This course introduces the processes and practice of public history and their intellectual foundations. Through our readings, class discussions, and assignments, we will examine the activities of public historians and the complex issues they face when preserving, researching, interpreting and presenting history. Reading a series of case studies and theoretical essays, we will discuss how theory plays out in practice and in a variety of formats and arenas in which historians engage with historical sites, objects, and publics. The course will be organized loosely around three themes. The first is the idea of the public. Who are the “publics” in public history? What kinds of relationships do (or should) public historians have with them? Can authority be shared? How do public historians handle “the other” – issues of cultural appropriation or cross-cultural interactions? Our second theme considers “history” – how does society decide what’s worth remembering and saving? What role do public historians play in shaping, sharing, and interpreting public memories? How do we resolve the tension between memory and history? And what is the relationship between public history and the historical discipline? And the third theme centers on the politics of public history practices. How have groups and individuals from outside the field shaped its pursuits and forced changes in practices? How have both conservative and radical agendas shaped the work of public history in the past, including sources of funding, methods of engagement, and institutional collecting priorities? What changes when/if public history moves from protest to institutionalization, from a pursuit of activist outsiders to professional insiders? And how do politics, personal and professional, shape the work of public historians today?

READINGS


Erica Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*


James Young, *Texture of Memory* (Yale University Press)