- use these events, contexts and processes to better understand the unique character of cultures, institutions or ideas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation: This is a reading and discussion intensive course that is organized around a series of hands-on practicums. Students are expected to participate actively in all class discussions and activities. The activities we do in class, such as creating condition reports for collection objects, composing exhibit displays and texts, devising wayfinding and visitor flow strategies, and incorporating materials such as oral history interviews and archival video into our interpretations of the past, will count toward the participation grade.

Reading Response Presentation: Over the course of the semester, each student will be responsible for preparing a 5-8-minute-long presentation on one of the course readings. Students should prepare and submit a structured script or detailed outline of their presentation, which should include an overview of the author's argument, a discussion of the evidence they provide, a critical analysis of the reading as it relates to course content covered to date in our discussions and other readings, and 2-3 questions for class discussion. Students should also prepare a slideshow to correspond with their presentation. Preparing the presentation offers an opportunity for students to think critically about the course material, while the responsibility to serve as a discussion leader provides students the chance to practice oral presentation skills. Each student in class will be assigned specific readings to present on, and the due dates will be staggered throughout the semester so that everyone has a chance to serve as discussion leader for their readings throughout the course.

Digital Exhibition Critique and Presentation: Students will select an online exhibit or digital history project in consultation with the professor and write a 5-page analysis/critique of the historical interpretation and visual presentation components they observe. Students should ground their analysis in the course readings and class discussions. Students will also give short formal presentations of their critiques for the class. **Due Date: March 23.**

Group Digital Exhibit: For the final project, students will work as in small groups to design a class-wide digital exhibit using materials from the Trinity University Special Collections and Archives. This project will require teamwork and significant work outside of class. Students will work together to develop the exhibit, write exhibit text, and select artifacts to display digitally using Omeka. Students will give formal presentations on their parts of the exhibit at an exhibition opening, which will be held on **May 9**. *Please see the Final Project Guidelines on Canvas for a full breakdown of deadlines associated with the exhibit.*

Policies for Written Work

Formatting. All written work must:

- be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font
- have one-inch margins on each side
- include page numbers
- be submitted in .doc (preferred) or .pdf format on Canvas

If an assignment does not meet these formatting guidelines, it will not be read or graded.

Citations. All sources MUST be cited according to Chicago Notes-Bibliography style guidelines. Citation guidelines are available at <http://lib.trinity.edu/lib2/cite.php>.

Late Work. If you think you will not be able to turn in an assignment on time, let me know me so that we can arrange an extension if appropriate. I am very flexible with due dates, so if you know you need an extension or if you are feeling overwhelmed, email me as soon as possible.

GRADING

The final course grade will be determined as follows:

Participation:	25%	Reading Response Presentation:	15%
Final Project:	30%	Exhibit Critique & Presentation:	30%

ACADEMIC HONOR CODE

All students are covered by a policy that prohibits dishonesty in academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. **Students are required to pledge all written work that is submitted for a grade: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this work” and their signature. The pledge may be abbreviated “pledged” with a signature.**

If you have any doubt about whether an action violates the Honor Code, please email me before submitting your assignments. If you are struggling, overwhelmed, or confused please contact me! I am here to help you in the course and guide you through the material. I understand that personal circumstances or unforeseen events can sometimes interfere with your academic work; I will keep any concerns confidential and work with you to ensure your best possible performance in the course.

GENERATIVE AI

All assignments submitted for this course should reflect your own thinking and work. Any use of generative AI, such as but not limited to Chat GPT, will be considered “unauthorized assistance” and a violation of academic integrity and of the Trinity University Honor Code.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Students With Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodations in this class, please submit your accommodation letter to me early in the semester so we can discuss how I can best meet your needs. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact the office at x8528 or SAS@trinity.edu. You must be registered with SAS before I can provide accommodation.

Attendance and Excused Absences

You are expected to attend all classes, and attendance counts toward your participation grade. If you are ill or participating in a university-sponsored event, please email me to let me know so I can excuse your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a reduced participation grade. If you experience a family emergency or serious injury or illness, please contact the Dean of Students office, which will coordinate accommodations for all of your courses.

Electronic Recordings of Classroom Instruction

Students are expressly prohibited from capturing or copying classroom recordings by any means; violations will be subject to disciplinary action.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Reporting

As a University employee who is committed to creating an environment where every member of our community can thrive, I want to let you know that **I am a Mandatory Reporter**. I am required to report any instances of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator when: 1) I witness or receive information in the course and scope of my employment, 2) this information is about the occurrence of an incident that I reasonably believe is Sexual Harassment or Sexual Misconduct, and 3) the incident is committed by or against someone who was a Trinity university student, employee, or contractor at the time of the incident. This reporting responsibility applies regardless of where the incident occurred (on- or off-campus) and regardless of whether the individual(s) are still affiliated with Trinity.

If you share information with me about any incidents that implicate the [Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#), I am required to report this to the Title IX Coordinator to make sure you have information about support resources and complaint resolution options. My report does not initiate the complaint process, and you are in control over how you choose to

engage with our Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, I encourage you to share this information directly with the Title IX Coordinator or one of the individuals who has been designated as a confidential resource on campus. [The reporting form is available here](#) and information about supportive resources is available [here](#).

REQUIRED TEXTS

- James and Lois Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*
- Samant Chmelik, *Museum and Historic Site Management*

Both of the required texts will be available for purchase or rental at the bookstore as well as from online retailers. All other course readings will be made available on Canvas.

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY MEETINGS

PART I: WHAT IS PUBLIC HISTORY?

January 26: Introduction to Public History

- David Glassberg, “Sense of History”
- Ronald J. Grele, “Whose History? Whose Public? What is the Goal of a Public Historian?” *Public Historian* (Winter 1981), pp. 40-48
- Excerpt from Barbara Chivers, *A Student’s Guide to Presentations: Making your Presentations Count*

February 2: Usable Histories

- Excerpt from Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*
- American Historical Association, “History, the Past, and Public Culture: Results from a National Survey,” (read through the introduction and sections 1-10)
- Pete Burkholder and Dana Schaffer, “A Snapshot of the Public’s Views on History,” *Perspectives on History* (August 2021).

February 9: Memory and Identity

- Horton and Horton, *Slavery and Public History*, Introduction, chapters 1-3, 6-9, epilogue.
- Christopher A. Graham, “Lost Cause Myth,” *Inclusive Historians Handbook* (2020).
- Timothy Snyder, “The War on History is a War on Democracy,” opinion essay, *New York Times Magazine* (June 2021).

February 13 Extra Credit Opportunity: Douglass Day transcribe-a-thon!

Drop in any time between 11am-2pm to participate in the Frederick Douglass Transcribe-A-Thon. More details about the location TBA. There will be cake!

February 16: Local and Community History

- Robert R. Weyeneth, “The Risks of Professionalizing Local History: The Campaign to Suppress My Book,” *Public History News* 24 (Fall 2003): 1-2.
- Robert R. Weyeneth, “History, He Wrote: Murder, Politics, and the Challenges of Public History in a Community with a Secret,” *The Public Historian* 16 (Spring 1994): 51-73.
- Leon Fink, “When Community Comes Home to Roost: The Southern Milltown as Lost Cause,” *The Journal of Social History* 40 (Fall 2006): 119-145.
- Erin Bartram, “What is Revisionist History?” *Contingent Magazine* (August 2019).

PART II: PUBLIC HISTORY SITES AND PRACTICES

February 23: Archives and Libraries— * VISIT TO COATES LIBRARY
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES *****

- Char Miller, “Flood of Memories,” in *The Water and Culture Reader* (Fountainhead Press, 2013), 215-18.
- Karen Engle, “The Boondoggle: Lee Miller and the Vicissitudes of Private Archives,” *Photographies*, 8:1, 85-104
- American Historical Association, “Historians in the Archives” (including the three profiles linked at the bottom of the page).

March 2: Historic Homes, Sites, and Monuments

- Mary A. van Balgooy, “Interpreting Women’s Lives at Historic House Museums,” in *Reimagining Historic House Museums* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 171-182.
- Jennifer Scott, “Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-first Century at a Post-Emancipation Site,” *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (May 2015): 73-88.
- Robert Kihne, “Creating Minds-on Exhibitions in Historic House Museums,” in *Reimagining Historic House Museums* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 257-263.
- John Patterson, “From Battle Ground to Pleasure Ground: Gettysburg as a Historic Site,” in Leon and Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States*, 128-157.

March 9: * SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS *****

March 16: Historical Agencies, Museums, and Societies

- American Historical Association, “Historians in Federal, State, and Local History” (including the profiles)
- American Historical Association, “Historians in Museums” (including profiles)
- Christopher Hommerding, “Queer Public History in Small-Town Wisconsin: The Pendarvis Historic Site and Interpreting the Queer Past,” *The Public Historian* 41, no. 2 (May 2019): 70-93.

❀❀❀ **BRING CHMELIK BOOK TO CLASS** ❀❀❀

March 23: Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources Management

- American Historical Association, “Historians in Historic Preservation” (Including the two profiles linked at the bottom of the page).

***** DUE IN CLASS: EXHIBITION CRITIQUE AND PRESENTATION *****

PART III: PUBLIC HISTORY METHODS: INTERPRETATION AND REPRESENTATION

March 30: Developing Exhibitions and Displays

- Excerpt from Kathleen McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*
- Excerpt from John Summers, *Creating Exhibits That Engage*
- Excerpt from Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*
- Adrienne Lalli Hills and Margaret Middleton, “Resisting the Colonial Imagination: The Role of Exhibition Design in the Decolonial Project,” *AAM Exhibition Journal* (2023).

IN CLASS: EXHIBITION DESIGN CASE STUDY AND PRACTICUM

April 6: Material Culture Studies

- Excerpt from Jules Prown, *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture*
- Excerpt from Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Age of Homespun*

IN CLASS: OBJECT LAB PRACTICUM

❀❀❀ **BRING CHMELIK BOOK TO CLASS** ❀❀❀

April 13: Digital History

- Cameron Blevins and Christy Hyman, “Digital History and the Civil War Era,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 12, no. 1 (March 2022): 80-104.
- Anne Lindsay, “#VirtualTourist: Embracing Our Audience through Public History Web

Experience," *The Public Historian* 35, no. 1 (February 2013): 67-86.

- "Film and Media Producers: Taking History off the Page and Putting it on the Screen," in Gardner and LaPaglia, *Public History*

IN CLASS: DIGITAL HISTORY CASE STUDY AND PRACTICUM

❖❖❖ **BRING CHMELIK BOOK TO CLASS** ❖❖❖

April 20: Oral History Methods

- Excerpts from Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*
- Excerpts from Perks & Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*
- Rose T. Diaz, "Oral historians: Community Oral History and the Cooperative Ideal," in Gardner and LaPaglia, *Public History*

IN CLASS: ORAL HISTORY CASE STUDY AND PRACTICUM

April 27: Museum Management, Registration, and Collections Care

- Excerpts from Lord and Lord, *The Manual of Museum Management*
- Gulliford, "Curation and Repatriation of Sacred Tribal Objects"
- National Council on Public History, "Ethics and Professional Conduct"

IN CLASS: MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY AND ACCESSIONS POLICY PRACTICUM

❖❖❖ **BRING CHMELIK BOOK TO CLASS** ❖❖❖

May 9: EXHIBIT OPENING, 12-3pm (Location TBD)