

**HIS 399**  
**Public History and Memory**

Summer Session I

Satisfies: SBS+  
Thematic Categories: “Arts, Ideas & Culture,”  
“Law, Politics & Social Justice”

Online, Asynchronous (with synchronous component)

Instructor: Robyn Stanton

Museums, monuments, and national parks across the United States draw hundreds of visitors annually. Yet, what we don't see in exhibitions and guided tours are those who were involved in the making of these public spaces. Who shaped the narratives on display? Who was not involved in the process, and why? What motivated their creation, and how is history communicated through them? How is the past remembered, and does this memory change over time? This course will consider and interrogate the process in which museums, monuments, and national parks are constructed. By using these public-facing venues, we will explore the practice of public history. Public history can be understood as the use and communication of the historical process—the interpretation of history through primary sources—in non-academic spaces; in other words, the teaching of history outside the traditional classroom. We will begin with an overview of the foundational elements of the field to prepare us to consider the politics that resulted in the development of different venues of public history. In doing so, we will position museums, monuments, and national parks not as stagnant arenas of American history and memory, but rather, as malleable spaces susceptible to their broader historical context. By the semester's end, students will be able to identify how notions of race, gender, class, and identity shape, and reshape history in public settings.

Throughout the semester, we will read a selection of chapters and articles exploring the different venues of public history. Students will be asked to submit weekly response papers based on the readings and have the option to participate in synchronous, weekly discussion sessions to be held on zoom. Additionally, students will be asked to keep and manage a research log on a museum, monument, or national park of their choice, which will serve as the basis for their final project.