

New Mexico State University
Department of History

Spring 2014

Interpreting Historic Places for the Public

HIST 486/586
MWF 10:30-11:20

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This course is designed to introduce students to the craft of historic site interpretation. Topics to be explored will include current issues in historic site interpretation, the relationship between interpretation and historical scholarship, the history of historic sites and the nature of heritage tourism, and the philosophy of meaningful interpretation. Students will be challenged through readings, class discussion, case studies, visits to historic sites, and the development of oral and written interpretive presentations. Since all quality historic site interpretation is based on scholarship, emphasis will be placed on linking historiography and research methodology with real places for presentation to the public. The course will require students to research a historic site using both primary and secondary sources and then develop: 1) a lesson plan (using the National Park Service's *Teaching with Historic Places* guidelines), 2) a script to reinterpret a historic site, or 3) a fully developed exhibit plan to interpret or revise interpretation at a historic site.

Interpreting Historic Places is based on thirty years experience in historic preservation and education by the former chief historian of the National Park Service. The course will be built around the National Park Service's philosophy and curriculum for its interpreters.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have (or believe you have) a disability and would benefit from classroom accommodation(s), you may wish to self identify by contacting Student Accessibility Services (SAS) located in the Corbett Center, Room 244 (505-646-6840 V/TTY; sas@nmsu.edu). If you have already registered, please make sure that your instructor receives a copy of the accommodation memorandum from SAS within the first two weeks of classes. It is your responsibility to inform either your instructor or an SAS representative in a timely manner if services/accommodations provided are not meeting your needs.

If you have a condition which may affect your ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or which may cause an emergency during class, you are encouraged to discuss any concerns with the instructor and/or Diana Quintana, Director, Student Accessibility Services. Feel free to call Ms. Quintana, at 505-646-6840 with any questions you may have on student

issues related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. All medical information will be treated confidentially.

Feel free to call Jerry Nevarez, Director of Institutional Equity, at 505-646-3635 with any questions you may have about NMSU's Non-Discrimination Policy and complaints of discrimination, including sexual harassment.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

REQUIRED READINGS:

Books

Jessica Foy Donnelly. *Interpreting Historic House Museums*. AltaMira Press, 2002.

Teresa S. Moyer and Paul A. Shackel. *The Making of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park*. Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2008.

Paul A. Shackel. *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape*. Walnut Creek: California: AltaMira Press, 2003.

Articles

Chappell, Edward A. "Social Responsibility and the American History Museum." *Winterthur Portfolio* 24 (Winter 1989), pp. 247-265. (See J-STOR)

Crow, Jeffrey J. "Interpreting Slavery in the Classroom and at Historic Sites." *Perspectives* (March 1998), pp. 23-26. <www.historians.org/Perspectives/issues/1998/9803/9803PUB.CFM>

Herbst, John A. "The Challenge of Interpretation at Historic House Museums." *Pittsburgh History* 73 (Fall 1990), pp. 119-128.

Kammen, Carol. "When Not Being Wrong is Not Good Enough." *History News*, (Fall 1996), pp. 3-4.

Mooney-Melvin, Patricia. "Harnessing the Romance of the Past: Preservation, Tourism, and History." *The Public Historian* 13 (Spring 1991), pp. 35-48.

Pitcaithley, Dwight T. "Historic Sites: What Can be Learned From Them?" *The History Teacher* 20 (February 1987), pp. 207-219. (See J-STOR)

"Public Education and the National Park Service: Interpreting the Civil War." *Perspectives* (November 2007), pp. 44-45.

www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2007/0711/0711pro2.cfm

"Rudolfo Anaya and the Headless Horseman: Thoughts on the Interpretation of the Past."

Legacy (November/December 1999), pp. 10-12.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Students are expected to attend each class session, read the reading assignments, and come to class prepared to discuss assigned material. **Informed** class participation results from timely preparation and thoughtful consideration of the readings. Come prepared and you will do fine. If you are not prepared to read, engage, and discuss the required material, **DO NOT TAKE THIS CLASS. Class participation will account for 10% of your grade.**

REFLECTION ESSAYS: Each week you will write a **1-2 page reflective essay that will be due each Monday.** These reflective, or reactive, essays (double-spaced, please) should be used to capture your reaction to material presented throughout the course in readings, lectures, or class discussion. You should feel free to offer personal reactions to new ideas particularly if they challenge previously held ideas. I expect your essays to improve in quality as the semester progresses especially in the areas of clarity, writing proficiency, and intellectual insight. These essays are intended to chronicle your growth throughout the semester as we explore the craft of interpreting historic places. There will be a total of twelve essays; the first due on Monday, January 30, the last on Monday, April 30. Points (1.66 per essay) will be awarded for essays completed; points will be subtracted for non-completion of essays. Please number and date each essay. E-mail submission of essays will **not** be accepted. **Completed essays will account for 20% of your grade.**

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: Over the course of the semester, you will prepare three analytical reviews of **three** chapters or articles from the course reading list. (In other words, each of the three papers will consider three chapters or articles.) Papers must be typed, clearly written and demonstrate proficient writing skills; they should identify the thesis and supporting arguments of the material, compare and contrast the information as appropriate, and provide an analysis of the ideas and evidence presented. These review papers should be 3-5 double-spaced pages in length (graduate students will write 5-7 page papers) and will be due Friday, February 14; Friday, March 14; and Wednesday, April 16. **Written reviews will account for 30% of your grade.**

FINAL PROJECT: Final projects will be due on Monday, May 7. Projects may be designed as a *Teaching With Historic Places* lesson plan, a script prepared to reinterpret a historic site, or an exhibit plan to interpret or revise interpretation at a historic site. Your project will be graded on the scholarship upon which it is based, clarity of presentation, and your grasp of the ideas presented. You will be required to present a eight-minute oral **summary** of your project to your classmates. **Final project will account for 40% of your grade.**

NOTE #1: All written assignments are expected to be word-processed or typed and conform to a standard style manual. Attention to grammar is expected as is proper spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. Citations must conform to a standard format. Typographical errors, inattention to spelling, punctuation, etc., will result in a lower grade.

NOTE #2: Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional is not allowed. Plagiarism is defined as failing to acknowledge others' work thereby making it seem to be your own. You must do your own work. If you borrowed the words, ideas, pictures, or other original material, you must give credit in a citation to the source. This includes material drawn from the Internet, other students' work, and unpublished materials. The penalties for plagiarism can be severe, from failure on the assignment, in the course, or expulsion from the university. Even if you do not know what plagiarism is, ignorance is no excuse. Please visit the NMSU web page for a further discussion of this important topic. <<http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/plagiarismforstudents.htm>>

GRADE STRUCTURE: 90-100=A; 80-89=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; below 60=F

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Course Introduction

January 17 - Introduction to course (general outline)

Week 1: Defining Interpretation

January 20 - **MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY - NO CLASS**

January 22 - Introduction to the Craft of Interpretation

Reading: Pitcaithley "Rudolfo Anaya"

Introduction to profession

January 24 - What is Interpretation? - NPS/IDP Film

Reading - Donnelly pp. 1-17; Kammen pp. 3-4

Week 2: Historic Preservation

January 27 - A Brief History of Historic Preservation - **1st Response Paper due**

Reading - Butler-pp. 18-42

January 29 - The Philosophy of Historic Preservation

Reading - Moyer & Shackel, ix-xi

January 31 - Heritage Tourism

Reading - Mooney-Melvin, pp. 35-48; Chappell, pp.247-265

Week 3: Developing Interpretive Themes

February 3 - Interpretive Planning - **2nd Response Paper due**

Reading - Levy, pp. 43-60; Levy-pp. 192-209

February 5 - Developing TWHP Lesson Plans <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/index.htm>>

February 7 - Developing Interpretive Plans

<<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products>>

<<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/exhibits/ex-indepth-defining-pd.htm>>

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Week 4: Changing Perceptions of History

February 10 - Changing interpretations - **3rd Response Paper due**

Reading - Shackel pp. xi-xiii, 1-19
February 12 - Broadening Interpretations - Race
Reading - Ellis pp. 61-80
February 14 - CASE STUDY - Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill
1st Review Essay Due

Week 5: Changing Interpretations - Case Study: Harpers Ferry
February 17 - Reading - Moyer & Shackel, pp. xiii-31 - **4th Response Paper due**
February 19 - Reading - Moyer & Shackel, 33-69
February 21 - Reading - Moyer & Shackel, 71-107

Week 6: Changing Interpretations - Case Study: Harpers Ferry (cont.)
February 24 - Reading - Moyer & Shackel, 109-150 - **5th Response Paper due**
February 26 - Reading - Moyer & Shackel, 175-218
February 28 - Lessons from Harpers Ferry

Week 7: Preservation/Restoration and Interpretation
March 3 - CASE STUDY - Abraham Lincoln's Springfield Home - **6th Response Paper due**
March 5 - Interpretation of Ruins
March 7 - Changing Your Mind - Lockwood House, Harpers Ferry

Week 8: Interpreting Interiors - Options?
March 10 - Furnishings Plans - **7th Response Paper due**
Reading - Brooks, pp. 128-143; Bryk, pp. 144-167
March 12 - Vacant Spaces
Reading - Lavin, pp. 251-268
March 14 - Furnishing Plans
Reading - Shackel, pp. 77-112; 145-172
2nd Review Essay Due

Week 9: Interpreting the Commemorative Landscape: Case Studies
March 17 - Reading - Shackel, pp. 21-50; 51-76 - **8th Response Paper due**
March 19 - CASE STUDY - Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace
Reading - Pitcaithley, "Historic Sites: What Can be Learned From Them?"
March 21 - Reading - Shackel, pp. 193-209

SPRING BREAK - March 24-28

Week 10: Interpreting Tough Subjects
March 31 - Interpreting Slavery - **9th Response Paper due**
Reading - Crow, pp. 23-26.
April 2 - Interpreting the Civil War
Reading - Pitcaithley, "Public Education and the National Park Service

April 4 - Exhibits/films/publications/tours/sales

Week 11: Media, or What Message Where

April 7 - Exhibits/films/publications/tours/sales (cont.) **10th Response Paper due**

April 9 - Class Presentations

April 11 - Thinking Outside the Box

Reading - Herbst, pp. 119-128

Week 12: Scholarship and Interpretation

April 14 - Keeping Current - **11th Response Paper due**

April 16 - Historical Perspective or Whose Story is Being Told?

3rd Review Essay Due

April 18 - **SPRING HOLIDAY - NO CLASS**

Week 13: Project Presentations

April 21 - Class Presentations - **12th Response Paper due**

April 23 - Class Presentations

April 25 - Class Presentations

Week 14:

April 28 - Class Presentations

April 30 - Class Presentations

May 2 - Final Thoughts: Learning and Teaching -- An Endless Cycle

FINAL EXAM - MONDAY, MAY 5; 10:30-12:30