

History 705: Introduction to Public History
Committing History in Public
Wednesdays, 6:00 to 8:30, N. Fine Arts, Room 533
Fall 2018

Course Instructor

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Office Hours:

Walk-ins welcome on a first come, first served basis with **no** appointment necessary on: Wednesdays from 2:30 to 5:30. Contact me by email to make an appointment if you need to see me on another day and/or at another time.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Explore emergence of public history as a profession
2. Provide a forum for expanding our understanding of historical professionalism
3. Analyze and discuss the relationships and responsibilities that compose public history
4. Provide practical experience in collaborative learning, and professional networking, both of which are essential skills for public history practice
5. Develop a history-based product for public consumption
6. Explore scholarship that composes public history as a field of intellectual inquiry

Required Texts to Borrow or Purchase:

Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski *Letting Go? Sharing Authority in a User Generated World* (Philadelphia: Pew Center, 2011) 0983480303

Keith Erikson *Everybody's History: Indiana's Lincoln Inquiry and the Quest to Reclaim a President's Past* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press)

Ari Kelman *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Harvard, 2013) ISBN-10: 0674045858

Cheryl Janifer LaRoche *Free Black Communities and the Geography of Resistance* (University of Illinois Press)

Akum Norder *The History of Here: A House, the Pine Hills Neighborhood, and the City of Albany* (State University of New York Press)

Laura Peers *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History)

NOTE: Additional Course Readings will be linked through the course website,
www.committinghistoryinpublic.org/blog

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the professional and intellectual field of public history. Believe it or not, there is more than one definition of public history. This is mine:

Public History is a form of public service. Public historians help create historical understanding by sharing authority and inquiry with a variety of partners: audiences, museum professionals, preservationists, business leaders and others. Public historians are trained, first and foremost, as historians –to conduct research, to craft interpretations and to write well. However, public historians must also be prepared to work collaboratively with partners for whom an understanding of history can have immediate practical implications. Public historians produce original interpretations that build bridges between scholarship and everyday life by respecting the ways in which their partners and audiences use history, and by balancing professional authority against community needs.

This course will give you the tools you need to define public history for yourself and to begin to chart your own professional path. We will read a selection of recent and classic scholarship and engage in weekly discussions that fall roughly into three units: (1) history of the field (2) The role and expectations of the public and best practices for communicating in the public sector; and, (3) Current Examples of professional practice.

During our classroom meetings, we will engage in discussion about the week's readings. In general, I will not lecture. I will typically begin each class by pointing to what I see as the key ethical and professional themes in the weeks' readings. The syllabus also provides you with some questions to guide your reading. You will each take turns shaping and leading classroom discussion, and you will prepare by actively blogging about the course readings.

In addition to classroom work (and in lieu of a more traditional research paper), you will also participate in a semester-long **collaborative** service learning project. This project requires you to put your skills as researchers, writers, and analysts to work in service of an external partner and enables you to find a balance between theory and practice. This project is essential because it makes our discussions more concrete and enables you to bring important and specific questions to our classroom experience.

This semester we will work with two partner institutions.

Our primary partner is the [Patapsco Heritage Greenway](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, protection, interpretation, and restoration of the environment, history, and culture of the Patapsco River Valley. In 2015, the organization achieved an important goal when the Patapsco River Valley became one of [Maryland's 13 certified heritage areas](#). The Patapsco Heritage Greenway operates through partnerships with a variety of preservation organizations, and the Executive Director is responsible for building and maintaining a strong network of communication and support. This semester, our project will help her meet that responsibility by working in [Oella](#) Historic District. You will have the opportunity to help organize and develop finding aids for the Oella Archives, which focuses on the history of the [Oella Company](#). You will also conduct research and develop historical content for a smart phone app—[Explore Baltimore Heritage](#)— developed and maintained by our secondary partner, [Baltimore Heritage](#). Founded in 1960, Baltimore Heritage is a nonprofit historic and architectural preservation organization. With two staff members, 33 volunteer board members, and a host of volunteers, the organization works to preserve and promote Baltimore's historic buildings and

neighborhoods. The UMBC Public History track's working relationship with Baltimore Heritage began in 2012, and our students have developed content for several neighborhoods, including [Downtown's West Side](#), [Druid Hill Park](#), [UMBC](#), and the [Maryland Zoo](#).

What should I think about?

First: The course schedule is intense, and the service learning project will be due in phases. It is crucial that you make plans **now** to meet each deadline. Because the project is collaborative, your classmates' success depends on your full participation and engagement. I will **not** assign a final grade of "incomplete," except in the most extreme and well-documented circumstances.

Second: This course will **not** teach historical research methods—as young historians, you are already trained or already receiving training in research, historiography, and traditional historical writing. Rather, this course will challenge you to think about the professional ramifications and ethical considerations created when historical research, writing and interpretation are done in a profoundly collaborative environment.

Is Dr. Meringolo an evil, evil task master?

As you might guess, putting this syllabus together is fairly complicated. As the course evolves, the assignments may evolve as well. Fortunately, I do not only teach collaborative, reflexive learning, I practice it, too. There will be opportunities along the way for us to decide—as a class—to modify the syllabus or shift the due dates in response to collective needs and real-world experiences.

Thus, I reserve the right to change requirements, the weight of each grade, and the schedule in response as we deem necessary.

Additional Information and Available Support

GEP Information

This course has NOT been approved to meet any of the requirements of the undergraduate General Education Program.

Student Disability Services (SDS)

UMBC is committed to eliminating discriminatory obstacles that may disadvantage students based on disability. Services for students with disabilities are provided for all students qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the ADAAA of 2009, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who request and are eligible for accommodations. The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) is the UMBC department designated to coordinate accommodations that would allow students to have equal access and inclusion in all courses, programs, and activities at the University.

If you have a documented disability and need to request academic accommodations, please refer to the SDS website at sds.umbc.edu for registration information and to begin the process, or alternatively you may visit the SDS office in the Math/Psychology Building, Room 212.

For questions or concerns, you may contact SDS through email at disAbility@umbc.edu or phone (410) 455-2459. If you require accommodations for this class, make an appointment to meet with me to discuss your SDS-approved accommodations.

Food and Housing Insecurity

The UMBC Counseling Center offers confidential support for students dealing with a variety of issues. You can explore their services by visiting the website <http://counseling.umbc.edu/>. Do not hesitate to contact a counselor if you have questions or need support. In particular, any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live is urged to contact Doha Chibani, LCSW-C, Clinical Social Worker and Referrals Coordinator at the Counseling Center, Student Development and Success Center. Her telephone number is 410-455-2472. Her email is chibani1@umbc.edu. She will help you identify resources that can assist you. Please note that [Retriever Essentials](#) is available to provide you with access to healthy food and other essential supplies free of charge. If you have any questions about Retriever Essentials, you can contact Lauren Kataja. Her email is lkataja@umbc.edu.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a serious matter at UMBC. We expect the absolute highest standards from students and faculty in their pursuit of new knowledge through academic coursework. By enrolling in this course, you assume the responsibilities of an active participant in the UMBC 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 general UMBC statement on Academic Integrity is [here](#). Specific information and training for graduate students can be found [here](#).

Please be further advised that the penalty for academic dishonesty –including plagiarism and other forms of cheating-- in any UMBC History Department course is an "F" for the course. ALL cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Conduct Committee. For further definitions on what academic misconduct is and how to avoid it at all costs please see <http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/>

How will I be Graded?

A. Regular Attendance

This is a collaborative, seminar style course. Your experience as a learner will depend on your participation in discussion, your ability to work well in a small group, and your full engagement with the readings and the project. It is imperative that you attend class regularly, keep up with work, and participate actively both on the blog and in person. *Unexcused* absences, chronic lateness, failure to participate, or obvious inattention **will** adversely affect your grade and may jeopardize your ability to pass this course.

B. Participation in Reading Annotation Class Discussion (10% of final course grade):

This semester you will also gain some experience using digital tools to facilitate both classroom discussion and public facing scholarship. First, we will use an app called [hypothesis](#) to facilitate close reading and discussion. This semester, each student is required to participate in annotating the class readings available in the [course blog](#) –adding a MINIMUM of three comments, questions, and observations to EACH reading for which annotation is available. Annotations are due NO LATER THAN 48 hours before the class session --by 6:00 on Mondays. In order to facilitate in-class discussion, you should read through your classmates' annotations prior to class and be prepared to reference this online conversation.

C. Three Part, Semester-Long Project (70% of final course grade):

During the first portion of the semester, you will work in small groups to conduct significant research and write a more-or-less traditional research report designed to explore some specific aspect of the history of Oella and its surrounding communities.

During the second portion of the semester, using this research as your foundation, you will work more or less independently to craft public facing content –both visual and textual—that may be used on Explore Baltimore Heritage and/or on the websites of the Patapsco Heritage Greenway and the Oella Company.

Due dates and project components are as follows

- 1) Part One: Collaborative Research on Relevant Historical Context (50% of TOTAL Project Grade)
 - a) Preliminary Research Proposal and Plan. Due by midnight on Sunday, September 16. (30% of part one grade).
 - b) Research Report and Annotated Bibliography. Due by midnight, Monday, October 22. (70% of part one grade).
- 2) Part Two: Individual Content for the App (50% of Project Grade)
 - a) Post to Class Blog: First Draft of Your Public Facing Content. Due by midnight on Monday, November 12
Your posts will be open for comment by our class partners. (20% of part two grade)
 - b) Oral Presentations to Baltimore Heritage and Oella Stakeholders (30% of part two grade), Wednesday December 12
 - c) Completed Project (50% of part two grade), due by 8:00 pm on Wednesday, December 19 (which is the day and time of the final exam as scheduled by the University)

D. Final Reflective Blog (15% of course grade)

Each student must write a final reflection. This assignment allows you an opportunity to reflect on the value of the group project and your overall course experience. Due by midnight Thursday, December 6.