

## AC/HI 390B: HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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**Office: Harward Center, 163 Wood Street**

**Class hours: T, Th 9:30-10:50**  
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### OVERVIEW

This is a cultural-history course **and** a community practicum. On the one hand (usually in our Tuesday sessions), we will explore the role of social memory, historical story-telling, and public representations of the past in American culture: the history, so to speak, of how Americans have viewed and used their history. On the other hand (mainly on Thursdays and outside of class), we will do public history, researching the history of Lewiston, its mills, and its millworkers as part of a community partnership to create a museum of labor and industry.

As cultural historians, we will study many forms of “history in the public sphere”—Hollywood movies, documentaries, war memorials, popular fiction, theatrical entertainments, history museums—which have various goals and politics. Indeed it is one point of the course that Americans’ pictures of the past has served as a manifold, powerful force in U.S. culture. Americans have used historical representations to define their values, assert their power, address grievances, and imagine alternative visions of U.S. society. They have turned key events like the Revolution, the Civil War, immigration, and slavery into stories, sometimes myths, with which to make sense of and shape their society in the present. Often these stories deny or falsify other parts of the past; part of our work as historians of American memory will be to ask, what is being left out?

Most of the research and writing you will do in AC/HI 390B will be part of a community partnership with Museum L-A, a community initiative whose mission is to create a museum of labor and industry about Lewiston-Auburn. Our project goals are to survey the documentary holdings at Museum L-A and other local archives; to do a series of individual research projects that contribute to the development of exhibit materials for Museum L-A; and to sketch the themes and key stories for a small, traveling exhibit that the Harward Center and Museum L-A will be designing in the coming year. You will be contributing to an important venture in community history. Our contributions will strive for careful research, critical rigor, and interpretive empathy toward the community, pursued in collaboration with the community.

My learning goals for you are: 1) to enrich your understanding of American cultural history and your critical and interpretive skills in understanding American culture; 2) to enhance your research and writing skills; 3) to enable you to deeply connect these liberal-arts skills and knowledges with the practical work of community involvement; and 4) to offer you the joy of helping to co-create important, tangible, valuable public work.

### REQUIREMENTS:

**Attendance and attention:** It is important to show up with your mind, ears, and mouth open—even more so in a small class doing work with community partners. Attendance is essential at all on- and off-campus meetings; please come prepared to learn, participate, create, and have fun.

**Reading and discussion:** I have assigned about 125 pages of reading per week. The assignments include fiction, memoir, and cultural journalism, as well as academic scholarship; you will also be seeing movies and community performances. I hope the assignments will strike you as lively and fun. The following books are available at the Bates Bookstore:

Jane Addams, Twenty Years At Hull-House

Thomas Bell, Out of This Furnace

David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You

Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt (eds.), History Wars

Martha Norkunas, Monuments and Memory: History and Representation in Lowell, Massachusetts

Mike Wallace, Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays On American Memory Temples

**Research, writing, and telling:** As historians of American social memory, you will be asked to do two 3-page response papers, commenting on and exploring the readings. These are meant to be concise and exploratory, but thoughtful and well-written. As community historians, you will be asked to do a series of assignments designed to grow your research skills, survey the rich but scattered archives of Lewiston's labor and industrial history, and research and present your own topics. The assignments include: 1) compiling an overview of Museum L-A's documentary holdings; 2) writing a one-page research plan and bibliography of your chosen research topic; 3) creating a research report or exhibit draft on your research topic; and 4) presenting your findings to community partners.

**Collaboration and engagement:** We will be working partners who have a passion for preserving and retelling their community's history and a deep knowledge of that history. It is essential that we respect their passion and their expertise, helping to create public history for them and with them. If we nurture the spirit of partnership and dialogue, our work will be better; your learning will be deeper; and it will be fun.

**Grading and deadlines:** I will set grades using the following guidelines: attendance and participation (at both class and off-campus meetings) (20%), response papers (20%), Museum L-A archive survey (15 %), research plan and bibliography (5%), research presentation (10%), and research project (30%). Written assignments are due at the Thursday class, but you may take an automatic extension until the following Monday morning if you let me know ahead of time. After that, I will mark down one notch each day for late work.

## WEEKLY SYLLABUS

**Th Jan 5: Introduction: Social Memory and Public History**

## **I. THE STAKES OF SOCIAL MEMORY**

**T Jan 10: Social Memory: Inventing and Contesting the Past**

Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles For the American Past, 1-62

Abraham Rodriguez, “The Boy Without a Flag,” The Boy Without a Flag: Tales of the South Bronx

**Th Jan 12: Local Memory: The Lewiston Mills and the Franco-American Community**

Visit to Museum L-A

“Lewiston: A New Home,” Franco-American Heritage Center, January 13-15

**T Jan 17: Memory and Social Justice: Inventing and Contesting the Present**

Scott A. Sandage, “A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963,” Journal of American History (June, 1993), 135-67

Website, International Coalition of Historic Sites of Conscience—explore sections on any four museums, but include the Lower East Side Tenement Museum

**Th Jan 19: Where Do You Find Social Memory?**

David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, Nearby History, 41-102, 123-45, 165-80  
Brainstorming session with elders

## **II. NATIONAL NARRATIVES**

**T Jan 24: The Politics of Memory: War, Heroism, and Dissent**

Linenthal and Engelhardt, History Wars, 63-139

**Th Jan 26: No class today—work on Museum L-A survey**

**T Jan 31: The Politics of Amnesia: Mass-Mediated History**

Mike Wallace, Mickey Mouse History, 133-174

“The Godfather, Part II”

**Th Feb 2: The Craft of Research**

Wayne Booth et al., The Craft of Research, Chapters Three and Four  
**Museum L-A survey due**

**T Jan 7: National Narrative and Immigrant Experience**

Thomas Bell, Out Of This Furnace, Part One

**Th Feb 9: National Narrative and Working-Class Experience**

Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, Parts Two and Three

- T Feb 14: Working-Class Americanism**  
Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, Part Four

**February 18-26—Bates Mid-Semester Break**

### **III. LABOR, INDUSTRY, IMMIGRANTS, AND THE FORMS OF PUBLIC HISTORY**

- T Feb 28: Thinking about research**

- Th Mar 2: Working-Class Americanism In a Milltown**

“Roughing the Uppers” documentary

“A Momentary Order” performance documentary

Suzanne Carbonneau, *A Momentary Order: An Arts-Community Partnership*, 1-50

- T Mar 7: The Politics of Memory In a Milltown**

Martha Norkunas, *Monuments and Memory: History and Representation in Lowell, Massachusetts*

**Research plans and bibliography of topics due**

- Th Mar 9: No class—work on research projects**

- T Mar 14: Museums and Social Memory**

Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 3-73, 88-100

- Th Mar 16: No class--work on research projects**

- T Mar 21: The Politics of Story-Telling**

William Cronon, “A Place For Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *Journal of American History* (March, 1992), 1347-76

- Th Mar 23: Presentation of research to community partners**

- T Mar 28: The Joy and Difficulty of Boundary-Crossing**

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years At Hull-House*, 1-91, 136-50

- Th Mar 30: No class—work on research projects**

- T Apr 4: Celebration**

**Final research project due April 6**