

## AC/HI 390B: HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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This is a two-legged course: both a cultural-history **seminar** and a community **practicum**. On the one hand (usually in Monday sessions), we will explore the role of social memory, historical story-telling, and public representations of the past in American culture; we will investigate the history of how Americans have viewed and used their history. On the other hand (mainly on Wednesdays and outside of class), we will do public history. In partnership with Museum L-A, a local historical museum of work and community, we will research and create cultural resources that help to tell the story of Lewiston's industrial, urban, and working-class past.

As cultural historians, we will study many forms of "history in the public sphere": documentaries, war memorials, urban walking tours, popular fiction, history museums. Indeed one key theme of the seminar is that Americans' pictures of the past have played many, powerful, conflicting roles in U.S. culture and politics. Americans have used historical representations to define their values, assert their power, address grievances, and imagine alternative visions of U.S. society. They have turned key events like the Revolution, the Civil War, immigration, and slavery into stories, sometimes myths, with which to make sense of and shape their society in the present. Often these social memories cover over or even falsify other parts of the past. It will part of our work as historians of American memory to ask what is being left out.

All the research and writing asked of you in AC/HI 390B is part of Bates' ongoing community partnership with Museum L-A. Each of you will work on one of two public-history projects, developed in dialogue with the Museum's staff. One team will research and script a set of brief educational "takeaways"—probably brochures—designed to accompany a traveling exhibit about the history of Lewiston's textile mills and millworkers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (That exhibit was the result of research and scripting by a previous year's seminar.) The second team will research and script the signage and itinerary for a planned historical walking tour of downtown Lewiston. Both projects will require and develop skills of documentary research, the interrogation of textual and visual sources, attention to context, interpretive argument, vivid writing. You will be asked to bring the historian's craft—careful research, critical rigor, interpretive empathy—to bear on important ventures in community history. Like those we will study in seminar, you will be telling stories about the past to enrich public culture in the present and future.

My learning goals for you are: 1) to enrich your understanding of U.S. cultural history and your ability to interpret it critically and empathetically; 2) to enhance your research and writing skills; 3) to enable you to deeply connect these liberal-arts skills and knowledges with the practical work of community engagement; and 4) to offer you the opportunity (and the pleasure) of co-creating significant, tangible, valuable public work.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

**Attendance and attention:** It is important for you to come with your mind, ears, and mouth open—even more so in a small class doing work with community partners. Attendance is essential at all on- and off-campus meetings; please come prepared to learn, participate, create, and have fun.

**Reading and discussion:** I have assigned about 125 pages of reading per week. The assignments include fiction, memoir, and cultural journalism, as well as academic scholarship; you will also be viewing films. I hope the assignments will strike you as lively and fun. The following books will be available at the Bates Bookstore:

Thomas Bell, Out of This Furnace

Michael Frisch and Milton Rogovin, Portraits in Steel

Kristen Hass, Carried To the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial

Dolores Hayden, Power of Place: Urban Landscape As Public History

Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, The Presence of the Past

Mike Wallace, Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays On American Memory

**Research, writing, and telling:** The writing assignments in the course require to be both students of American social memory and public historians. You will be asked to do two 3-page response papers, one commenting on an assigned reading of your choice, the other on a public-history website. These are meant to be concise and exploratory, but thoughtful and well-written. At the same time, you will be asked to write two individual assignments geared to your public history project: a primary source analysis and overview of one of the components (individual brochure or walking-tour sign) that you will be creating as part of your team; and full drafts of two individual components for your project. Your team will produce a collective text, scripting either the downtown walking tour or the exhibition takeaway (as well as selecting visual, oral-history, and other sources for the final product). Finally you will be asked to write a 5-page reflection paper at the end of the semester.

Along with these research and writing assignments, you will be asked to make two public presentations, in collaboration with your peers, about the public history project you are undertaking: one at the Mount David Summit and the other to our partners at Museum L-A.

**Collaboration and engagement:** We will be working with partners who have a passion for preserving and retelling their community's history and a deep knowledge of that history. Even as we bring our own skills of critical thinking, archival research, and rigorous analysis to the partnership, it will be essential to respect their passion and their expertise, helping to create public history for them and with them,. If we nurture the spirit of partnership and dialogue, our work will be better; your learning will be deeper; and it will be more fun.

**Grading and deadlines:** I will set grades using the following guidelines: attendance and participation (at both class and off-campus meetings) (20%), response papers (10% each), primary source analysis (15%), final project (30%), and final reflection paper (15%). Written assignments are typically due electronically at the end of business on Fridays, but you may take an automatic extension until the following Monday morning if you let me know ahead of time. After that, I will mark down one notch each day for late work.

## WEEKLY SYLLABUS

(All readings except the required books will be available on Lyceum or via the Web.)

### I. THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

**M Jan 7: Introduction: The Presence and Uses of the Past**

Barack Obama, "Victory Speech at the Iowa Caucuses"

**W Jan 9: The Politics of Social Memory: National Identity, Civic Space, and the Past**

Abraham Rodriguez, "The Boy Without a Flag," The Boy Without a Flag: Tales of the South Bronx

Scott A. Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963," Journal of American History (June, 1993), 135-67

**M Jan 14: The Politics of Public History: Contesting the Present By Presenting the Past**

Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles For the American Past, 1-96

### II. LEWISTON-AUBURN, MUSEUM L-A, AND COMMUNITY HISTORY PARTNERSHIPS

**W Jan 16: The Stakes of Community History: Millworkers in Lewiston-Auburn**

"Weaving A Millworkers' World" (text of Museum L-A traveling exhibit)

Suzanne Carbonneau, A Momentary Order: An Arts-Community Partnership, 1-50

Michael Wilson, Social Memory, Democracy, and the History Museum: Museum L-A in Lewiston-Auburn (Honors Thesis, Bates College, 2007), 23-60

**Response paper on class reading due by Friday afternoon, January 18**

**M Jan 21: Martin Luther King Day: no class**

Downtown driving/walking tour on Monday or Tuesday morning

**W Jan 23: Tour of Museum L-A with Rachel Desgrosseilliers and Alan Elze, Museum L-A**

Selected transcripts, Millworker Oral History Project

**M Jan 28: No class**

**W Jan 30: Discussion of Catalogue and Walking Tour Projects with Rachel Desgrosseilliers and Kevin Callahan, Museum L-A**

Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit website ([www.aadl.org/aastreet](http://www.aadl.org/aastreet)) [Read all sixteen panels.]

**M Feb 4: Museums and Public Memory**

Mike Wallace, Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays On American Memory, vii-xiv, 3-129

**T Feb 5: Meeting with Hannah Smotrich, designer of "Weaving a Millworkers' World" traveling exhibit, and Museum L-A Exhibit Committee**

**W Feb 6: Research and Public Memory**

Wayne Booth et al., The Craft of Research, Chapters Three and Four

**Response paper on museum or walking tour website due Friday afternoon, February 8**

### **III. NATIONAL NARRATIVES: IMMIGRANT HEROES, WORKING-CLASS HEROES, WAR HEROES**

**M Feb 11: The Immigrant Story**

Thomas Bell, Out of This Furnace, Part I

**W Feb 13: The Story of Labor**

Thomas Bell, Out of This Furnace, Parts II and III  
“Roughing the Uppers” (community screening Wednesday evening)

**M Feb 25: Working-Class Americanism**

Thomas Bell, Out of This Furnace, Part IV

**W Feb 27: Research projects discussion: planning the walking tour**

**M Mar 3: Research projects discussion: planning the takeaway project**

**W Mar 5: Research projects discussion: developing research plans**

### **IV. PUBLIC HISTORY: KEY THEMES AND PROBLEMS**

**M Mar 10: Capital “H” and Little “h”: Ordinary People Inside/Outside History**

Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, The Presence of the Past

**W Mar 12: Presentation of project plans to Museum L-A staff**

**M Mar 17: Place: The Landscape of Memory**

Dolores Hayden, The Power of Place, chapters 1,2,6,7

**W Mar 19: Research projects discussion**

**Component sketch and primary source analysis due on Friday afternoon, March 21**

**M Mar 24: Voice: Whose Past? Whose Story?**

Kristen Hass, Carried to the Wall

Alessandro Portelli, “There’s Gonna Always Be a Line: History-Telling As a Multivocal Art,” in  
The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue, 24-39

**W Mar 26: Research teams meet to plan Mount David presentations**

**Friday, March 28: Mount David Summit  
Panel presentation on seminar projects**

**M Mar 31: No class**

**W Apr 2: Presentation of draft final projects to Museum L-A staff and Exhibit committee**

**Individual component final drafts and document selections due on Friday afternoon, April 4**

**F Apr 11: Final team projects and final reflection papers due**