

American University  
**Public History Program**



History Department  
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Washington, DC 20002 US

<http://www.american.edu/cas/history/public/index.cfm>

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The Public History Program at American University offers Public History as a concentration within the MA degree, requiring 36 hours of credit, and as an outside field of specialization for the PhD. The program enrolls approximately ten students per year. The flexible curriculum seeks to balance rigorous study in the discipline of history with professional training in public history practice. Students work closely with professionals at cultural institutions in the Washington, DC area on class projects as well as internships. Our partners include the National Park Service, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of African American History, several non-profit house museums, and the DC Humanities Council, among others. Students can design a program that best fits their intellectual and professional goals and are encouraged to take advantage of courses offered through Washington, DC Consortium Institutions and through AU's Arts Management and Public Anthropology programs.

**Type of Program:** Public History Graduate Program

**Degree(s) offered:** M.A. in History with a Certificate or Concentration in Public History  
Ph.D. in History with a Certificate or Concentration in Public History

**Concentration(s):**

- Museum Studies
- Archival Practices
- Historic Preservation
- Material History
- Local/Community History
- Oral History
- Historical Archaeology
- Public Policy
- New Media/Digital History. We allow students to shape their own concentration within public history drawing on courses across campus and from the universities within the Washington, DC Consortium.

**Course Offerings:**

- Public History Seminar; required; offered every fall
- Public History Practicum; required; offered every spring
- Internship; required
- Oral History; satisfies the Tool of Research requirement, offered every fall
- Digital History; satisfies the Tool of Research requirement, offered every spring
- Visual and Material History; offered alternating falls
- Historic Site Management; offered alternating springs
- Public Policy and History; offered alternating falls
- Visitor Evaluation for Public Historians; offered in the summer
- Global Public History: How History Matters; offered alternating springs; taught by visiting faculty
- National Park Service Institute (in development for the summer of 2011)
- Civil War Institute; offered every summer
- Nuclear Studies Institute; offered every summer

**Thesis required?** No

**Special project required? Yes**

**Description:** Students in the seminar-practicum series work in small teams on three or four projects in conjunction with external partners. We've done projects with Arlington Cemetery; Arlington House, NPS; The Lemelson Center at the National Museum of American History, SI; President Lincoln's Cottage and a host of other partners. The project requires 150 hours of work over 14 weeks and includes research in primary and secondary sources and development of the final product. For instance students have researched, written, and designed twenty wayside interpretive signs for Arlington Cemetery. The project is nested within a class on best practices on historical interpretation and while students are developing the project they are also reading best practices literature on how to do audience evaluation, how to write for a general audience, etc.

**Credit Hour Requirement:** 36

**Internship Required? Yes**

**Who arranges internships?** The Director

**Credit hours earned for internships:** 3

**Who evaluates internship? What are the criteria for evaluation?** Internships are part of a three-hour class; students must work on a defined project, develop a reading list, keep a blog or journal, write a synthetic final paper analyzing the experience and assemble a portfolio.

**Places where students have interned in the past three years:**

- National Museum of American History, SI
- Heritage Education Services, NPS
- DC Humanities Council
- National Archives and Records Administration
- Mount Vernon
- Arlington House, NPS

**Admission Requirements:**

- Minimum GPA: 3.2
- Statement of Purpose
- Letter(s) of Recommendation
- Transcripts
- Writing Sample
- GRE Aptitude Score

**Financial Aid Available:**

- Loans
- Fellowships

**Maximum annual stipend for:** MA: \$14K not including tuition waivers PhD: 0

**Average number of students who receive:** Stipend: 1 at the MA and 5 at the PhD levels Scholarships: N/A

**How many students are admitted annually?** BA: N/A MA: 10 PhD: 2

**Placement assistance offered?** The Director distributes employment opportunities on a listserv and helps students connect with potential employers individually and through sponsored events.

**Employers who have hired your graduates in the past three years:**

- NARA; National Museum of American History
- Office of Institutional History, Smithsonian Institution
- Design Minds
- IMLS
- Heritage Education Services, NPS
- Mount Vernon
- Arlington House, NPS