

SHSU History 5388 01: Public History

Credit Hours: 3

Spring 2018

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What is Public History?

Public History is a broad category of historical practices that include creating historical projects for the public, working in public as a historian (such as working with museums, governmental organizations, and archives), working to help public institutions fulfill their goals (such as advising and measuring compliance on historic preservation), and analyzing and interpreting how the past is displayed in public. It is interdisciplinary in nature and interactive in practice.

The Philosophy of Public History 5388

To borrow from one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century, Vaclav Havel, a key goal of the intellectual is to make the powerless aware of their power. This class sees fostering this awareness as the main goal of public history in its present state. By bringing to light the stories of the dispossessed, the subaltern, the marginalized, and the idiosyncratic, good public history works to bring forgotten

people and narratives to the public's consciousness. The ultimate goal of a public historian is to awaken and engage the general public in the task of taking ownership of their history.

Course Description:

This course is organized into four acts. The first will have us read and discuss major works on public history. The second will have us investigate public history projects related to our topic and plan our research agenda. In this act we will also form research teams - you will be a team leader for a small group of undergraduates. The third act will have us conduct research into our topic, the Segregation of Walker County. The last act will be to publish our results on the internet, which we will do through the use of digital humanities tools, chiefly the East Texas History application, and in physical form, which we will do by creating an exhibit for the general public.

Course Goals:

By the end of the course you will have:

Engaged with significant issues in public history.

Led and facilitated a graduate level discussion in history.

Led a research team of undergraduates.

Analyzed local displays.

Conducted original historical research.

Created an online and a physical exhibition for the general public.

Our Service in this Course:

In 1872, Walker County voted Grant for President. In 1876, only two votes were cast for the Republican candidate. Three years later, Sam Houston Normal Institute opened its doors to an all white student body. The following years witnessed a political and cultural struggle to define what rules would govern the citizens of the county, of which little is known. The outcome, though, was certain. By 1900, Walker County had implemented an apartheid system. This course aims to uncover the history of this process in order to answer: What was the price of apartheid? Who implemented segregation on a local level and how? We will provide an exhibit on our findings to the general public.

Research

The research process will be a collaborative effort with undergraduate students currently enrolled in HIS 3388. You will have a small team of undergraduate students assigned to your team. You will be the team leader and are responsible for the group's overall output. In this, you will be expected to meet with your team at least three times during the semester while staying in close contact with each other via email. You will evaluate each of your team members at the end of the semester and they will evaluate you.

Assignments:

Participation in Discussion: 10%

Research reports (x3): 25%

Discussion Lead: 10%

Formal Research Summary: 20%

Peers' review: 5%

Data Entry in East Texas History App and Project Narrative: 30%

Readings:

There are far too many themes and issues in the secondary literature of public history to cover in one semester, so we will focus on three works dealing with the theory of public history and two dealing with our subject.

Theory:

Black, Jeremy. *Contesting History: Narratives of Public History*. 2014.

Kean, H. and Martin, P., eds. *The Public History Reader*. 2013.

Truillot, Michel. *Silencing the Past*.

Segregation¹

Hale, Grace. *Making Whiteness*. 2012.

Woodward, Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 1995.

University Policies:

<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the

academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[Dean of Student's Office](#)

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf](#)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

Class Schedule

1/17

Course Introduction. What is public history? Assign Teams for Class Led Discussions.

1/25

Discuss Black, *Contesting History* and *Public History Reader* – “Introduction, The Past is Present”. Assignment of research teams.

2/1

Michel Truillot, *Silencing the Past*.

2/8:

Public History Reader (Four selections chosen by discussion leaders).

2/15

Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Meet with team this week.

2/22: Making Whiteness

Hale, *Making Whiteness*. Framing Good Research Questions.

3/1: Phase One.

Planning, Identifying, Locating.

3/8: First Research report due March 8.

3/15: (Spring Break).

3/22: Research Discussion

3/29: Research Discussion.

4/5: Second Research Report.

4/12: First draft of narratives/website entry.

4/19: Preparing the Exhibit

4/26: Preparing the Exhibit. Third Research Report.

5/3: Exhibit.

Formal Research Summary and Peer Review due May 7.