

HST 3901

The History Detectives

Course Description:

This class is an experiment. Hopefully, it will be among the most culturally and intellectually enriching experiences that you have at HPU, but you're going to need to be more flexible, self-starting, and responsible with me and with each other than in a normal undergraduate course. The goal of this class is to spend the semester collectively exploring a narrowly focused historical subject from beginning (asking thoughtful historical questions and gathering information) to end (presenting your research findings to a public audience) in order to gain a better understanding of the methods and skills utilized in a rigorous historical process. In this case, the subject will be William Penn High School, High Point's traditionally black high school, with a particular focus on the experiences of the students, teachers, and administrators of that community during the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s. We will continue building a website documenting the history of that institution, and will work in conjunction with students from the school that currently sits on that site, the Penn-Griffin School for the Arts. You will work as both peers and mentors to these students as we collaboratively explore the history of the school and its community

Working with community partners is just one of the challenges inherent in laying out a syllabus for this course. Another major obstacle is the fact that while traditional classes are fully mapped out in advance, historical scholarship is more of a contingent process, which means that what we do in step 2 will depend in part on what we discover during step 1. Thus we may need to adjust on the fly depending on our findings over the course of the semester. For you, this potential slippery slope means that in order to succeed in this course, both in terms of learning and in terms of grades, you will need to offer two things above all: commitment and communication. Since the quality of the final product in this class, which will be a group project, will not be entirely under your control, I will be grading you in large part on your commitment to the success of the collective effort, which will depend in part on your maintaining constant communication with me and the rest of the class regarding your findings and the status of your work. We may have moments of turbulence over the course of the semester, but I also hope and believe that the class will prove to be even more engaging and edifying than many traditional classes.

Service Learning Designation

The University has designated this section of History 3901 as a Service Learning Course. Service learning is neither an internship nor volunteering- it is a pedagogical model that will deepen your understanding of the course material by exposing you first-hand to the ethical issues we discuss in class. You will perform service work that aids our local community and that service learning will advance your thinking about ethics and education. The students' commitment to service learning will include spending a minimum of 15 hours working with our community partners at the Penn-Griffin School of the Arts, conducting oral history interviews

with former community members at William Penn High School or other relevant community figures, and other work relevant to our project that is pre-approved by me as service learning work.

All students in the course are required to abide by the policies set forth by the HPU Service Learning Program in its Service Learning Code of Ethical and Professional Behavior and Partnership Agreement, which is posted on the course's Blackboard site. Failure to abide by these policies will be treated as a breach of the University's Honor Code and you may be referred to the Honor Council for punishment. You are expected to take the initiative to complete your required service hours and you are responsible for the penalties to your grade if you do not complete the hours.

Goals and Objectives:

Successful students in this class will:

- Improve their proficiency at the practical skills needed to produce good historical scholarship. These skills include critical thinking, research, analytical writing, and the production and delivery of public presentations.
- Develop and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the ethical responsibilities of historians to both their subjects and their audiences. Students will display their understanding through application of the theories of historical practice that we will explore in class readings and discussions to their service learning work in the community and to their final presentation.
- Develop and display a sophisticated understanding of the diverse challenges faced by the city of High Point through the desegregation process, and how those challenges relate to the broader patterns of how desegregation unfolded during the mid-twentieth century across the United States.
- Students will display their developing ethical and intellectual sophistication by incorporating a diversity of ideas gathered through texts, service experiences, and engagement with people from difference backgrounds into our final project.

Texts:

The assigned texts for this course will be predominantly readings that will help us to contextualize our subject within the histories of High Point, the process of school desegregation after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, and the cultures of African-American youth during the mid- twentieth century. The texts below are required will be available in the bookstore and through most online vendors and will also be placed on reserve in the Smith Library.

William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*

Alison Stewart, *First Class: The Legacy of Dunbar, America's First Black Public High School*

Book Club books: Each of you will join a class "book club" that will read ONE of the four books below. We will divide these assignments during the early part of the semester:

Nelba Patillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry*
Claude Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land*
Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

Additional reading assignments will come from articles and book excerpts that I will make available on our class Blackboard site, through Google Docs, or through online sources. Readings will be posted on our Facebook page every Friday for the following week.

Course Requirements

1. **Professional Engagement:** All students in this class are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and professional manner. Your professional engagement in this class will be assessed based on the following criteria:
 - a. **Attendance:** In order to succeed in this class, you must be present at nearly all of the class sessions and at all of your required service learning assignments. Habitual absenteeism by any student negatively impacts the entire community involved with this project. Consequently, I have a strict attendance policy in my class. You are allowed two class absences over the course of the semester. The university makes no distinction between excused and unexcused absences, and leaving class early or arriving more than 5 minutes late counts as an absence. After these two absences, you will receive a 1/3 of a grade penalty on your professional engagement grade for every additional absence. Attendance at all service learning sessions is mandatory unless you receive permission from me in advance. If this attendance policy will be a problem for you, come see me (once again, in advance). I will not consider explanations or requests for leniency after the fact.
 - b. **Participation:** Students are expected to be active participants in this course. This means you must complete all reading and service learning assignments in a timely and thorough fashion, and come to class prepared to engage your fellow classmates in a lively discussion. In addition, on a rotating basis students will be “on call,” which means they will produce questions for the day’s class discussions and assist me in leading those discussions. Your performance in the classroom will serve as the primary basis for your professional engagement grade.
 - c. **Professional Conduct:** I expect all students in this class to treat their classmates, me, and everyone else they encounter in the course of this class in a mature and respectful manner inside and out of the classroom. That means turning off all handheld electronic devices for the duration of our class periods; if students fail to do so, I will require everyone to drop such devices at the front of the room at the beginning of class.

Outside the classroom, professional conduct means treating all university and community members with respect. One particular area in which professionalism has emerged as a problem for students in previous classes is in communication through e-mails. When addressing class-related e-mails to me or to other men or women who are not your peers, please address the person by their title (Dr. Ringel, Dean Stoneking, Mr. or Ms. Smith) and be sure to spell their name correctly. You should follow this practice even if your correspondents do not. If the e-mail is requesting their assistance in writing or in person, please give them a reasonable amount of time to fulfill the request, recognizing that they have multiple other obligations beyond working with you. When dealing with me, requests that are not made in such a timely fashion will not be honored, absent exceptional circumstances. For more suggestions on e-mail etiquette in a classroom context, see <http://web.wellesley.edu/SocialComputing/Netiquette/netiquetteprofessor.html>.

Finally, professionalism means hustling to get your work completed in a timely and accomplished manner. All sorts of obstacles will emerge as you try to complete your work for this class; if you remain passive and wait for me or someone else to fix the problem for you, your work will not get done. You need to take the initiative, both by asking me for help and by figuring out ways to overcome these problems on your own. Again, communication is the key to success in this endeavor.

2. **Writing Assignments:** Students will have three writing assignments in this class.
 - a. The first assignment will be a weekly journal entry through which students will document weekly contributions to the group project and the ethical and substantive challenges they face as they attempt to apply the historical methods we are developing in the classroom to their practical work in the community. Journal entries will be due beginning the second week of the semester at a mutually agreed upon time.
 - b. The second assignment will be a 1250-1500-word review of a historical study of another community's process of desegregation during the mid-twentieth century.
 - c. The third assignment will be the student's individual contribution to the final group project. There may be opportunities for students to incorporate visual, audio, and technological elements into this assignment. More details will be forthcoming shortly.
3. **Presentations:** Each student will make three presentations in this class (all students will regularly present their work to the group on an informal basis, with those presentations counting as part of the professional engagement grade). During the week after fall break, each student will make a 10-15 minute presentation on her or his second writing assignment. During Book Group days, each group will collectively present the

memoir/autobiography they read to the class. At the end of the semester, each student will participate in the group presentation of the class project.

- 4. Research Requirements:** Each of you will be required to complete and transcribe at least two oral history interviews with alumni of William Penn High School. Additionally, you will be expected to find three artifacts (broadly defined- we can discuss definitions in class) that we can present on the website. You will share these artifacts on Google Docs or some other file sharing site, and also be responsible for working with the library staff to ensure these interviews and artifacts are uploaded onto our website.

5. Grading and Assessment:

The final grade will be computed from a weighted average of the individual grades you earn for your professional engagement, written assignments, and presentations. The course requirements will be weighted as follows in determining your final grade for the course:

Journals	10%
Community Study Essay	15%
Community Study Presentation	5%
Book Group Presentation	5%
Final Contribution to Group Project	25%
Contribution to Group Presentation	10%
Professional Engagement (includes research requirements)	30%

6. The Fine Print

- a. This syllabus is a road map for this class but it is not set in stone. I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus with proper advance notice given to you.
- b. You must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade.
- c. All papers are due at the times stated below. You must submit papers electronically. All responsibility for technical problems such as e-mails not received by me lies with you. Late papers will automatically be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late (the first day begins at the time they are due and weekend days count) unless you have written documentation from your advisor, an academic Dean, or from University medical services. Computer problems are **never** an acceptable excuse for late work.
- d. Students are responsible for checking their High Point University e-mail addresses regularly for information regarding this course. Failure to check this e-mail address is not an acceptable excuse for missing notifications about changes in assignments or deadlines for this class.
- e. If you have a question about a grade you receive on a paper, test, or for the course, please come to my office hours or make an appointment. I will not discuss grades over the phone or e-mail. However, I am happy to discuss questions about the course material via e-mail.
- f. Academic Honesty: The work you submit for this course should be completely and solely your own. This means that any and all quotations from the words and thoughts of others must be appropriately acknowledged in your assignments. To

do anything less is stealing. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please talk to me about them in advance. I will be happy to help you sort through any confusion. Any evidence that you have failed to follow these rules will be immediately and thoroughly investigated, and any violations of the honor code will be submitted to the Honor Court. Be forewarned: I consider cheating to be a very serious and utterly avoidable offense. Expect no leniency from me in cases of suspected cheating/plagiarism.

- g. Students with Disabilities: Students who require classroom accommodations due to a diagnosed disability must submit the appropriate documentation to Disability Support in the Office of Academic Development, 4th Floor Smith Library. A student's need for accommodations should be made at the beginning of a course because accommodations are not retroactive.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Intro/Theory/Resources

January 13 Course Introduction

January 15 What is Public History, and Why Should We Do It?
Readings: Robert Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects," *Public Historian* (Autumn 1978), I:1, pp. 16-28; Ronald J. Grele, "Whose History? Whose Public? What is the Goal of a Public Historian?" *Public Historian* (Winter 1981), pp. 40-48

Assignment: Choose your book club book

January 17 **Premiere of High Point: A Memoir of the African American Community**
Phillips 120, 5-7:30 pm

January 20 The Practice of Oral History
Readings: "What Makes Oral History Different" (Bb); "Cast Upon the Shore: Oral History and New Scholarship on Movements of the 1960s" (Bb)
Service Learning Orientation, 6 pm in Phillips 120

Asking Historical Questions/ Researching Sources (

January 22 **Pick your research/writing topic**

January 27 Oral History Workshop
Pick your community study book

Traces of the Trade Screening/Discussion, 7 pm, Wanek Center Theater

January 29 **Meet with me by this date to develop a research plan**

February 3 **Interviews should be scheduled by this date**

Analyzing Sources

February 5 **First round of book club reports**

February 10 **1st Individual Progress Meetings by this date; 1st interviews should be completed by this date**

February 12 **Discussion of 1st Oral History Interviews**

February 17 NO CLASS

February 19 **Draft of Community Study Papers Due**

February 24 **Second round of book club reports**

February 26 **First transcript completed by this date**

March 3 **2nd Individual Progress Meetings by this date; 2nd interviews should be completed by this date**

March 5 Mid-term Status Updates- What Have We Learned Thus Far?
Community Study paper due

March 10-12 NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK

Redefining Questions/ Organizing and Producing Interpretations

March 17 Preparations for Writing

March 19 **1st group of community study presentations**

March 24 **2nd group of community study presentations**

March 26 NO CLASS

March 31 **2nd transcripts due**

April 2 How to Draft Effectively

April 7 **3rd Individual Progress Meetings by this date; Drafts of final contributions due**

The Big Picture: The Final Project

April 9	Group Discussion of Drafts/ Brainstorming the Big Picture
April 14	How to Revise Effectively
April 16	NO CLASS
April 21	Making a Multimedia Presentation Assignment: Final Version of Project Contributions Due
April 23	Practicing Group Presentation
April 28	Refining Group Presentation
April 30- May 5	Final Presentation at Penn-Griffin; Date and Time TBA
May 5	Project Debrief, 4-7 pm