PUBHM-GA 1101 Practicing Public Humanities: Bridging the Public and the Humanities
Mondays 9am-11:45am
Waverly 268

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Office hours: by appointment
Course Description
This course asks humanities doctoral students to consider how we understand and define the concepts "humanities" and "public." With an emphasis on “practice,” the course questions how these two concepts relate to particular ways of doing things in the world. Because the course seeks to bridge academic definitions with more popular ones, it will ask students to take seriously problems inherent with the use of the pronoun "we" as it examines a number of projects undertaken in a variety of places and times where non-academics shaped the humanities, working with scholars or independently to achieve a number of political and cultural goals. How have the humanities functioned in public spaces? How have specific techniques of the humanities—e.g., archiving, interpreting, criticizing, recording, translating—acquired new value beyond strictly academic settings? What work have the humanities done to advance many different purposes and how have scholars and a larger public worked together or sparred over the role of the humanities? In addition to delving into specific episodes in the history of public humanities, this course will benefit from the contributions of special guests who have powerfully applied their own humanities training in professional fields outside of academia. The seminar is open to doctoral students in the Public Humanities program as well as students who are not but want for academic or professional reasons to gain some exposure to this growing field.

Assignments
1. Final Project
Develop a possible public humanities project. Over the course of the semester you will complete the following tasks and address the following questions:
   • Describe the project: what is the theme? what field or fields does it represent?
   • What is your goal?
   • Who do you define as the public?
   • What medium are you thinking of? podcast, digital project, exhibition, discussion groups, film?
   • Pinpoint a public setting where you would stage it. Obviously this is hypothetical but should be described in terms of a real possibility; a public library, a business setting, a government office, a train station are just a few examples.
   • Write a rationale for the project, what statement you would make --think of it as a "pitch"-- to the sponsoring institution that your public humanities project would benefit its shareholders, whether patrons, employees, and the like.
   • What resources would you draw upon to convey your humanities theme?

2. Reading, listening/viewing, and discussion
It is imperative that you keep up with the weekly reading, viewing, and listening assignments in order to participate adequately in our discussion. We will often ask that you give informal presentations or complete short assignments in connection with the readings and listening and viewing materials of the course.
**SCHEDULE**

*Part 1: What are the Humanities, What is the Public?*

**Monday, Sept 13 — Introduction**

**Monday, Sept 20 — History and Philosophy of the Humanities**

*Reading*


*Guest*

David Weinstein, National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Monday, Sept 27 — The Humanities in the United States**

*Readings*


*Guest*

Bea Gurwitz and Michelle May-Curry, National Humanities Alliance.

**Monday, Oct 4 — Public Intellectuals, Humanities, and Human Rights**

*Readings*


*Viewing*

Hannah Arendt, *Zur Person* interview.

Edward Said and Palestine.

“Pen Out Loud: Saidiya Hartman with Leslie Jamison.”


*Guest*

Ted Gong, 1882 Foundation.
Tues, Oct 12 — The Public Sphere

Readings

Part 2: Case Studies: Applied and Public Humanities

Monday, Oct 18 — Ethnic and Religious Groups: The Case for Inclusion

***** Special Short Assignment Due******

Guest
Marcus Pyle, ChamberWorks and Davidson College.

Monday, Oct 25 — The Formation of Black History

Readings

Guest

Monday, Nov 1 — Imperial Sound Archives

***** Special Short Assignment Due******

Readings

Guest
Owen Gottleib, Rochester Institute of Technology.
Monday Nov 8 — Medical Humanities
Readings
TBD

Guest
David Oshinsky, NYU Langone Health

Monday Nov 15 — The WPA
Readings

Viewing
Andrea Kalin and Patricia Clarkson, *Soul of a People: Writing America’s Story* (Los Angeles: Infinity Entertainment Group, 2010), videodisc.

Guest
Annie Polland, Tenement Museum.

Monday Nov 22 — The Humanities and Fascism
Readings

Guest
Adriaan Fuchs, Carnegie Hall.

Monday Nov 29 — Cold War Soft Power (Meet in the Tamiment Collection, Bobst Library)
Readings

Guest
Nikhil Singh, Departments of Social and Cultural Analysis and History, New York University; Founding Director, NYU Prison Education Program (confirmed)
Monday Dec 6 — Glucksman Ireland House

Reading

Guest
Miriam Nyhan, Glucksman Ireland House.

Monday Dec 13 — CONCLUDING THOUGHTS