

## Public History

W 5:30 MJW 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Dr. Jessica Taylor

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Office Hours: TR 2-3 on Zoom or gchat

This class has three interlocking purposes: to foster discussion about how complex or “troubling” historical moments remain part of public conversation, to find ways to meaningfully interpret history in ways that benefit our communities, and finally to explore digital humanities skills that broaden the reach of those new interpretations. In providing a foundation for our discussions, we will focus our efforts primarily on Black and Appalachian history. We will read texts and examine exhibits about crucial historical moments like the legal construction of race, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights Movement before we move on to interpreting them. Because of the theme of our final project, we will be spending substantial time how to do oral history and archival work.

All assignments are due at midnight the day of class.

**Reflections (20%):** You will write two reflections of five pages each that put your portfolio work and the readings into dialogue. You will choose a reading and discuss how a specific piece of your oral history interview, exhibit plan, or archival work supports, complicates, or challenges the narrative that this historian, curator, or practitioner offers. We will decide the prompt of the reflection together two weeks before the assignment is due.

**Class Participation (30%):** This is a small class, so participation from everyone is necessary for successful discussion periods. This grade also includes your effort and consistency in dealing with community partners. Each student will lead a component of one class period with discussion questions and/or some background information on the reading or subject. Admittedly, this grade is subjective and it is not an easy A component of your grade. Therefore, the most important thing you can do is be supportive, respectful, and thoughtful of other students with your comments. Your contributions to discussion should demonstrate that you read for class and that you take the points of your colleagues into account. You are encouraged to come to office hours for further discussion or with any questions or concerns.

**Portfolio (50%):** Students will build their own firsthand public history experience based on their interests. This is a chance to learn or refine digital humanities skills, dive deeper into a period of history, or try out fieldwork or exhibit-building. When working with community partners, this will help us make sure that everyone is doing comparable amounts of work in the class. Complete what you think will serve you best in the future; just make sure it stacks up to fifty points total. The following can include any work you do for community partners as well as for your thesis, and you can collaborate with classmates on projects as long as the final product is thorough and reflects the work of multiple people. Just run it by me first.

Oral history interview	15 points
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Oral history metadata	5 points
Oral history transcript	10 points
Exhibit building, plan for physical	15 points
Creating finding aid	20 points
Critique of exhibit/museum, 3-5 pages	10 points
CCCC Omeka section	20 points
Digital Exhibit (Knightlab, Scalar, HistoryPin)	20 points

Virginia Tech welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. The University promotes efforts to provide equal access and a culture of inclusion without altering the essential elements of coursework. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers that may be due to disability, including but not limited to ADHD, chronic or temporary medical conditions, deaf or hard of hearing, learning disability, mental health, or vision impairment, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office (540-231-3788, [ssd@vt.edu](mailto:ssd@vt.edu), or visit [www.ssd.vt.edu](http://www.ssd.vt.edu)). If you have an SSD accommodation letter, please meet with me privately during office hours as early in the semester as possible to deliver your letter and discuss your accommodations. You must give me reasonable notice to implement your accommodations, which is generally 5 business days and 10 business days for final exams.

The Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states: "As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do."

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

Honor Code Pledge for Assignments:

The Virginia Tech honor code pledge for assignments is as follows: "I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment."

The pledge is to be written out on all graded assignments at the university and signed by the student. The honor pledge represents both an expression of the student's support of the honor code and an unambiguous acknowledgment that the student has, on the assignment in question, abided by the obligation that the Honor Code entails. In the absence of a written honor pledge, the Honor Code still applies to an assignment.

If you have questions or are unclear about what constitutes academic misconduct on an assignment, please speak with me. I take the Honor Code very seriously in this course. The normal sanction I will recommend for a violation of the Honor Code is an F\* sanction as your final course grade. The F represents failure in the course. The "\*" is intended to identify a

student who has failed to uphold the values of academic integrity at Virginia Tech. A student who receives a sanction of F\* as their final course grade shall have it documented on their transcript with the notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION.” You would be required to complete an education program administered by the Honor System in order to have the “\*” and notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION” removed from your transcript. The “F” however would be permanently on your transcript.

#### Readings:

I encourage you to take note of the sources of these readings, including websites, authors, professional associations, and journals. Over time, they may become places to start for future projects or questions you’ll have.

### **PART 1: Intro to Affrilachia / Black Appalachia**

Week 1 8/25:

Calfee School: <https://www.colorsвамag.com/2021/02/08/calfee-training-school-the-legacy-lives-on/>

Explore: <https://www.blackinappalachia.org/>

Week 2 9/1: **Visit to Calfee**

Cabell, Intro, *Blacks in Appalachia*

Karida Brown, *Gone Home: Race and Roots in Appalachia*

Effie Waller Smith, <https://poets.org/poem/grave-forgotten>

<https://coalblackvoices.com/frank-x-walker-affrilachia/>

Nikki Giovanni, “Black Appalachia” podcast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1ik9TezPl4>

Timeline of Virginia Education Desegregation:

<https://dc.lib.odu.edu/digital/collection/dove/id/391>

Frank X. Walker, “affrilachia,” <https://coalblackvoices.com/frank-x-walker-affrilachia/>

Week 3 9/8:

J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, Intro, Chapters 5-Epilogue [Available online]

Manning Marable, *Living Black History*, Preface, Chapter 1, Chapter 5

Week 4 9/15:

Career Talk: Andre Taylor, Oral Historian, College of William and Mary

Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past*, Intro, Chapter 4-end.

“Exhibition Strategy”

“Exhibition Design Brief”

### **Part 2: Oral History and Practice**

Prompts for Reflection Essay Due

Week 5 9/22:

Oral History Workshop

*The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) [available online]

VT Oral history collection [critique an interview]

Week 6 9/29:

**Visit to Calfee**

William Chafe, *Remembering Jim Crow*

Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, selections

Week 7 10/6:

Career Talk: Kira Dietz, Special Collections

Cynthia Duncan, *Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America*, Introductions, 1-72

**Reflection Essay 1 Due**

### **Part 3: Public History and Practice**

Week 8 10/13:

Career Talk: Monica Varner, Library of Congress

Digitization and Community Archives:

<https://www.clir.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/pub159.pdf> [a very boring but brief handbook]

Explore a Community Archive: <https://densho.org/>

<https://libraryarchives.arlingtonva.us/>

<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>

Grant Hurley, "Community Archives, Community Clouds,"

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/687709/pdf>

Michelle Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian*

Week 9 10/20:

Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance*

Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*

### **DIGITAL DAY OCTOBER 23**

Week 10 10/27

Career Talk: Nick Barnes, Curator and Postdoctoral Fellow, Watson Institute, Brown University

Dorothy Spruill Redford, "Seeing History Whole,"

[https://futureafampast.si.edu/sites/default/files/07\\_Redford%20Dorothy.pdf](https://futureafampast.si.edu/sites/default/files/07_Redford%20Dorothy.pdf)

Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South*

Week 11 11/3:

Career talk:

Sherry Wyatt, Collections Manager and Curator, Montgomery Museum

Brittany Lane, Interpretive Park Ranger/Interim Superintendent, Booker T. Washington National Historic Site/ Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historic Park, National Park Service

Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*

## **EXHIBIT DRAFTS DUE**

Week 12 11/10:

Special Issue on Black Museums, *The Public Historian*,

<https://online.ucpress.edu/tph/issue/40/3>

Fath Davis Ruffins, “Mythos, Memory, and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820–1990,” *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

Christy Colman, “African American Museums in the Twenty-first Century,” *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Lanham, Md: Altamira Press, 2016).

## **Reflection Essay 2 Due**

Week 13 11/17

Career Talk: David Brown, Archaeologist/Principal, Fairfield Foundation and DATA Investigations

Lonnie G. Bunch III, A Fool’s Errand: Creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture in the Age of Bush, Obama, and Trump

## **Week 14 break**

Week 15 12/1: Future Directions, Pressing Problems

Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums: Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*

December 4

## **Final Presentations at Calfee**

Final Exhibits and Portfolio due December 11