



Recommended Readings for Public History Courses

History & Memory

Prepared by the Curriculum and Training Committee, November 2020

Note: Recommendations are for graduate level. Readings that are also suitable for undergraduate level are indicated by (UG) at the end of the annotation.

Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.

Blight's book—particularly Chapter 10, "Fifty Years of Freedom and Reunion,"—offers African American perspectives on the Civil War. This book enables students to tangle with popular memory, professional manipulation, and the big business of historic site interpretation.

Bruggeman, Seth, ed. *Born in the USA: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.

The essays in this volume suggest that the way Americans have celebrated famous births reflects evolving expectations of citizenship as well as a willingness to edit the past when those hopes go unfulfilled. The contributors also demonstrate that the reinvention of origin myths at birthplace monuments still factors in American political culture and the search for meaning in an ever-shifting global order. Beyond asking why it is that Americans care about birthplaces and how they choose which ones to commemorate, *Born in the U.S.A.* offers insights from historians, curators, interpretive specialists, and others whose experience speaks directly to the challenges of managing historical sites.

Bruggeman, Seth, ed. *Commemoration: The American Association for State and Local History Guide*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

Commemoration: The American Association for State and Local History Guide serves as a handbook for historic site managers, heritage professionals, and all manner of public historians who contend daily with the ground-level complexities of commemoration. Its fourteen short essays are intended as tools for practitioners, students, and anyone else confronted with common problems in commemorative practice today. Of particular concern are strategies for expanding commemoration across the panoply of American identities, confronting tragedy and difficult pasts, and doing responsible work in the face of persistent economic and political turmoil.

Denson, Andrew. *Monuments to Absence: Cherokee Removal and the Contest over Southern Memory*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

Andrew Denson explores the public memory of Cherokee removal through an examination of memorials, historic sites, and tourist attractions dating from the early twentieth century to the present. White southerners, Denson argues, embraced the Trail of Tears as a story of Indian disappearance. Commemorating Cherokee removal affirmed white possession of southern

places, while granting them the moral satisfaction of acknowledging past wrongs. During segregation and the struggle over Black civil rights, removal memorials reinforced whites' authority to define the South's past and present. Cherokees, however, proved capable of repossessing the removal memory, using it for their own purposes during a time of crucial transformation in tribal politics and US Indian policy.

Horwitz, Tony. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. New York: Vintage, 1998.

A classic exploration of Civil War history and memory by former journalist Tony Horwitz. In the words of Civil War historian James McPherson, "Horwitz's chronicle of his odyssey through the nether and ethereal worlds of Confederatemia is by turns amusing, chilling, poignant, and always fascinating. He has found the Lost Cause and lived to tell the tale a wonderfully piquant tale of hard-core reenactors, Scarlett O'Hara look-alikes, and people who reshape Civil War history to suit the way they wish it had come out." (UG)

Kelland, Lara. *Clio's Foot Soldiers: U.S. Social Movements and Collective Memory*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018.

Collective memories are key to social movements. Activists draw on a shared history to build identity, create movement cohesion, and focus political purpose. But what happens when marginalized communities do not find their history in dominant narratives? How do they create a useable past to bind their political communities together and challenge their exclusion? In *Clio's Foot Soldiers*, Lara Leigh Kelland investigates these questions by examining 1960s and 1970s social movements comprised of historically marginalized peoples: Civil Rights, Black Power, Women's and Gay Liberation, and American Indian. These movements sought ownership over their narratives to create historical knowledge reflective of their particular experiences. To accomplish their goals, activists generated new forms of adult education, published movement newspapers, and pursued campus activism and speeches, public history efforts, and community organizations. Through alternative means, marginalized communities developed their own historical discourses to mobilize members, define movement goals, and become culturally sovereign. In so doing, they provided a basis for achieving political liberation and changed the landscape of liberal cultural institutions.

Kelman, Ari. *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.

In the early morning of November 29, 1864, with the fate of the Union still uncertain, part of the First Colorado and nearly all of the Third Colorado volunteer regiments, commanded by Colonel John Chivington, surprised hundreds of Cheyenne and Arapaho people camped on the banks of Sand Creek in southeastern Colorado Territory. More than 150 Native Americans were slaughtered, the vast majority of them women, children, and the elderly, making it one of the most infamous cases of state-sponsored violence in US history. *A Misplaced Massacre* examines the ways in which generations of Americans have struggled to come to terms with the meaning of both the attack and its aftermath, most publicly at the 2007 opening of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site.

Ladino, Jennifer K. *Memorials Matter: Emotion, Environment, and Public Memory at American Historical Sites*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2019.

In a unique blend of narrative scholarship and critical theory, Ladino demonstrates how memorial sites and their surrounding landscapes, combined with written texts, generate emotion and shape our collective memory of traumatic events. She urges us to consider our everyday environments and to become attuned to features and feelings we might have otherwise overlooked.

Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Alison Landsberg argues that mass cultural forms such as cinema and television in fact contain the still-unrealized potential for a progressive politics based on empathy for the historical experiences of others. The result is a new form of public cultural memory—"prosthetic" memory—that awakens the potential in American society for increased social responsibility and political alliances that transcend the essentialism and ethnic particularism of contemporary identity politics.

Linenthal, Edward. *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Linenthal examines the changing interpretations and historical meanings at five battlefields: Lexington and Concord, the Alamo, Gettysburg, Little Big Horn, and Pearl Harbor. The book seeks to examine what happened to each site after the battle was over and how the meaning of each battle has changed over time. A useful study for exploring the uses and abuses of historical memory and the struggles that have occurred to interpret and define these sites of conflict in American history. The study is particularly useful for showing how the work of academic historians has led to new interpretations of sites, such as the Little Big Horn. Because chapters often echo similar themes, public history educators may find it useful to assign individual chapters rather than the entire work. (UG)

Linenthal, Edward. *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Linenthal explores the many ways Oklahomans and other Americans have tried to grapple with this catastrophe. Working with exclusive access to materials gathered by the Oklahoma City National Memorial Archive and drawing from over 150 personal interviews with family members of those murdered, survivors, rescuers, and many others, Linenthal looks at how the bombing threatened cherished ideas about American innocence, sparked national debate on how to respond to terrorism at home and abroad, and engendered a new "bereaved community" in Oklahoma City itself. Linenthal examines how different stories about the bombing were told through positive narratives of civic renewal and of religious redemption and more negative narratives of toxicity and trauma. He writes about the extraordinary bonds of affection that were created in the wake of the bombing, acts of kindness, empathy, and compassion that existed alongside the toxic legacy of the event. *The Unfinished Bombing* offers a compelling look

at both the individual and the larger cultural consequences of one of the most searing events in recent American history.

Linenthal, Edward and Tom Engelhardt. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1996.

Eight historians provide essays on the controversy that erupted at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space museum over the exhibiting of the Enola Gay, the B-29 Bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima at the end of World War II. Written soon after the controversy, the work captures the intensity of the emotions that surfaced in the mid-1990s. The essays provide a range of viewpoints (though most are critical that opposition led to the cancelation of the original exhibit concept), and several could be used on their own, such as Paul Boyer's "Whose History is it Anyway: Memory, Politics, and Historical Scholarship." The essay by Richard Kohn, Former Air Force Historian, "History at Risk: The Case of the Enola Gay," provides a fine overview of the exhibit that skillfully examines the different perspectives and interests at stake in the exhibit (though he is critical of the original exhibit concept). That article was printed in a fuller form in *Journal of American History*, and that article also serves as a useful source for studying the controversy (see entry above).

Pitcaithley, Dwight. "Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace Cabin: The Making of an American Icon" in *Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape*. Paul A. Shackel, ed. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001.

Pitcaithley, the former chief historian for the National Park Service, raises important questions about the persistence of "myth" in popular memory at historic sites. The article challenges students to consider their own attachment to various, familiar stories, and to move beyond a too simple distinction between myth and history.

Romano, Renee C. and Leigh Raiford, eds. *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006.

The movement for civil rights in America peaked in the 1950s and 1960s; however, a closely related struggle, this time over the movement's legacy, has been heatedly engaged over the past two decades. How the civil rights movement is currently being remembered in American politics and culture—and why it matters—is the common theme of the thirteen essays in this unprecedented collection.

Savage, Kirk. *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Architectural historian Kirk Savage provides a historical overview of both the changing style of historical monuments as well as the political forces and historical memory those monuments have embodied across time as various interest groups have sought representation on the National Mall. Savage's book effectively connects the history of the monuments to the history of Washington—noting the way that the city's sense of itself as well as its role as a tourist destination interconnected with its profusion of monuments. Savage effectively brings to light the fierce debates that surrounded the creation of some of the mall's most popular monuments—including the Lincoln, Jefferson, and Vietnam Veteran's memorials. Savage

examines how the competing forces of planning, politics, and design shaped the commemorative landscape of the nation's capital.

Wallace, Mike. *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

This collection of essays, many of which Wallace wrote in the 1980s and 1990s for the *Radical History Review*, offers perspectives on a wide array of topics including urban history museums, museums of science and technology, the presentation of history at Colonial Williamsburg, a history of the historic preservation movement in the United States, the Enola Gay controversy, and the Disney Corporation's uses of history in its theme parks and its failed effort to create an American history theme park. This work is useful for gaining insights into some of the major controversies facing public historians at the end of the twentieth century. Wallace expresses a strong liberal viewpoint and is often highly critical of choices made by institutions and corporations—and especially the policies of Ronald Reagan—making it useful for sparking classroom discussions about the state of public history in the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the essays are period pieces, so public history educators might want to assign individual essays rather than the entire collection.

Young, James E. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

In Dachau, Auschwitz, Yad Vashem, and thousands of other locations throughout the world, memorials to the Holocaust are erected to commemorate its victims and its significance. This fascinating work by James E. Young examines Holocaust monuments and museums in Europe, Israel, and America, exploring how every nation remembers the Holocaust according to its own traditions, ideals, and experiences, and how these memorials reflect their place in contemporary aesthetic and architectural discourse. The result is a groundbreaking study of Holocaust memory, public art, and their fusion in contemporary life.