

AC0155 Museums and More: Methods in Public Humanities

Curating, Conserving, Communicating

Spring 2006

Steven Lubar

This course provides a survey of public humanities work, including historic preservation, exhibition development, curatorial skills, radio and television documentaries, local history, and more. In addition to lectures and discussions, the course features presentations from practitioners in a range of topics and includes field trips to museums and other sites.

This course, intended for students interested in understanding the ways in which public humanists conserve and curate culture, and the public learns about history and culture, offers an overview of the field. It focuses on the work that public humanists do: techniques, concerns, and practical issues. I hope to provide an insider’s view of what happens behind the scenes in museums and other cultural organizations to understand how the people who work there make decisions about content, interpretation, and presentation. My hope is that the class will be useful both for those who intend to work in museums and other public humanities institutions and for those who want to become sophisticated users of those institutions. We will try to understand and appreciate the work that public humanists do—as well as to question some of their assumptions and techniques.

The way the class works:

In general, Monday’s class is a lecture; Wednesday, a visit or visitor; Friday, a discussion section. You should read the assigned weekly reading before Friday; often, it will be useful to have read it before Wednesday. Chapters from Gardner and LaPaglia, *Public History*, are assigned throughout; these are required only for graduate students. Undergraduates interested in careers in public humanities may also find these readings valuable. Additional readings of interest are listed on the syllabus as well. The required readings are on reserve at the Rockefeller Library, or on the class WebCT, or on the library’s reserve web site: the password is jnbc.

There are four short (3-4) page papers due during the class. Most of these should take the form of a memorandum or consultant’s report to the director of one of the projects discussed during the previous few weeks. They should refer to other examples, from the books, from class, or from your experiences. A final paper, due at the end of the reading period, is intended to have you reflect on how you see museums differently after having taken the course; I’m open to other final projects. Your grade is based on the papers (80 percent) and class participation (20 percent).

Books available in the bookstore (and on reserve):

- Robert R. Archibald, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community*
- Gardner and LaPaglia, *Public History*
- Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone*
- Catherine M. Lewis, *The Changing Face of Public History*
- Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*



M.,W.,F. 11:00-11:50 PM (D Hour) Salomon Center 203

Office Hours: Monday 2-4, John Nicholas Brown Center, 357 Benefit Street.

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Monday: Lecture</i>	<i>Wednesday: Visit or Visitor</i>	<i>Readings for Discussion</i>	<i>Friday: Problem to Solve at discussion</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Additional readings of interest</i>
1.	1/23	Introduction	(no class)	About the class: Defining the public humanities. Examples.	Carl Becker, "Everyman his own historian", at http://www.historians.org/info/AHA_History/clbecker.htm and Roy Rosenzweig, "Everyone a Historian," at http://chnm.gmu.edu/survey/afterroy.html Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i> section 1	Introductory lecture, continued: What does it mean for "everyman to be his own historian"? What role do professionals play?		
2.	1/30	Community 1: How and why societies remember and forget and the role that cultural institutions play	Museums, memorials, and memories; how societies remember, how they forget, and the role cultural institutions play in those processes.	Visit to John Brown House, RIHS	Willard L. Boyd, "Museums as Centers of Controversy," in <i>Daedalus</i> (Summer 1999) WEBCT Magaly Cabral, "Exhibiting and communicating history and society in historic house museums," <i>Museums International</i> (2001) WEBCT The President's House Debate: http://march.camden.rutgers.edu/presHouse.htm Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i> , pp. 233-255 and 345-56.	What should be done at the President's House site in Philadelphia? Compare with the John Brown House.		David Glassberg, <i>Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life</i>
3.	2/06	Community 2: Using culture to build community	How do cultural institutions represent (or not represent) communities? Examples include National Museum of American Indian, Wing Luke Museum, and other community cultural organizations.	Speaker: Vas Prabhu, Peabody Essex Museum	Robert R. Archibald, <i>A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community</i> Stephen E. Weil, "From Being <i>about</i> Something to Being <i>for</i> Somebody: The Ongoing Transformation of the American Museum," <i>Daedalus</i> (Summer 1999) WEBCT Wing Luke Museum website: http://www.wingluke.org/ Jack Tchen, "Towards a Dialogic Museum," in <i>Museums and Communities</i> , edited by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press), 285-326. OCRA Gardner and LaPaglia, pp. 295-345.	Community involvement: compare the way community is involved in the various places we've read about		Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Carl Grodach, "Displaying and Celebrating the Other": A Study of the Mission, Scope, and Roles of Ethnic Museums in Los Angeles, <i>The Public Historian</i> , Vol. 26 No. 4 Akemi Kikumura-Yano, Lane Ryo Hirabayashi and James A. Hirabayashi, <i>Common Ground: The Japanese American National Museum and the Culture of Collaborations</i>
4.	2/13	Community 3:	Memorials and commemorations are	Discussion section on Wednesday this week.	Sanford Levinson, <i>Written in Stone</i>	Tour of Roger Williams	Write a 3-5	David Glassberg,

		Memorials	one way that societies indicate what they would like to remember. The politics of shaping (and reshaping) memorials, especially Civil War memorials and WWII and Holocaust memorials.		Gardner and LaPaglia, pp. 279-294	National Memorial	memorandum to the director of one of the institutions mentioned during the last three weeks outlining suggested changes in policy toward community relations.	<i>Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life</i>
5.	2/20	Preservation: Buildings and Landscapes	No class 2/20	History of historic preservation. What's saved, by whom, how, and how is the public told about it? The politics of historic preservation. Film: A legacy of change	Briann Greenfield, "Marketing the Past: Historic Preservation in Providence, RI," in <i>Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States</i> ed. Max Page and Randall Mason OCRA Patricia Mooney-Melvin, "Harnessing the Romance of the Past: Preservation, Tourism, and History," <i>Public Historian</i> (Spring 1991). OCRA "How to apply the National Register Criteria for Nomination," at http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/ Providence Preservation Society website: http://www.ppsri.org/ http://philipmarshall.net/providence/index.htm Gardner and LaPaglia, pp. 129-140, on work in historic preservation	Providence Preservation Society tour of downtown Providence (tentative)		Robert E. Stipe, ed., <i>A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century</i> (2003) or Carol Kammen, <i>On Doing Local History</i> , Patricia West, <i>Domesticating History</i>
6.	2/27	Collecting 1: Museum Collecting	What do museums collect, and why? What's worth saving? Who decides? Collecting objects or collecting stories?	Visit to RISD Museum; Presentation by Judith Tannenbaum, curator of contemporary art.	Judith Tannenbaum, "C is for Contemporary Art Curator: Curiosity, Contradictions, Collaboration, and Challenges," in <i>Art Journal</i> , Fall 1994 WEBCT Stephen E. Weil, "Twenty-one ways to buy art" OCRA "Applying Market Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning," Chapter 5 in Neil and Philip Kotler, <i>Museum Strategy and Marketing</i> OCRA Gardner and LaPaglia, pp. 357-371.	Which of the 21 ways to buy art makes sense for RISD? For Brown? Discuss Weil's in light of Tannenbaum's presentation, and Kotler and Kotler's ideas about market segmentation.		
7	3/06	Collecting 2: History museum collecting	What do museums collect and why? Ethical issues about collections. Accessioning, deaccessioning, preservation, conservation, storage.... Film: "Bridge of Books"	Peter Liebhold, Smithsonian, on collecting	Maines and Glynn, "Numinous Objects," <i>Public Historian</i> 15:1 (Winter 1993) WEBCT Elaine Heumann Gurian, "What is the object of this exercise: A Meandering Exploration of the Many Meanings of Objects in Museums," in <i>Daedalus</i> , 1999 WEBCT Klyberg, Albert T. "Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Rhode Island History: 175 Years." <i>Rhode Island History</i> . 1997 55(3): 88-99. OCRA http://www.smithsonianlegacies.si.edu/ http://americanhistory.si.edu/september11/	Consider the changing reasons for collecting: how and why have collections policies changed?	Write a 3-5 page memo to the director of one of the institutions mentioned in the readings or discussions from the last three weeks. In the memo, outline a course of action to improve their collecting or preservation policies.	Steven Lubar and Kathleen Kendrick, <i>Legacies: Collecting America's History at the Smithsonian</i> <i>Mining the Museum: An Installation Institution</i> by Fred Wilson James B. Gardner and Elizabeth E.

					James Gardner and Elizabeth Merritt, “Collections Planning: Pinning Down a Strategy,” <i>Museum News</i> 81 (July/August 2002): 30, 33, 60–61. OCRA Harriet Baskas, Hidden Treasures Radio Project, at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4119242 Cohen and Rosenzweig, “Collecting History Online” at http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/collecting/ Gardner and LaPaglia, pp. 187-201		OR Write a collecting proposal (3-5 pages) for some object or group of objects. (See examples on WEBCT.) Explain why an object should be collected.	Merritt, <i>The AAM Guide to Collections Planning</i>, 2005— Aaron Lansky, <i>Outwitting History: The Amazing Adventures of a Man who Saved a Million Yiddish Books</i>
8	3/13	Presentation 1: Museum Exhibits	Tour of Haffenreffer exhibit in Manning Hall with Kevin Smith, Haffenreffer Deputy Director	Some history, recent trends, some recent case studies: slavery, industrial history, transportation	Catherine M. Lewis, <i>The Changing Face of Public History</i> Steven Greenblatt, “Representation and Wonder” in Karp and Lavine, <i>Museums and Communities</i> OCRA Crew and Sims, “Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue” in Karp and Lavine, <i>Museums and Communities</i> OCRA Susan Vogel, “Always true to the Object, in our fashion,” in Karp and Lavine, <i>Museums and Communities</i> OCRA Appendix B, “Notes for Entering and Describing a Cultural Institution,” in Carr, <i>Promise of Cultural Institutions</i> OCRA Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i>, pp. 295-324.	Consider the Haffenreffer’s exhibit in light of Greenblatt and Crew & Sims; how useful is Carr’s technique?	NOTE: Optional SATURDAY, March 18 trip to New York to visit Christies and New York Historical Society slavery exhibit for behind-the-scenes tours. \$40 bus charge.	Margaret A. Lindauer, “From salad bars to vivid stories: four game plans for developing ‘educationally successful’ exhibitions,” <i>Museum Management and Curatorship</i> 20 (2005) 41–55 WEBCT Tiffany Scott, “How Museums do things without words,” WEBCT National Park Service, <i>Interp Guide: The Philosophy and Practice of Connecting People to Heritage</i> WEBCT Beverley Serrell, <i>Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach : An Interpretive Approach</i>
9	3/20	Presentation 2: Museum exhibitions	Politics of exhibitions. Review of some controversies, including the Enola Gay, West as America, and others. Stakeholders and others.	Lonnie Bunch, NMAfAHC	Lonnie Bunch, “Embracing Controversy: Museum Exhibitions and the Politics of Change,” <i>Public Historian</i> 14 (Summer 1992): 63-65. OCRA Mike Wallace, <i>Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory</i>	What advice can you give the director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture as he begins to build his museum?		Peter Liebhold, “Experiences from the Front Line” Steven Dubin, <i>Displays of Power</i>

					Read public humanists' codes of ethics at http://www.ncph.org/ethics.html http://icom.museum/ethics.html http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/coe.cfm http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/indiv_support.cfm http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/bus_support.cfm Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i>, pp 345-356	What controversies should he be ready for? What ethical concerns should he consider?		Alan Wallach, <i>Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States</i> , Chaps 7,8,9
Spring Break VISIT MUSEUMS !!!								
10	4/03	Presentation 3: Museum visitors	The work of the exhibition curator, designer and educator, and the work of the museum visitor, and how they interact.	Visit to RISD Museum with exhibition designer	James B. Gardner, "Contested Terrain: History, Museums, and the Public," <i>The Public Historian</i>, Fall 2004, Vol. 26, No. 4, Pages 11-21 WEBCT David L. Larsen, "Be Relevant or become a relic: Meeting the Public Where they are," <i>Journal of Interpretation Research</i>, Vol. 7 No. 1 (200) , pp. 17-24. at http://www.interpnet.com/JIR/pdf/v7n1.pdf John H. Falk, "Museums as Institutions for Personal Learning," in <i>Daedalus</i> (Summer 1999) WEBCT Barbara Franco, "Communications Conundrum," <i>Journal of American History</i>, June 1994 WEBCT One or more of the visitor surveys at www.si.edu/opanda Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i>, pp. 141-156	Visit a museum and watch visitors as they interact with the exhibit, Ask them what they are there for, what they're learning, and if they're enjoying themselves. Come prepared to describe the way they used the exhibit.	Write a 3-5 page exhibition review. For suggestions on what to include, see Thomas J. Schlereth, "Museum Exhibition Reviews: Introduction," <i>Journal of American History</i> June 1989 WEBCT. The <i>Journal of American History</i> , <i>American Quarterly</i> , and <i>Technology and Culture</i> all have good exhibition reviews that can serve as models.	Beverly Serrell, <i>Paying Attention: Visitors and Museum Exhibitions</i> Donna R. Braden and Grethen Overhiser, <i>Old Collections, New Audiences: Decorative Arts and Visitor Experience in the 21st Century</i>. Falk and Dierking, <i>The Museum Experience and Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning</i> Gaea Leinhardt and Karen Knutson, <i>Listening In on Museum Conversations</i>
11	4/10	Presentation 4: Programs and performance	Reenacting, movies, etc. What makes a movie or a performance seem true?	Ellen Rosenthal, Connor Prairie	Watch a movie set in the past, or the future, with special attention to what makes it seem real, true, believable, accurate? Scott Magelssen, "Living History Museums and the Construction of the Real through Performance" <i>Theatre Survey</i> (May 2004) Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i>, pp. 117-128.	What makes a movie, or a museum, seem accurate? Consider the balance of authenticity of artifact and experience. How would you make a show seem more accurate? How would you make it more popular?	.	Stacy F. Roth, <i>Past into Present, Effective Techniques for First-person Historical Interpretation</i> (UNC Press, 1998)

12	4/17	Presentation 5: Radio, Television and the Web: Virtual exhibitions	Old media, new media, and the way they change culture. Getting the word out in a variety of media; what's the best medium for your message?	Scott Tiffany, TimeFrame Films, on producing videos for the History Channel	Watch some programs on the History Channel Consider some exemplary websites: use examples from http://www.secondstory.com/collected.php?SubjectMask=0&CategoryMask=0 Brad Johnson, "Beyond On-Line Collections," at http://www.archimuse.com/mw2004/papers/johnson/johnson.html Kevin Mattson, "Channeling History," <i>Dissent</i>, Fall 2005 WEBCT Brian Taves, "The History Channel and the Challenge of Historical Programming," in Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, ed., <i>Television histories: shaping collective memory in the media age</i>, pp. 261-281. OCRA Cohen and Rosenzweig, "Exploring the History Web," at http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/exploring/ Edward L. Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," at http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html David Silver, "Interfacing American Culture: The Perils and Potentials of Virtual Exhibitions," <i>American Quarterly</i> 49.4 (1997) 825-850 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_quarterly/v049/49.4er_folklore.html Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i>, pp. 117-128	Compare the advantages and disadvantages of web, radio, and television presentations, and compare them to exhibitions and performance. Consider what you would have to do to remake one format into another.	Write a 3-5 page TV program, movie or website review. In the review, consider: what the curator or producer hoped to accomplish; what the audience got from it; who the exhibit is aimed at and how well it works for that audience; and your own reaction to it. Include advice for the curator on changes that you believe should be made.	Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, ed., <i>Television histories: shaping collective memory in the media age</i>. Daniel J. Cohen, Roy Rosenzweig, <i>Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, And Presenting the Past on the Web</i> Museumpatch.com Sample website reviews: http://www.publichistory.org/reviews/index.asp
13	4/24	Conclusions	Balancing the demands of audience, entertainment, money, collections, staff...	Patricia Mooradian, Director, The Henry Ford	Gardner and LaPaglia, <i>Public History</i>, pp. 45-56 No class Friday		Final Paper/project, Due May 9 Either: Return to the John Brown House or the RISD Museum and write a 4-5 page paper describing how you see it differently now from what you saw when you visited it the first week of class, Or:	Lynne M. Ireland, eds. <i>Museum Administration: An Introduction</i> Barry Lord, <i>The Manual of Museum Management</i>

							Write a 4-5 page proposal for an exhibition or other program, or a collection plan, for an area of interest.	
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