

Hist 4314: Historical Preservation, Research, and Writing.

“History offers the best training for those who are to take part in public affairs,” Polybius,
Histories, c. 125 B.C.

“We may live without architecture, and worship without her, but we cannot remember
without her,” John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849

History 4310, Sec. 010

Room: A221

MWF: 1:00-1:50

Dr. Jason Pierce

jason.pierce@angelo.edu

Office: 942-2199

Office A210D

Office Hours: Everyday, 9:00-11:00am or by appointment.

What is Public History?

According to James Loewen’s *Lies Across America*, eighty percent of Americans never take a history class after high school. Undoubtedly this is one cause of our collective historical amnesia, but perhaps all is not lost. While the average American may not formally study history and keep up on the latest historiographic trends in the field, Americans nevertheless encounter history everywhere: television, motion pictures, roadside markers, museums, and so on. The omnipresence of history, or of various interpretations of it, presents opportunities and challenges to the historian. It is here, in the rough and tumble world of everyday life, that public history exists. The public historian, therefore, can get out in the “real” world and influence “actual” people. This is not an easy task, but it can be rewarding.

The goal of “Introduction to Public History” is to introduce the various manifestations of public history, encourage history majors to see public history as a venue by which their work can reach a larger audience, and, perhaps, answer the age-old question posed by history majors: “What can I do with a history degree besides teach?” Even conventional academic historians, those who supposedly hide in their “ivory towers” and teach, can benefit from the experience of doing public history. Indeed, in recent years the separation between academic historians and public historians has been closing. In short, taking a public history course is beneficial to any history major, and it may even be fun.

Format of this Class

This class is broken up into two discrete, but related, parts. The first half is a survey of the various fields of public history, with readings designed to encourage students to think critically about the theories behind each of the disciplines. We will discuss the techniques and challenges posed by doing archival work, conducting oral history, conserving and preserving historical artifacts, and many other topics. Since public

history is very much history in action, we will also get involved in the world of public history, encountering and critiquing public history sites, coming into contact with the issues involved in doing public history, meeting and talking with public history professionals, and creating public history of our own.

Assignments

Students will be required to read all readings and complete the assignments of the class. These are:

1. Review of 1619 vs 1776. Due January 28th in class. 100 points.
2. Review of Gardner's article "Contested Terrain." Due February 18th in class. 100 Points.
3. Virtual Exhibit Review. Due March 11th in class. 100 points
4. Group Research project. 200 points
5. Individual Research Paper based on Research Project. 200 points

Grading Scale

A = 700-630
B = 629-560
C = 559-490
D = 489-420
F = 419 and below

Required Books

None. Articles are scattered throughout the semester.

Part I: Weeks 1-6: Introduction and Theory

Week One: What is History? What is Public History? Who owns History? What is the role of the Historian? Historical Interpretations and the "New" History.

Week Two: History and Memory: Uses of History. What is Critical Race Theory and Why are People so Mad about it?

Read: Lauren Cameron, "What is Critical Race Theory and Why are People so Upset about it?" U.S. News and World Report, June 4, 2021.
<https://easydb.angelo.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f6h&AN=150718703&site=eds-live&scope=site>

Week Three: The Museum and "Edutainment"

Read: James B. Gardner, "Contested Terrain: History, Museums, and the Public," *The Public Historian*, Vol 26, no. 4 (Fall 2004). Available here:
<https://easydb.angelo.edu/login?url=https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tp.2004.26.4.11>

Week Four: The Internet and Virtual Archives and Museums.

Assignment: Review of on-line archive or Museum due March 1st.

Week Five: Historic Preservation and Landscapes as Public History.
Tour: Fort Concho: TBD.

Week Six: Archives and Preservation of Historical Artifacts.
Tour: The West Texas Collection: TBD

Part II: Group Research Project

Weeks Eight-Fifteen: Begin Group Project Work. Topic: TBD.

Week Fifteen: Final Thoughts? Project Presentations
Assignment: Final Paper due on Wednesday, May 11th at 1:00pm.