

**PUBHM-GA 1101 Practicing Public Humanities:
Bridging the Public and the Humanities**

Mondays 9am-11:45am

Waverly 268



Instructors: Brigid Cohen and Hasia Diner

Emails: bc64@nyu.edu and hrd1@nyu.edu

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-academicians 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

Michael Leezenberg and Gerard de Vries, *History and Philosophy of the Humanities* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2018).

Guest

David Weinstein, National Endowment for the Humanities.

Monday, Sept 27 — The Humanities in the United States

Readings

Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Humanities and the Dream of America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Guest

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

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

Readings

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 1-21, 175-247.

Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-48.

Edward Said, "Introduction: Secular Criticism" in *The World, The Text, and The Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 1-30.

Viewing

Hannah Arendt, *Zur Person* interview.

Edward Said and Palestine.

"Pen Out Loud: Saidiya Hartman with Leslie Jamison."

"Saidiya Hartman Human Rights and the Humanities, March 20, 2014"

Guest

Ted Gong, 1882 Foundation.

Tues, Oct 12 — The Public Sphere

Readings

Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

Michael Hofman, *Habermas's Public Sphere: A Critique* (Lanham: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017).

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

Jacqueline Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson: A Life in Black History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997).

Guest

Hannibal B. Johnson, 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centenary Commission, 400 Years of African-American History Commission.

Monday, Nov 1 — Imperial Sound Archives

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

Readings

Lars-Christian Koch, "Images of Sound: Erich M. von Hornbostel and the Berlin Phonogram Archive," in *The Cambridge History of World Music*, ed. Philip V. Bohlman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 475-497.

Anette Hoffmann and Phindezwa Mnyaka, "Hearing Voices in the Archive," *Social Dynamics* 41 (2015): 140-165.

Benjamin Steege, "Between Race and Culture: Hearing Japanese Culture in Berlin," *History of Humanities* 2 (2017): 361-374.

Viktoria Tkaczyk, "Archival Traces of Applied Research: Language Planning and Psychotechnics in Interwar Germany," *Technology and Culture* 60 (2019): 64-95.

Guest

Owen Gottlieb, Rochester Institute of Technology.

Monday Nov 8 — Medical Humanities

Readings

TBD

Guest

David Oshinsky, NYU Langone Health

Monday Nov 15 — The WPA

Readings

Jerrold Hirsch, *Portrait of a People: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project*
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Scott Borchert, *Republic of Detours: How the New Deal Paid Broke Writers to Rediscover America*
(New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2021).

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

Anson Rabinbach and Wolfgang Bialas, *Nazi Germany and the Humanities: How
German Academics Embraced Nazism* (London: Oneworld Publications,
2014).

Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 2004).

Guest

Adriaan Fuchs, Carnegie Hall.

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

Readings

Sarah Miller Harris, *The CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the Early Cold War: The
Limits of Making Common Cause* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

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

Terry Golway, ed., *Being New York, Being Irish: Reflections on Twenty-Five Years of Irish America and New York University's Glucksman Ireland House* (Newbridge, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2018).

Guest

Miriam Nyhan, Glucksman Ireland House.

Monday Dec 13 — CONCLUDING THOUGHTS