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COURSE SYLLABUS - The City as History: Introduction to Public History

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COURSE SYLLABUS

The City as History: Introduction to Public History

Upper Division, Undergraduate Course

Welcome and Course Description

Welcome to The City as History: Introduction to Public History. This course introduces students to the field of public history by presenting current and relevant scholarship on the topic, inviting guest speakers, and exploring public history spaces in the Knoxville area. It will introduce students to the various professional practices of historical societies, museums, historic houses, libraries, archives, historical editing projects, historical preservation groups, and other organizations involved in historical research, advocacy, and educational programming for public audiences. **It will demonstrate that public history is civic engagement.**

A component of the course will include experiential learning through **individual student internships.**

Our course will focus on **race, memory, and public history**, particularly that of **voting rights and civic engagement.** We will begin with the Atlantic slave trade and how it is interpreted in museums, such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Next, we will examine slavery and memory through the Colonial, Early Republic, and Antebellum years, looking at the interpretation of the enslaved at presidential houses, the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park, and other venues, including Blount Mansion, Mabry Hazen House, and the Museum of East Tennessee History.

We will continue by examining the role of African Americans during the Civil War and how that contribution has been remembered in monuments and museums. At the same time, we will look at the Confederate statues and memorials and study the recent controversies surrounding these sites. Next, we will examine the experience of African Americans during Reconstruction and the New South period (Knoxville College, Historic Westwood), followed by memorialization of African Americans in World War I, the Knoxville Race Riots (Beck Cultural Exchange Center), the celebration of African American art through the Harlem Renaissance and the work of the Delaney brothers (Knoxville Museum of Art), and the commemoration of the Tuskegee Airmen. We will explore the emerging field of “Black in Appalachia.” Finally, we will look at the impact of school desegregation in East Tennessee (Green McAdoo Cultural Center) and the impact of urban renewal/removal of the second half of the twentieth century (Beck Cultural Exchange Center). **We will conclude by reflecting on the recent conversations and controversies on memory, civic engagement as public historians, and voting rights as memorialized in public spaces.**

Our capstone class project will be an exhibit with the working title of “A History of Voting Rights in Tennessee.” Students will conduct research and create wall panels for a traveling exhibit.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the methods that historians use to study memory as part of historical investigation and to understand that public history involves civic engagement in the local community and beyond.
- To understand what historians do in museums, archives, preservation organizations, and other agencies involved in historical research, advocacy, and history programming for public audiences.
- To gain **real world experience** in public history venues through **student internships and the practical experience of curating an exhibit**.

What is Public History?

This course introduces the history, theory, and practice of public history. There are many definitions of public history, but we'll think of it broadly encompassing historical work that:

- is conducted in public settings;
- is fundamentally engaged with public audiences or communities;
- addresses itself explicitly to current public issues or problems; and/or
- mediates between the specialized knowledge of professional historians and the historically-oriented preferences, expectations, and needs of various publics.

To elaborate, public history is a **vast and diverse** field that can embrace all of the following components:

- **History in public:** the many arenas where historians work and where historians and the public are in dialogue about history, including websites, podcasts, museums, archives, libraries, historic sites, national parks, battlefields, historic houses, corporations, historical societies or organizations; and in and with government agencies.
- **History developed for and with public audiences:** historical works directed primarily at public audiences (e.g., historical exhibits mounted in any of the above venues, as well as documentary films, trade or popular historical books, historical dramas or festivals, and historical novels); historical projects cocreated with, and responsive to various publics.
- **History on the public's behalf:** historical work done for public benefit (e.g., to measure or certify compliance with public statutes concerning historic preservation, cultural resources management, or planning; or to undergird policy decisions); done within government agencies by professional historians or contractors; or produced as part of a dialogue about current political, social, or cultural issues (e.g., historically-oriented analysis of current policy debates appearing in the public media).
- **The public and history: what the public wants and seeks from its encounters with history:** Topics include: history and civic engagement, "heritage," history and "memory," the relationship of history and tourism, grass-roots historical projects and local history, participatory history through such mechanisms as reenactments or crowdsourced projects, regional or national controversies over history, and general issues of "shared authority" between professional historians and the public. A single introductory course cannot possibly cover the full range of professional practice and scholarly activity that constitute public history.

This course will, therefore, introduce some major issues in public history through an approach that weaves together two major strands:

1. Reading and discussing some of the best recent public history scholarship and considering the following:

- Definition of “the public” and civic engagement with the public
- Memory: how parts of the past are remembered or forgotten
- Development of the public history field
- Public history and consideration of difficult topics and painful episodes in the past

2. Refining key skills:

Through the approach outlined above, this course will expand student knowledge of some key ideas and issues in public history while building some specific skills:

- Practicing critical reading and discussing other historians’ work
- Reading texts carefully to understand the nuances of historical arguments
- Thinking critically and analytically about readings
- Learning to have an informed, grounded, and authentic discussion of readings
- **Doing historical research, including asking historical questions and finding pertinent primary and secondary materials in archival collections (physical and online); developing an interpretation and presenting your findings to public audiences**
- Evaluating, assessing, and drawing meaning from primary sources and historical evidence
- Keeping track of research in a way that allows proper citation and tracking of sources
- Engaging with various perspectives about the particular histories to identify major questions
- Formulating and articulating cogent, well-grounded, well-supported, and engaging narratives about discoveries through research
- Trying to determine what kinds of interpretive approaches might be effective in the current environment
- **Planning and executing a compelling, accurate, well-researched, and user-friendly exhibit/presentation that is both appropriate to the stories uncovered and relevant to current concerns**
- Working collaboratively as part of a large team
- **Developing and executing an interesting, substantive in-person public presentation of student work**

Learning Environment

This is a face-to-face course, which means to complete this course you are required to travel to campus and the various historical venues that we visit in the Knoxville area.

Required Readings

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell. 2016. *March*. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions.

Each student will also choose 2 books from the following list and write a book review on each book (instructions under the first Module).

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE SOUTH

- McKinney Jr., Charles W. and Aram Goudsouzian. 2018. *An Unseen Light: Black Struggles for Freedom in Memphis, Tennessee*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- Hahn, Steven. 2003. *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Primary Readings:

- National Archives. "[Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)" and "[Voting Rights Act of 1965](#)."
- Franklin, Sekou M. and Ray Block Jr. 2020. *Losing Power: African Americans and Racial Polarization in Tennessee Politics*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- Favors, Jelani M. 2019. *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Primary Readings:

- Civil Rights Movement Archive. 1960. "[Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Statement of Purpose](#)."
- Civil Rights Movement Archive. 1964. "[Letter to College Professors re Freedom Summer](#)."

URBAN RENEWAL

- Ammon, Francesca Russello. 2016. *Bulldozer: Demolition and Clearance of the Postwar Landscape*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Simmons, Omari Scott. 2020. "Urban Removal: Reshaping Urban Landscapes through a Responsive Communitarian Lens." *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* 29 (4).

Primary Readings:

- Ammon, Francesca Russello. 2018. "Digital Humanities and the Urban Built Environment: Preserving the Histories of Urban Renewal and Historic Preservation." *Preservation Education and Research* 10.
- New American History Learning Resources. "[Renewing Inequality: Urban Renewal, Family Displacements, and Race 1950-1966](#)."

AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

- Weisenfeld, Judith. 2016. *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration*. New York. New York University Press.

Primary Reading:

- King, Jr., Martin Luther. 1963. "[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#)."

BLACK ARTISTS BEAUFORD AND JOSEPH DELANEY

- Moffatt, Frederick C. 2009. *The Life, Art and Times of Joseph Delaney, 1904-1991*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Leeming, David. 1998. *Amazing Grace: A Life of Beauford Delaney*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Primary Reading:

- Digital Public Library of America. "[A Handwritten List of Pictures Submitted to the Whitney Galleries by Beauford Delaney.](#)"

BLACK CAPITALISM

- Winford, Brandon. 2020. *John Hervey Wheeler, Black Banking, and the Economic Struggle for Civil Rights*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- Garrett-Scott, Jennette. 2019. *Banking on Freedom: Black Women in U.S. Finance Before the New Deal*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Primary Reading:

- Digital humanities website, "[Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America.](#)"

RACE AND MEMORY

- Blight, David. 2001. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Primary Reading:

- American Battlefields Trust. "[Civil War Monument Speeches.](#)"

RACE RIOTS

- Booker, Robert J. 2001. *The Heat of a Red Summer: Race Mixing, Race Rioting in 1919 Knoxville*. Netsource Dist Services.

BLACK APPALACHIA

- Brown, Karida L. 2018. *Race and Roots Through Appalachia: Gone Home*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Primary Reading:

- Interview with Lilian Butner. 1987. "[Blacks in Kentucky Oral History Project.](#)" Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries.

WEBSITES ON VOTING RIGHTS

- [US Constitution and Amendments.](#)
- [US Supreme Court Cases.](#)
- [Voting Rights Act of 1965.](#)

Course Expectations and How to Be Successful in this Course

All students are expected to be present in class, to arrive on time, to have completed the assigned readings and assignments by the due dates, and to participate actively in class discussions. **Students should bring readings to class.**

The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which are supportive of the learning process, creating an environment in which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop an understanding of the community in which they live and the community beyond the university.

TO SUMMARIZE:

LEARNER EXPECTATIONS

- Be prepared for all classes
- Be respectful of others
- Actively contribute to the learning activities in class
- Abide by the Honor Code

INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS

- Be prepared for all classes
- Evaluate all fairly and equitably
- Be respectful of all students
- Create and facilitate meaningful learning activities
- Behave according to University codes of conduct

AI POLICY: PERMITTED WHEN ASSIGNED IN THIS COURSE WITH ATTRIBUTION

- In this course, students are permitted to use Generative AI Tools such as ChatGPT for specific assignments, as designated by the instructor. To maintain academic integrity, students must disclose any use of AI-generated material. As always, students must properly use attributions, including in-text citations, quotations, and references.
- A student should include the following statement in assignments to indicate use of a Generative AI Tool: “The author(s) would like to acknowledge the use of [Generative AI Tool Name], a language model developed by [Generative AI Tool Provider], in the preparation of this assignment. The [Generative AI Tool Name] was used in the following way(s) in this assignment [e.g., brainstorming, grammatical correction, citation, which portion of the assignment].”

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

A weekly meeting as a class. In these seminar-style meetings we will discuss the readings, the internship experiences, the field of public history, and career preparation; we will also be visiting history venues in the Knoxville area and hearing from public history and museum professionals. Attendance is required at every class meeting. **Sixty (60) hours of hands-on internship experience**, an average of six (6) hours per week for 10 weeks of the spring semester.

YOUR FINAL GRADE WILL BE BASED ON THESE SIX COMPONENTS:

1. Attendance and participation in all the class meetings (10%). Students are expected to attend all class meetings, arrive on time, and be in class for the full period. You are expected to do all the reading, come prepared, and participate in discussions.
2. A weekly Canvas posting on the internship experience and commentary on the readings (15%). Posts should be reflective observations of at least a full paragraph, if not more, in length. Comment on the previous week's experience at work, as well as this week's readings. Use a computer keyboard, not a smartphone, to post; avoid cursory tweet-like posts. Read your classmates' posts before class; these are a part of the required weekly readings.
3. A midterm and final written reflection (10% and 10%) on the internship experience and readings.
4. A confidential evaluation letter from the internship supervisor to the instructor (15%).
5. Two book reviews (20%).
6. Final (in-class) project (20%).

IMPORTANT:

You should think about the internship as requiring the discipline and responsibility of a job. You need to set up a work schedule with your supervisor and adhere to it. Once you have agreed to work specific days and times, you must honor that commitment. You cannot just skip your internship obligation as you might skip a class.

Your internship supervisor and the instructor will be evaluating your ability to make this transition from college to the workplace, assessing all aspects of your performance, including your maturity and sense of responsibility. In addition to learning about public history, you will learn about the expectations of professional life. Failure to perform professionally in the internship can result in cancellation of the internship midsemester and assignment of an "F" in the course.

Social media and the internship. While you are expected to send weekly posts to the class listserv about the internship experience, you should be careful about sharing your observations on social media. Why? You are being treated as a professional in your internship, and you may therefore be exposed to sensitive issues.

Course Schedule

Please note: The course schedule and the syllabus are subject to change; you will be notified on Canvas if there are any changes. Assignments should be completed by due date as shown on Assignments.

Please post everything to Canvas.

From time to time, I will extend a due date for an assignment in order to accommodate the class. Please note that any extensions are for the particular assignment only; the rest of the due dates will remain the same, unless also noted.

WEEK ONE

Introduction to course themes. Course syllabus and readings. Introduction to the capstone project of curating 2 small exhibits: 1. Howard H. Baker Jr. and 2. A History of Voting Rights in Tennessee.

WEEK TWO

Visit **Museum of East Tennessee History** with Lisa Oakley, vice president and curator of education at the East Tennessee Historical Society and Adam Alfrey, curator at the Museum of East Tennessee History. Pay particular attention to areas of race, civic engagement and voting rights. Research at the McClung Historical Collection.

WEEK THREE

Baker Center: Research materials for the Baker Exhibit. Look for images; begin to write labels. Presentation on research for exhibition development.

WEEK FOUR

Slavery in the Early Republic. **Visit Blount Mansion.** Pay particular attention to voting rights as noted in the first constitution of Tennessee. Slavery in the Antebellum Period. **Mabry Hazen House.** Pay particular attention to the civic engagement of those who lived there. Read the revised Tennessee Constitution and note voting rights changes.

WEEK FIVE

Research at the **Baker Center**; write labels; peer review. Turn in first book review.

WEEK SIX

Introduction to Knoxville's history with public historian **Jack Neely.** Pay particular attention to the civic engagement and voting rights (and lack of voting rights) of Knoxville citizens. Research at **UTK Special Collections.**

WEEK SEVEN

Submit all final labels/images to the **Baker Center.**

WEEK EIGHT

Jim Crow, Knoxville Race Riots, Urban Renewal. **Beck Cultural Exchange Center.** Turn in second book review. Pay particular attention to civic engagement of the early founders as well as political engagement and voting rights.

WEEK NINE

Walking Tour of downtown Knoxville and the Bijou Theater with Jack Neely. Pay particular attention to the statues devoted to suffrage and the second balcony at the Bijou.

WEEK TEN

The Harlem Renaissance and the Delaney brothers. **Knoxville Museum of Art**. Pay particular attention to the changes in civic engagement throughout the exhibit.

WEEK ELEVEN

McClung Museum: Overview and best practices in museums. Pay particular attention to the practice of repatriation at the McClung. Continue research at the UTK Special Collections.

WEEK TWELVE

Old Gray Cemetery Walking Tour with Jack Neely. Pay particular attention to the civic, military, and suffrage leaders buried there. Who is missing?

WEEK THIRTEEN

Finalize exhibit boards to send to Print Shop.

WEEK FOURTEEN

Install exhibit on **A History of Voting Rights and Tennessee**.

FINAL REFLECTION AND INTERNSHIP EVALUATION BY MENTOR