

History 3810A
INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC HISTORY:
PUTTING HISTORY TO WORK IN THE WORLD
Fall 2026
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Office Hours: TBA

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.



Course Description:

This course is an introduction to Public History- or the diverse ways in which history is put to work in the world! Public History is a museum exhibit at the ROM, an Assassin's Creed video game, an episode of Bridgerton, the movie Oppenheimer, Maus the graphic novel, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a walking tour of London's Labatt Memorial Park, a heritage plaque, history podcast, and family stories shared by your nan and pop! It is history experienced by everyone, and there are many different ways to share it. Public History involves understanding the various means in which people engage with the past and learning how to communicate it to larger audiences through a variety of tools, including objects, exhibits, film, oral history, digital media, comics, games, plays, and historic sites.

Because public history is a hands-on, practical approach to the past, students will become acquainted with the wide range of skills, experiences and careers possible in public history through assignments, guest speakers, workshops and site visits. It is a required course for those enrolled in the Public History Minor, excellent preparation for graduate work in history, and/or an exciting way to exercise your love for history!

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Prerequisite(s):

Registration in third year or above, any module.

Antirequisite(s):

History 3813E

Course Learning Objectives:

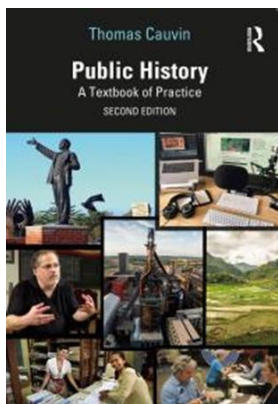
By the conclusion of the course, students should have:

- a sense of the origin, theory and growth of the public history field,
- an awareness of the main issues and challenges faced by public historians,
- a familiarity with the variety of tools and media used by public historians, including archival materials, digital technologies, film and oral history,
- first-hand experience working with material culture objects,
- an ability to examine and critically assess various forms of historical media,
- the capability of delivering a short presentation of their work to their peers,
- demonstrated critical thinking and writing skills,
- the experience of working in small groups on a public history community project,
- visited several local public history-related sites,
- made contacts with public history professionals and institutions,
- an understanding of the primary career avenues for practicing public history.

Course Materials:

There is one textbook for the course, **freely available** to be read online through Western Libraries (student login and password required):

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/detail.action?docID=6940543&pq-origsite=primo>



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Image: Thomas Cauvin, *Public History: A Textbook of Practice*. Second Edition (Taylor & Francis, 2022).

Additional readings, consisting of book chapters, articles, and videos, will be accessible through the course website on OWL Brightspace.

Methods of Evaluation*:

'Me in 3' Exhibit Presentation	15%	October 19 th (in-class)
Museum London Exhibit Review	20%	November 2 nd (online)
Participation	25%	Weeks #1 to #12 (in-class)
Group Project - Contract & Proposal	10%	October 26 th (online)
Group Project - Presentations & Final Project	30%	December 7 th (in-class/ online)

***More information regarding the assignments in this course will be made available on the OWL Brightspace website prior to the start of classes.**

Policy for Late Assignments:

Late assignments will be subject to penalties, i.e. 5% for the first day and 2% each day thereafter, including weekends and holidays. Please note that the Museum London Exhibit Review is a designated assessment, meaning that formal supporting documentation will be required for any academic consideration. Students cannot use an undocumented absence to miss or reschedule this assessment. Extensions for the Group Project will only be granted if each member of the group can provide supporting documentation.

Tentative Course Schedule and Readings**:

September

14 Introduction: Definitions, Applications and The Group Project

Reading: TBA

21 Museums & Historic Sites: Reading and Interpreting Objects & Sites

Reading: TBA

28 Archives

SITE VISIT: WESTERN ARCHIVES!

Reading: TBA

October

05 **SITE VISIT: MUSEUM LONDON!**

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12 THANKSGIVING/ FALL STUDY BREAK – NO CLASS!**19 ‘Me in 3’ Exhibit Presentations!****26 SITE VISIT: MUSEUM OF ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGY!****DUE: Group Project - Contracts & Proposals!**

Reading: TBA

November

02 Family & Community History**GUEST SPEAKER! (TBA)****DUE: Museum London Exhibit Reviews!**

Reading: TBA

09 HERITAGE CONSERVATION & TOURISM**GUEST SPEAKER! (TBA)**

Reading: TBA

16 POPULAR HISTORY (COMICS, NOVELS & GAMES)**GUEST SPEAKER! (TBA)**

Reading: TBA

23 Film & Documentary**GUEST SPEAKER! (TBA)**

Reading: TBA

30 Careers in Public History: Becoming A Practitioner**GUEST SPEAKING PANEL! (TBA)**

Reading: TBA

December

07 Group Project Presentations!****More information regarding the course schedule and readings will be made available on the OWL Brightspace course website prior to the start of classes.****Additional Statements**

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI):

You may use generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course for activities such as initial research, refining your ideas, and/or drafting an outline to organize your thoughts—

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but not for generating prose. All writing submitted in this course must be your own. If in doubt, please ask me for clarification and advice.

Communication:

The best ways to stay in touch over the course of the term is via my UWO email address or in person before or after class or during my weekly office hours, details of which will be shared through the final version of the draft syllabus on OWL Brightspace. We can also set up a zoom meeting if necessary. I hope this will be an enjoyable experience for you. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are having issues or concerns and we will work towards finding a solution. Thank you for enrolling in this hands-on course. See you soon!

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at:

https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.