

HIST 595: PUBLIC HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT (CAPSTONE) GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

What is HIST 595? HIST 595 is the capstone course for the M.A. in Public History. It is designed to give students hands-on experience in the career field of their choice. Students should therefore choose a project that complements both their course of study and career ambitions.

What kinds of projects are encouraged? Projects should incorporate client-based and/or academically-based research and should communicate their findings to a non-academic audience. It is expected that many students will choose their final projects based on their internship experience. Finding an institution to sponsor the project, whether it is the same institution in which the student completed his or her internship or a different institution, helps assure that the Capstone Project reaches a public audience. Potential projects include, but are not limited to:

- Exhibitions
- Walking Tours
- Local or Institutional Histories
- Oral History Projects
- Curriculum Projects
- Preparation of Archival Finding Aids
- Visitor Surveys
- Workshops
- Grant Applications
- Public Programs/Events
- National Register Nominations

Public History Capstone Project Guidelines Project Topic and Format

The topic and format of the Capstone Project must be developed in consultation with the Public History Coordinator and the Capstone Project Adviser. Every Capstone Project must:

1. Make a scholarly contribution to the discipline of history;
2. Involve original research using primary sources;
3. Demonstrate the student's knowledge of the historical topic and the historiography of that topic and place his/her work within this body of knowledge and academic study;
4. Demonstrate the student's ability to think and write critically, analytically, and clearly;
5. Demonstrate the student's knowledge of public history practices and techniques and his/her ability to craft a project that meets professional public history standards.

Completing the project and submission to the Graduate School

The Capstone Project submitted to Project Adviser and the Graduate School must include:

1. A written ***description of the project***, approximately 12-15 pages in length. This paper should adopt a professional tone and should demonstrate project's significance.

References to public history theory and methodology are encouraged. This description should include the following sections, clearly identified:

- A **Project Abstract**: The project abstract should provide a brief, one page, summary (200-300 words) of the project including a description of the project goals, project format, scope, sponsoring institution, the students' specific role in the project, and project outcomes. The project abstract should be exact, concise, and unambiguous.
- A **Table of Contents** identifying each section contained in the submitted materials, including page numbers and appendices.
- A **Definition of Project** which describes in greater detail the form of the project, its scope or duration, its relationship to the sponsoring institution and lists other project participants.
- A discussion of the **Project Objective**. This section should explain why this project was undertaken, how it fits the sponsoring institution's mission, its significance to the public, and its contribution to historical scholarship.
- A **Review of Literature** that summarizes relevant secondary sources in the discipline of history and explains how this particular project utilized or built upon the existing historiography. In addition this section should consider relevant works in the field of public history and explain how the project met professional public history standards expressed in those works. For example, if your project was a museum exhibit, you might make reference to Beverly Serrell's book *Exhibit Labels*.
- A **Plan for Project: Research Methods and Design**. This section should detail as specifically as possible the work involved in completing the project. For example, if you started an archive describe how you did it and why you made the choices that you did. If you created a museum program, be specific about the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating the program. Also, use this section as a place to showcase the original research you conducted
- A section describing the project **Results and/or Findings**. What was the final outcome of the project? What was the overall contribution of this project to the sponsoring institution? Has the project had a public debut? If so, who has used the project, and how?
- A brief project **Summary/Conclusion**. How would you evaluate the project? What lasting impact will it have?
- A complete **Bibliography** of sources consulted for the project and the essay. This bibliography should divide the sources into secondary sources and primary sources; primary sources may be divided further into other more specific categories such as oral histories, manuscript collections, etc. Be sure to list ALL of the sources that you use, including artifact collections or other non-traditional sources

2. An original **essay** on a topic related to the Capstone Project. The essay should be the equivalent of a journal article that could be published. The essay should state and defend an argument, not just present information that the student has learned. Students should be sure to put their work in the context of other scholarship on the field and to show how their work contributes to the field as a whole. All essays should be **approximately 25-30 pages in length** and should use proper footnotes as described in the *Chicago Manual of Style*

3. **Appendices** that illustrate both the written and non-written component of the project. This portfolio can include any of the following, depending on the type of project:

- written reports prepared for the sponsoring institution

- publicity for the project (such as newspaper articles, posters, etc),
- written elements of the project (e.g. the text of an exhibit or website),
- photographs of the project (e.g. for an exhibit or public program)
- archival finding aids
- samples of the final product (e.g. transcriptions for oral histories or accessions forms for a collections management project)
- copies or a summary of evaluation forms or reports for the project
- evaluations of the student's work by scholars or professional public historians
- Historic preservation survey materials or National Register nominations
- pages from websites if the project incorporates a website
- exhibit plans

Submitting your capstone project

One complete copy of your capstone project must be submitted to your faculty advisor along with one additional copy of the project abstract to be maintained in the Graduate Studies Office. These will be forwarded by your advisor to the Graduate School along with a completed copy of the Approval of Special Projects Form.

How do I enroll in HIST 595?

Step 1: Identify a potential project and a faculty sponsor in the History Department. The faculty sponsor may be one of the Public History faculty members, but depending on the nature of the project or subject of study, the student might elect another member of the faculty. It is the faculty sponsor's responsibility to identify an appropriate faculty member to serve as a second reader who will assist in determining the project's final grade.

Step 2: Submit project proposal to faculty sponsor. All proposals should be submitted as both an electronic document (Microsoft Word) and as a hard copy. Proposals should be 6-8 pages in length, adopt a professional tone, include a project title, and address the following issues:

- **Project Format:** What format will the final project take? (e.g. exhibition, walking tour, local or institutional history, curriculum project, etc.)
- **Project Goals:** What do you hope to achieve with this project? Why is this project significant in terms of its historical content? Why is this project significant in terms of its public impact?
- **Project Team:** Are you working alone or are you completing this project in conjunction with a public history institution? For what specific parts of the project are you responsible? What do you expect from the organization? What steps have you taken to ensure that the organization will be able to meet your needs?
- **Project Resources:** The proposal should include a review of literature that examines relevant secondary sources both from the perspective of historical content and public history practice. (This review of literature should be revised and expanded for inclusion in final description of the project.) The student must also include a working bibliography that identifies appropriate secondary source material as well as collections of primary source material that support the project. It is expected that this working bibliography represents the students' beginning research and that the student will add to the bibliography for the final project.

- **Work Plan:** Create a calendar that identifies specific tasks and a schedule for their completion. As part of this work plan, identify times for you to meet with your faculty sponsor and discuss your progress.

Step 3: The proposal must be reviewed by the sponsoring faculty member and the Public History Advisory Committee. Once the project has been approved, students must also complete the “Capstone Project Request” form and send it to the Graduate School by the end of the first week of classes in the project semester.

By what date must I submit my project proposal?

All proposals are due to the Public History Program Coordinator by **April 30th** for fall semester projects and **November 30th** for spring semester projects.

How will my project be graded?

While final grades are issued at the discretion of the faculty sponsors and second readers, faculty members are encouraged to consider both the scholarly quality of the project and its presentation to a non-academic audience.

When is my project due? Your project will be due on the last day of classes in the semester in which you enrolled in HIST 595. Alternative arrangements may be made upon the mutual consent of both the student and the sponsoring faculty member.

For additional information see the CCSU Graduate Studies Special Project Handbook. http://www.ccsu.edu/grad/Word_documents/Special_Project_2006.doc

revision: May 2007