

# PUBLIC HISTORY, MASTER OF ARTS

Public history is an interdisciplinary pursuit that unites members of the field in "an interest and commitment to making history relevant and useful in the public sphere."<sup>1</sup> Students of public history must learn to use and organize archives, to conceive and erect museum exhibitions, to use historical artifacts and texts as teaching tools within historical organizations, to conduct oral histories and thus co-create historical documents, and to work with various community and historical groups. The Master of Arts (M.A.) in Public History is designed to serve the needs of historical consultants, museum professionals, government historians, archivists, oral historians, cultural resource managers, curators, film and media producers, historical interpreters, historic preservationists, policy advisers, local historians, community activists, and teachers of both history and social studies.

## Program Delivery and Tuition Rate

This degree program is delivered through online courses and a required internship and is billed at the non-MBA rate.

<sup>1</sup> "What is Public History? (<http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history/>)" National Council on Public History

## Admission

Admission to this program is selective. This program enrolls new students in the fall and spring terms. Applicants should possess a bachelor's degree.

## Application

Please see the Graduate Admissions (<http://catalog.sunyempire.edu/graduate/admission/>) pages of this catalog for a complete listing of materials required to complete a graduate application.

## Curriculum

This 33-credit program is comprised of 21 credits of required courses, 6 credits of electives reflecting a student's area of focus, and 6 credits of capstone course work which includes an internship. Below is a listing of the program's required courses as well as examples of some available elective courses.

## Program Courses

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Required Courses</b>		
PBHS 6040	Museums and Public History: Theory & Practices	3
PBHS 6025	Public History, Ethics & Professionalism	3
PBHS 6325	Archival Theory & Practice	3
PBHS 6105	Exhibition: Planning & Interpretation	3
PBHS 6215	Oral History: Theory & Methods	3
PBHS 6245	Preservation Material & History	3
PBHS 6240	Preservation Policy & Law	3
<b>Electives (two)</b>		<b>6</b>
<b>Capstone Courses</b>		
PBHS 7005	Public History Internship	3

PBHS 7030	Public History Final Project	3
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>33</b>

## Electives

To satisfy the 6-credit focus area requirement of the degree, students may choose from a wide variety of elective courses found in the Graduate Course Catalog, or unique courses developed in consultation with their advisor in the form of independent studies. Just two examples of focus areas and the catalog electives that might be chosen, are listed below. Students are not restricted to these examples and should work with their advisor to determine the area they will focus on and the appropriate electives.

Code	Title	Credits
<i>Possible Electives in American History</i>		
LACS 6122	19th Century US Culture & Society	3
LACS 6130	Gender Race & Nation	3
LACS 6160	Literature of New York	3
LACS 6190	American Modernism	3
<i>Possible Electives in Material/Visual Culture</i>		
LACS 6075	Cultural and Visual Studies	3
LACS 6185	American Material Culture	3
LACS 6145	Language & Culture	3

## Final Project

Students in the Public History program will complete their degree with a final project. The specific design and focus of your final project will be developed in close consultation with your advisor. There are two main types of final project in the public history program; the traditional Thesis, and the Practice-based project.

## Thesis

The thesis is a sustained piece of research-based analytic writing that examines an issue or topic related to your interest in public history. You could use this to expand your topical knowledge and expertise in a particular historical issue or topic. Students have written on such diverse topics as Italian immigration; gender in animated films; specific strikes or labor actions; and the history of particular places such as monuments, parks, or homes. You could also write a thesis that critically evaluates particular practices or issues in museum representation, the politics of particular monuments, or other public history practices. The thesis option is a particularly good option for students considering moving onto PhD work.

## Practice-based Project

This approach varies widely depending on your interest and experience in hands-on public history. You might consider options like writing an historical play and staging a performance; mounting an exhibit; organizing a community history project; or creating a public online archive. The approach is very open and you will need to work closely with you advisor to plan and execute the project. As a final part of the project, you will be expected to write a concluding reflective essay that analyzes the practice-based project in terms of the methods, ethics, and best practices of public history that you have been studying over the course of your program. This practice-based approach works particularly well for students who are looking to work in public history directly after graduation from the program or are working to advance a current public history career.

There might be other kinds of final projects, but the key to all final projects is to develop them in close consultation with your advisor and work closely with your advisor as you complete them. What is important to your successful completion is that you design a final project that is right for you. The final project is a significant piece of scholarship and public history work and one that should have personal meaning and provide a deep sense of accomplishment.

**Upon completion of the M.A. in Public History program, students will be able to:**

- Define and work within the field of public history;
- Differentiate between the various components of public history and demonstrate an ability to work within several of those areas;
- Assess various public history activities for their completeness and appropriateness;
- Identify public historians and public history institutions within their region, analyze the work those groups have done, and propose new local public history endeavors; and
- Discuss, in analytical and reflective terms, their work within a public history institution.