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History 427
Digital Public History:
Using Digital Tools to Interpret Difficult Pasts

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Instructor Information:
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Course Background:
This public history, service learning course trains students to recognize the entrepreneurial aspects of public history practice. Unlike other courses, public history service learning courses are entirely focused on developing a creative response to a persistent problem in our profession. These courses create an opportunity for you to take the lead in your own learning, building an original portfolio of work, learning marketable skills, and broadening your professional network.

In this Digital Public History course, you will learn to use digital tools for engaging the public, and you will think about how digital environments can help you transform what many consider to be "difficult histories" into meaningful and relevant pasts. This semester, you will contribute to an ongoing digital project, titled **Mapping the Past: Slavery and Freedom on the Regional Landscape**. The course layout provides a logical pathway for you to follow in order to think critically and creatively about a persistent problem in the field of public history: How can public historians engage audiences in the interpretation of difficult subjects?

Course Goals:
1. You will take an entrepreneurial approach to the practice of history. First, you will identify a problem. You will read and analyze relevant scholarship about how the history of slavery has been interpreted in public history, documented in historic preservation, and silenced or amplified as particular landscapes, structures, and communities over time. This exploration will serve as the backdrop against which you will develop an original and innovative new approach to the interpretation of slavery and freedom.

2. You will conduct historical research and create innovative public history products that engage audiences in the interpretation and use of a difficult past

3. You will learn use a variety of digital platforms as tools of social entrepreneurship, discovering and creating uses that enable craft compelling and relevant historical narratives with text, image, and mapping technologies, thereby presenting a solution to the problem of exploring difficult pasts in the pubic sector.

4. You will build a network of colleagues and a track record of work that can advance your professional goals

Course Description:
As social entrepreneurs, you will identify the specific parameters of a pressing problem in the field of public history and you will develop an innovative approach to that problem.

During the first half of the semester, you will examine and critique strategies that public historians have developed to engage audiences in dialog about the history and significance of slavery. You will arrive at a deeper understanding of why audiences and professionals seem at odds over this history. You will consider new interpretive strategies and learn to use digital tools that can help contemporary audiences recognize the immediacy and relevance of the history of slavery and freedom

During the second half of the semester, you will conduct original historical research. With guidance from our partners at the State Archives, you will identify compelling stories that illustrate the instability of freedom for

people of color living in our region during the decades leading up to the Civil War. You will be looking for stories that resonate with contemporary issues, themes, or questions. For example, you may find stories that illustrate the ways in which different state laws regarding escape and capture constrained the movements and sense of security for free people and their families. You may find stories that help demonstrate that slavery and freedom were not static concepts, tied to particular structures or places, but rather they were contested ideas, unstable across borders and across time. You may find stories that illuminate the construction and institutionalization of white supremacy and white privilege.

Rather than writing a traditional paper, you will experiment with a variety of interpretive methods, storytelling strategies, and digital tools that will help you communicate your stories in a concise, logical, and engaging manner. You will work in teams and benefit from the expertise of a series of guest speakers and instructors: professionals who are actively engaged in an effort to improve the public interpretation of slavery; storytellers and professional interpreters who will help you revise your work; technical experts who will train you in using a variety of apps and digital tools.

By the end of the semester, you will have developed an innovative interpretive product that our partner organizations can use immediately to engage audiences in a conversation about the relevance and meaning of slavery for contemporary audiences.

Course Assignments:
Due Week 7: Reflective Essay (5% of Final Grade)
Based on our readings and explorations, write a reflective post for your blog that clearly identifies the problem we are trying to address: why have public historians had a difficult time interpreting slavery and freedom? Your post should propose an innovative approach to this problem, an argument about how we might interpret the history of slavery in a new way. Consider these questions to help you: Why is this history relevant in our contemporary culture? How might you frame the history of slavery and freedom to make it accessible and meaningful for a 21st century audience? In what ways can a digital environment be helpful? Which tools seem most promising?

Due Week 11: Annotated Bibliography (10% of Final Grade)
Post an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources to your blog. These should be the key resources you will draw on as you develop a story for your digital project. Your annotations should help me –and your blog readers—to see an interpretation and a narrative emerging from your research.

Due Week 13: Story and Images (20% of Final Grade)
Bring the final version of your story, all of your research notes, and all of your digital images to class. You will work with faculty from the New Media Studio to develop a digital story. The digital story will be ONE element of your final digital project.

Week 15: Oral Presentation to our Partners and Potential Partners. (15% of Final Grade)
You will share your digital story and walk our partners through your digital project. You will emphasize the entrepreneurial aspects of your work by addressing this question: How does my proposal present the history of slavery and freedom in an innovative fashion that enables audiences to recognize its potential usefulness for understanding contemporary social, cultural, or political problems? You will ask for feedback. NOTE: Your project need not be COMPLETELY finished for your presentation, but the interpretation must be clear and the story must be watchable.

Final Projects due on the day and time of the scheduled Final Exam (50% of Final Grade)

For this Class	Do This	Be Ready to Discuss	We Will
Week One	Read the Syllabus "Creating Your Web Presence: A Primer for Academics," *Profhacker* (February 14, 2011). http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/creating-your-web-presence-a-primer-for-academics/30458	Class Assignments and Expectations; Student assignments and Expectations Think about the image you want to present online. Begin to draft an "about me" page for your website.	IN CLASS, I will walk you through the process of establishing a domain and setting up a blog. This will be your "home base" all semester
Week Two	Read: Read in blackboard from James O. Horton and Lois Horton *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006) James O. Horton "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue" in. 103-135 Bruce Levine "In Search of a Usable Past: Neo-Confederates and Black Confederates Bruce Levine" Marie Tyler-McGraw, "Southern Comfort Levels: Race, Heritage Tourism, and the Civil War in Richmond"	What is the broad problem outlined in these first readings? What are some ideas the authors give us about how we might address that problem? Is there a difference between sites associated with national culture and sites associated with local or regional culture?	What problems must we consider as we think about developing public interpretations of slavery and freedom?
Week Three	Read in Blackboard Joe Mahoney, "Mayor Stoney's full statement on Monument Avenue" *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* August 16, 2017 Nicholas Fandos, Russell Goldman, Jess Bidgood "Baltimore Mayor Had Statues Removed in 'Best Interest of My City'" *The New York Times* August 16, 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/us/baltimore-confederate-statues.html "Mitch Landrieu's Speech on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans," Reprinted in *The New York Times*, Opinion Page, May 23, 2017 (Video of the speech is here: http://wapo.st/2i7oqK9)	Why does the story of slavery and freedom still matter –why is it relevant—for contemporary audiences?	Why does the story of slavery and freedom still matter –why is it relevant—for contemporary audiences? Why should we tell this story in a new way? What is our goal? What do we want them to DO with this story?

For this Class	Do This	Be Ready to Discuss	We Will
Week Four	Read: Sharon M. Leon, *21st Century Public History*, read parts I, II and III (linked in blackboard) Sharon M. Leon "Layers and Links: Writing Public History in a Digital Environment" Selections from Beverley Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*	Be prepared to discuss the readings both critically and practically. What concrete advice and ideas can you pull out of these documents? What are the key issues for public historians practicing in the 21st century? What advice seems most important? What strategies can museums and historical societies adopt?	We will create our own planning documents for the class project We will also load Zotero and get some basic practice using it for research and note taking
Week Five	Read: E. Arnold Modlin, Jr. "Representing Slavery at Plantation House Museums in the U.S. South." *Historical Geography* Volume 39 (2011): 147-173 Antoinette T. Jackson *Speaking for the Enslaved: Heritage Interpretation at Antebellum Plantation Sites* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012) • ALL STUDENTS: Preface, Chapters 1 and 2 and Conclusion • AS ASSIGNED: Chapter 3, 4, 5, 6 and prepare to explain to your classmates Explore: http://www.mountclare.org/ http://whitneyplantation.com/	How has the history of slavery and freedom been handled in the preservation and interpretation of historic houses, particularly plantations?	Given what we have read and discussed, analyze, and critique the interpretation of Mount Clare and at the Whitney Plantation. What works? What does not? What lessons can you take from these examples?
Week Six	Visit the Omeka Website (linked in Blackboard) Go to "Documentation" Watch the "Intro to Omeka 2.0" movie Read "Site Planning Tips" Visit the Omeka Showcase to look at Omeka based projects	What are the benefits of digital collections? How might the development of a digital collection and a digital exhibition/showcase benefit our effort to improve the public interpretation of slavery and freedom?	We will also load Omeka onto your Reclaim Hosting site and play a bit with it as a tool for gathering, documenting, and exhibiting research. We will also explore Flickr and discuss issues of copyright.

For this Class	Do This	Be Ready to Discuss	We Will
Week Seven	Read Cheryl Jennifer LaRoche *The Georgraphy of Resistance: Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014) • All Students Read: Preface, Introduction, Chapters 5 and 6 • Other Chapters as Assigned to Individual Students; be prepared to explain to your classmates Explore the Following Sites, Watching Tutorial Videos and Reading "How To" Information: https://storymap.knightlab.com/ https://www.historypin.org/en/	What does LaRoche mean by "the geography of resistance?" How have archaeologists approached the history of slavery and freedom? How can we learn to see landscapes differently? How can landscapes become interpretive tools for public historians?	In addition to discussing the readings, we will explore two open source tools for creating public history sites that connect stories to places. We will consider the pros and cons of each. Think about audience and collaboration.
Week Eight	No Regular Class Meeting REQUIRED Research Trip Maryland State Archives on Saturday 9:30 to 12:30		
Week Nine	No Regular Class Meeting REQUIRED Research Trip Maryland State Archives on Saturday 9:30 to 12:30		
Week Ten	No Class, Writing and Research Week, Individual Meetings with Dr. Meringolo	What is your core interpretive theme? What is the dramatic center? Can you break your story into steps for a story map or a digital exhibit. Is there ONE PIECE that deserves deeper attention because it is a great story or because it raises a relevant issue?	I will work with each of you individually to identify the best format for your project and the best focus for a digital story.

For this Class	Do This	Be Ready to Discuss	We Will
Week Eleven	NO READING ASSIGNMENT In Class Project Workshop DUE: Annotated Bibliography	What digital tool do you plan to use for your final project? How, specifically, will you use it to engage an audience in a new and meaningful interpretation of slavery and freedom? Bring all of your research, writing, and images to class.	We will spend sometime creating the digital framework for your project. We will troubleshoot as necessary. While you do not have to be prepared to upload images or text, the more you know about how your project will fit the format, the better.
Week Twelve	NO READING ASSIGNMENT In Class Writing Workshop Bring a working Draft of your Story and any preliminary images you have assembled. We will work together to improve your stories and prepare for the Digital Storytelling workshops.	Focus this week on the standalone story, the ONE piece of your larger project that will benefit from fuller storytelling.	You will work to improve your stories and prepare them for a digital format. You will identify any crucial issues that must be addressed over the weekend.
Week Thirteen	Digital Storytelling Workshop DUE: Final text and images for digital story		You will work with faculty from the New Media Studio to record and illustrate your digital stories.
Week Fourteen	Digital Storytelling Workshop		You will work with faculty from the New Media Studio to record and illustrate your digital stories. As time allows, you will work on integrating these stories into your larger digital project.

For this Class	Do This	Be Ready to Discuss	We Will
Week Fifteen	Final Presentations	What is your core interpretation? How does it address the interpretive problems you observed? Why did you select a particular digital platform? What work remains for you to complete? What questions do you have?	You will share your digital story with your classmates and with our partners from the New Media Studio and the Maryland State Archives. You will walk them through your project. You will ask for specific feedback.

Grading Rubric, Final Digital Story, Digital Public History

	A	B	C	F
Theme	The story has an excellent interpretive theme, one that raises interesting questions and sparks conversation	The story has a good interpretative theme, but it occasionally "tells" rather than provoking inquiry	The story has a good interpretative theme, but sometimes loses focus.	It is difficult to identify the interpretative theme
Interpretation	The story helps an audience think about how to interpret violence, protest, and race	The story helps an audience think about how to interpret violence, protest, and race but it may need some tweaks to be more effective	The story tells us it will helps an audience think about how to interpret violence, protest, and race but that is not obvious in the final product	The story offers no clear and relevant interpretation
Consideration of Place	The story interprets the specific needs, desires, and/or problems **in Baltimore** related to violence, protest, and race, crafting a history that can create new understanding of one or more of these conditions and/or clarifies their historical roots	The story historicizes the history of violence, protest and race **in Baltimore** and attempts to connect this history to present day conditions, but has to convince us that the connection is meaningful	The story offers an interesting history, but does not attempt to offer a meaningful connection to present day life **in Baltimore**	The story has not helped historicize violence, protest or race in Baltimore, nor has it helped to craft a sense of place
Pacing	The pace fits the storyline and helps engage the audience.	The pacing is occasionally too fast or too slow.	An attempt is made at pacing but the audience is not fully engaged.	No attempt at pacing is made.
Audio Quality	Narration is clear and well edited. Soundtrack/effects (if any) compliment but do not overwhelm narration.	Narration is fairly clear but is occasionally overwhelmed by soundtrack/effects.	Narration is hard to discern many times, soundtrack is distracting.	There is no narration or soundtrack
Image Quality	All images are clear (with little or no pixellation), and well chosen.	Some images are pixelated and some seem out of place in the story.	Many images are pixelated and few support the story.	All images are pixelated and inappropriate for the story
Economy	The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail and is not too long or short.	The story sometimes is lacking details or includes a few unnecessary details. Is seems to drag in places.	The story needs more editing and is noticeably too long or too short.	The story needs extensive editing or significantly more detail.
Credits and Titles	Title included at beginning or end, all images and sound are credited.	Some credits are missing	Many credits are missing.	No title or credits.

	A	B	C	F
Interpretive Theme	The story has an excellent interpretive theme, one that raises interesting questions and sparks conversation	The story has a good interpretative theme, but it occasionally "tells" rather than provoking inquiry	The story has a good interpretative theme, but sometimes loses focus.	It is difficult to identify the interpretative theme
Problem Solving	The story offers a creative response to the difficulty public historians experience when interpreting violence, protest, and race	The story offers a response to the difficulty of interpreting violence, protest and race, but it may need some tweaks to effectively interpret violence, protest, and race for a public audience	The story tells us it will offer a creative response to the interpretation of race, violence, and protest but that is not obvious in the final product	The story offers no response to the difficulty of interpreting violence, protest and race and/or it lacks an interpretation
Consideration of Place	The story identifies and addresses a need, desire, and/or problem in Baltimore related to violence, protest, and race, and illuminates important connections that can create new understanding of one or more of these conditions and/or clarifies their historical roots	The story attempts to historicize, problematize, or address some issue related to violence, protest and race in Baltimore, and attempts to make this story relevant, but it has to convince us that the connection is meaningful	The story is interesting, but does not seem relevant or meaningful to present day life in Baltimore	The story has not helped historicize violence, protest or race in Baltimore, nor has it helped to craft a sense of place
Economy	The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail and is not too long or short.	The story sometimes is lacking details or includes a few unnecessary details. Is seems to drag in places.	The story needs more editing and is noticeably too long or too short.	The story needs extensive editing or significantly more detail.

Grading Rubric, Final Digital Project, Digital Public History

	A	B	C	F
Interpretive Theme	The digital project has an excellent interpretive theme, one that raises interesting questions and sparks conversation	The digital project has a good interpretative theme, but it occasionally "tells" rather than provoking inquiry	The digital project has a good interpretative theme, but sometimes loses focus.	It is difficult to identify the interpretative theme
Problem Solving	The digital project helps an audience think about how to interpret slavery and freedom	The digital project helps an audience think about how to interpret slavery and freedom but it may need some tweaks to be more effective	The digital project tells us it will helps an audience think about how to interpret slavery and freedom but that is not obvious in the final product	The digital project offers no solution to no clear and relevant interpretation
Consideration of Relevance	The digital project identifies the contemporary relevance of the history of slavery and freedom, and crafts an interpretation that illuminates important connections, and/or creates new and/or clarifies historical roots	The digital project historicizes the history of slavery and freedom and attempts to connect this history to present day conditions, but has to convince us that the connection is meaningful	The digital project offers an interesting history, but does not attempt to offer a meaningful connection to present day life	The digital project has not helped historicize slavery and freedom, nor has it helped to craft a sense of relevance
Digital Tool Choice	The digital tool is effective for supporting the interpretation and for engaging an audience.	The digital tool seems uneven in effectiveness –some portions of the project work better than others in supporting the interpretation or engaging the audience		The digital tool seems wrong for the project
Design	Text and image work well together to advance the interpretation. The amount of text and image is appropriate and economical	Most of the text and image work well together to advance the interpretation. In some places there may be too much or to little text and/or image to support the interpretation.	Some text and image may contradict one another or repeat one another, though an attempt at thoughtful design is evident. The project needs editing and is noticeably too much or too little	Text and image do not work well together.
Credits	All content is appropriately credited	Some credits are missing		There are no credits at all

Grading Rubric for Annotated Bibliography, Digital Public History

	A	B	C	F
Critical Thinking	Places the source in place and time. Draws on key arguments and descriptions from course readings to offer an interpretation of the primary source.	Tries to place the source in place and time. Tries to draw on course readings to offer an interpretation. However, I have to do some work to follow the connections you are trying to make.	The effort to contextualize and interpret the source is evident, but either the context or the interpretation is incomplete/not fully formed.	Does not adequately offer a sense of context or interpretation.
Close Reading	Identifies the main point articulated in/by the source; and provides some specific evidence from the source itself.	Attempts to articulate the source's main point and provide some specific evidence, but I have to do some work to understand the connections you are making.	Effort to identify main point and provide evidence is obvious, but lacks specificity and/or describes the content rather than analyzing the main idea.	No clear and compelling description of primary source ideas
Story Development	Each annotation explains the connections to the other sources and identifies the elements of a story in development	Annotations attempt to explain the connections among sources and frame a story, but I have to do some work to understand the connections you are making	Effort to connect primary sources and frame a story is evident, but story is still too rough to identify and/or connections are ill defined	No effort to explain connections or frame a story
Format	Your annotations are in Chicago/Turabian format without errors	Your annotations are in Chicago/Turabian but you have one small pattern of error	Your Chicago/Turabian annotations contain many errors	You did not use Chicago/Turabian format
Spelling/ Grammar	Your spelling and grammar are perfect	Your spelling and grammar contain one or two consistent errors	Your spelling and grammar need a significant edit and revision	You spelling and grammar problems render your assignment incomprehensible.

Oral Presentation Grading Rubric

A Presentations
1. You have started your digital project
2. You can describe/explain the entire project –what it will look like, what materials you have, etc.
3. You clearly identify the "big idea" driving your project
4. You can present some details/examples from your project and they are clearly connected to the big idea
5. Your digital story is visually appealing and the audio is clear and compelling

B Presentations
1. You have started your digital project
2. You attempt to describe/explain the entire project, but parts are difficult to follow or not thought all the way through
3. You identify a "big idea" driving your story but it needs minor clarification
4. You can present some details/examples from your project, and they are mostly related to the "big idea" but the idea is too big, too small, or not clear
5. Your digital story needs minor tweaking with audio or visuals

C Presentations
1. You have barely started your digital project
2. You have difficulty describing/explaining the entire project
3. The "big idea" is too broad or too narrow; it doesn't quite work
4. You present a few details/examples from your project but cannot really connect them to the big idea
5. Your digital story is not successful visually OR aurally

F Presentations
1. You have not started your project
2. You cannot describe/explain the project at all
3. You don't have a "big idea"
4. Your details are too vague and you can't explain why they matter
5. You digital story is not successful visually AND aurally

Grading Rubric for Critical Reflection, Digital Public History

	A	B	C	F
Critical Thinking	Used guiding questions in assignment and examples from course readings to identify problems public historians face in interpreting violence, protest, and the history of race	Tried to use guiding questions in assignment and examples from course readings to identify problems public historians face, but I have to do some work to understand your connections	May have used guiding questions OR examples from course readings; Made an effort to identify key problems. The effort to make connections is evident, but one or more aspects of the thought process are missing	Does not adequately respond to the parameters of the assignment
Effective Writing	Articulated a strong and arguable thesis and advanced argument with supporting points and evidence from course readings	Tried to articulate a thesis and advance the argument, but I have to do some work to understand your logic	Thesis is descriptive rather than argumentative or paragraphs do not directly support argument or use of evidence is sparse. The effort to craft an argument is evident, but one or more aspects are missing.	No obvious effort to craft an effective argument in response to the assignment
Close Reading	Identifies specific, fully described, and well-chosen (they support your point) strategies public historians have used to address problems (from course readings)	Attempts to identify specific strategies from the course readings, but I have to do some work to understand your examples	Effort to identify specific strategies is evident, but they lack specificity or are not well described or they do not support your point	No clear and compelling examples from course readings
Problem Solving	Makes concrete and creative suggestions about how to improve public interpretation of violence, protest and race	Attempts to make suggestions about how to improve public interpretation of violence, protest, and race, but suggestions may be vague or they may simply repeat an older strategy	Effort to make suggestions is evident, but the suggestions are difficult to understand or they seem disconnected from the argument and observations in the paper	No effort to make concrete suggestions for public interpretation of violence, protest, and race
Research Plan	You chart a plan for your own research project. You know what you want to do, what tools you want to use, and why you want to do it. Your plan connects with the problem you identify and your proposed solution.	You have made an effort to chart a plan for your own research and to frame it as a response to the problem you have identified, but it needs a bit more thought	Your plan is not clear or you have not thought about it in relationship to a problem in the field	No plan
Spelling/ Grammar	Your spelling and grammar are perfect	Your spelling and grammar contain one or two consistent errors	Your spelling and grammar need a significant edit and revision	You spelling and grammar problems render your assignment incomprehensible.