



The University of Western Ontario

## HIS9800: PUBLIC HISTORY - THEORY, HISTORY & PRACTICE

*"The history that lies inert in unread books does no work in the world."*  
~Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian"

Michelle A. Hamilton [mhamilt3@uwo.ca](mailto:mhamilt3@uwo.ca) Lawson 2216  
Office Hours: Tues. 1:30-3:30

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**Course Description:** This seminar and project-based course examine history as it is communicated to and understood by the public including:

**Public history theory:** Topics and issues such as authenticity, commemoration, 'imagined communities,' invented tradition, 'usable pasts,' contested places, colonialism/decolonization, historical designation and preservation, living history, heritage tourism, legislation, public policy, (mis)representation, diversity, oral history, ethics, gender, class, natural and built environments, intangible heritage, education vs. entertainment, and social memory.

**The history of public history:** Examination of the establishment of Canadian museums, archives, government agencies and the individuals key to their development.

**The practice of public history:** Through readings, guest speakers, site visits, workshops and projects, students learn the methods and skills practiced by public historians today.

We meet weekly in person to discuss readings, listen to guest speakers, and participate in workshops. Some classes will be or include meetings with project partners which will not necessarily take place in the classroom. Some PD seminars may be slotted on other days when speakers' schedules conflict with ours or we need more time for a site visit.

### Learning Objectives

At the end of this courses students will have:

- conducted graduate level research in primary and secondary sources;
- examined the theory and history of public history;
- an understanding of the main avenues for practicing public history;
- a broad range of the different skills that public historians use;
- an ability to communicate history to the public through a variety of media;
- a familiarity with the major issues and legislation public historians face;
- an ability to examine critically public presentations of history;
- practiced non-traditional historical skills such as project management, team work, budgeting, promotion,

and working with community stakeholders;

- had opportunities for reflective, collaborative, service-based, and experiential learning;
- contacts with practicing public historians.

**Enrollment Restrictions:** This course is restricted to MA students in the Public History field.

**Course Materials:** Most readings for seminars are online, through the library catalogue (LC) and OWL. Weldon has hard copies of most readings. There are other readings for the two community projects which must be completed either for group research or as preparation for project work in class. For books to be shared, I recommend finding a common place to leave them.

## **Evaluation**

Participation (class discussion, group meetings, PDS) 25%

Research & Report (group mark) 35%

LACH Report (individual mark) 25%

LACH Presentation (individual mark) 15%

**Due Dates and Late Penalties:** Penalty for late assignments is 2% each day (including Saturdays and Sundays). See the Policy on Accommodation for Illness ([Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca))

**Participation:** Students are expected to have read and digested the assigned readings before class and participate fully in class seminars. Students must actively participate in all workshops, PD, and in group project work that occurs outside of class which may be partly assessed through peer review.

## **Seminar Participation Rubric**

Seminar participation will be marked weekly and then averaged at the end of each term. You may come and see your weekly marks at any time.

**Preparation:** Evident preparation for the seminar.

**Initiative:** Questions asked focus, clarify and summarize discussion.

**Response:** Quality of response reflects knowledge, comprehension and application of readings.

**Discussion:** Quality of response extends discussion, and reflects analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

## **Group Project Meetings (GPM)**

Some of the time set aside for group project meetings is for project planning, strategic meetings, updating the instructor, receiving feedback, or conducting group-related research. Some group project meetings may be, or include, meetings with project partners, and may be outside of the classroom. Small and large groups will also meet at additional times, to be determined by each group and the stage of the project.

## **Metcalf Professional Development Series (PDS)**

As part of History 9800/01, attendance is **mandatory**. Speakers generally visit during class, but may be scheduled at other times, based on their schedules. Site visits generally occur on Fridays when more time is needed. If you have a conflict, let us know immediately.

## Collaborative Community-Based Projects

### A. Built Heritage Project

The City Heritage Planning office and the Community Advisory Committee on Planning <https://london.ca/advisory-committees> seek research and documentation on built heritage in London for designation, conservation, and planning purposes. Students will each research one building, following the city's assessment protocol under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

#### **Deliverables**

- a short report (approx. 10 pages of text plus photos, maps, charts) using the city's template, assessing the significance of your building, including comprehensive footnotes and bibliography, and revised using feedback from CACP members
- 7-minute presentation to CACP members for feedback and revision, which addresses all 3 areas of research

### B. London's Bicentennial

#### **The Project**

We have partnered with the City of London to research, interpret, and present significant historical moments, people, and themes in the second century of London (1926-2026) as part of the celebration of its bicentennial. Students will research in Western Archives, the London Room at the London Public Library, the City of London archives in fall 2025. As part of this project, we will learn oral history theory and practice in order to interview local historians. The project will be completed in History 9801.

#### **Deliverables**

- research, visuals, and research report which will become the basis for the public-facing product

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#### **Additional Statements**

##### ***Health/Wellness Services:***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html)

##### ***Accessibility Options:***

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate

Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

***Request for Accommodations/Medical Issues:***

Students are entitled to their privacy and consequently they do not need to disclose personal information to their course professors. In the event that students feel the need to discuss personal information, they should see the graduate chair. Unlike undergraduate students, graduate students cannot be referred to Social Science Academic Counselling to have their medical or non-medical circumstances evaluated and to receive a recommendation for accommodation. Those facilities are for undergraduates only, and there is no process beyond the department to secure recommendations for accommodation. Our process is that faculty should deal with routine requests for extensions. However, a student's request for accommodation (on medical, non-medical, compassionate grounds) should go to the graduate chair, Prof. Francine McKenzie ([historygradchair@uwo.ca](mailto:historygradchair@uwo.ca)) who will consult and communicate with faculty. Additionally, faculty and students should communicate with the grad chair about any case in which work is not submitted before grades are due. In the event that the graduate chair is also the course professor, then a request for accommodation can be taken to the department chair.

***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com

(<http://www.turnitin.com>).

***Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:***

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca)

NOTE: See Policies and Statements on the Graduate section of the History Department Website, [https://history.uwo.ca/graduate/program\\_information/graduate\\_policies\\_and\\_statements.html](https://history.uwo.ca/graduate/program_information/graduate_policies_and_statements.html). This includes additional information on academic support services for health and wellness and on other academic policies, including copyright, plagiarism, and accessibility.