

AMCV2650 Introduction to Public Humanities Fall semester 2009

Steven Lubar

Class: Wednesday 3:00-5:20, Nightingale-Brown House

Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 lubar@brown.edu

This graduate seminar addresses the theoretical bases of the public humanities, providing a background that will help students understand the choices made in preserving, interpreting, and presenting art, history and culture. We will address those issues by reading and discussing case studies to see how theory plays out in practice.

The way the course works: there's a book to read each week, each one a case study (or a set of case studies). Twitter about it as you read it. One or two students will write something on the blog about the book - everyone should read and comment on it, and related topics. In each class, we'll discuss the reading, and have a presentation or two, as outlined below.

Here's what is required for the class:

Reading

- Read assigned work

Discussion (45 percent of grade)

- Participate in class discussion
- Read the papers posted on the blog and comment on them there.
- Read, throughout the semester, newspapers, journals and websites that address issues related to the class, for example, the *New York Times*, *Art in America*, *Artsjournal.com*, *Museum News*, *The Public Historian*, *CRM*, <http://www.aamd.org>, or www.artsjournal.com/culturegrll/. Browse the books in the JBC library. Occasionally post links and comments on the articles you find interesting on the class blog or Twitter.
- Each week, use Twitter to call our attention to a few interesting ideas from the reading, or from other sources. Follow the Twitter feeds from others in the class. Hashtag: #AMCV2650.

Presentation (10 percent of grade)

- Present a not-to-exceed 10 minute illustrated talk -- a pecha-kucha or a prezzi (prezi.com) or a Voicethread or some other interesting technique -- sometime during the semester. This can be a summary of your research paper, or on any other topic appropriate to the readings. This is graded both on content and style!

Writing (45 percent of grade)

- Prepare an introduction and questions for readings for one class. For that class, write a short paper, 2-3 pages, to provide some theoretical or historiographical background to the book assigned that week, or on a related topic - a separate case study, perhaps. Meet with me to discuss this after you've read through the book, preferably on the Friday before class; I can recommend background reading for you. Post your paper on the class blog the Monday before class, and be prepared to discuss it in class.

- Write a research paper, due on December 15. This should be roughly 20 pages, and should be a case study of some public humanities project, either historical or contemporary. Consider modeling your paper on one of the books or essays we read during the semester. A 2-3 page proposal is due November 15. Note: Your paper should be your original work. Footnote anything you use from books, articles, interviews, or the web. Note ideas that came from other people. Failure to do so can result in failing the class.

Class blog website: <http://amcv2650.wordpress.com/> Note: this is open to outside readers

Books are available in the bookstore. Most chapters, articles, etc., are available on OCRA, available online through the library, or are in the JNBC library. All of the books are in the Rockefeller Reserve. Password on OCRA: public. Note that there are a great many related books and article on reserve in the library, or on OCRA.

Readings Schedule

Introduction

Week 1 (September 9)

Introductions, explanations, etc.: What is public humanities?

Memory

Week 2 (September 16)

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*

The Other

Week 3 (September 23)

Sally Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly*

New York Times articles at: <http://bit.ly/D8UWA>

Week 4 (September 30)

Journal of American Folklore Special Issue: "Constructing Folklife and Negotiating the Nation(al): The Smithsonian Folklife Festival" (Volume 121 Number 479, Winter 2008)

Week 5 (October 7)

James Horton and Lois Horton, eds, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*

Brown University Slavery and Justice reports:
http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/

Wonder

Week 6 (October 14)

Lawrence Weschler, *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and Other Marvels of Jurassic*

Video: "Inhaling The Spore: A Journey Through The Museum Of Jurassic Technology" OCRA

Week 7 (October 21)

Susan G. Davis, *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience*

Community

Week 8 (October 28) (Marci Reaven visit)

Stephanie E Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston.*

Week 9 (November 3)

Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*

Week 10 (November 11)

Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City*

OR

Teresa S. Moyer and Paul A. Shackel, *The Making of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park: A Devil, Two Rivers, and a Dream*

Week 11 (November 18) (Michael Edson visit)

Read a variety of online materials related to the Smithsonian web 2.0 project: <http://smithsonian-webstrategy.wikispaces.com/>

<http://smithsonian20.si.edu/>

http://smithsonian20.si.edu/forum_schedule.html

<http://smithsonian20.typepad.com/>

Mike Edson, "Imagining a Smithsonian Commons" at <http://bit.ly/8LFpK>

#si20 twitters from strategy workshops:

<http://hashtags.org/tag/si20/messages>

Display

Week 12 (December 2)

Andrea Witcomb, *Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum*

Week 13 (December 9)

Lewis, Catherine M. *The Changing Face of Public History: The Chicago Historical Society and the Transformation of an American Museum*