SHARING KNOWLEDGE: PARTICIPATORY ARCHIVES, COLLABORATIVE ORAL HISTORY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How can we mobilize the humanities to inspire social justice? This course introduces students to collaborative methods that encourage democratic participation among broad public audiences. Throughout the semester, students benefit from hands-on workshops, course sessions co-taught by community partners, guest lectures, and public talks.

The first half of the course provides an introduction to the modes of inquiry and methods by which historically marginalized communities become partners in research and not simply objects of study. We investigate indigenous research methods, participatory action research, collaborative ethnography and oral history, participatory archives, and interactive theater.

The second half of the course explores several case studies, focusing on Baltimore-based initiatives that enable marginalized populations to frame research questions, project design, and interpretation with the goal of generating social change. Leaders and participants involved with these projects will co-teach relevant class sessions.

Final projects draw on Johns Hopkins’ archival, museum, and library collections, focusing on documents related to activism at JHU and in Baltimore, from the 1950s through the present. Students will conduct original research and submit a proposal for a collaborative humanities project of their own that draws on and reinterprets these collections.

Throughout the course, students are introduced to interdisciplinary methods of research including oral history and ethnography, archival research, and performance ethnography. Students will leave the course prepared to develop and implement their own projects.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Participation: 20%
Leading Class Discussion: 10%
Reading Responses: 20%
Mid-Semester Paper (7 pages): 20%
Final Project (12 pages): 30%
Participation (20%): It is crucial that you come prepared to discuss the readings that are assigned. Students will be graded on their ability to apply concepts and develop thoughtful questions derived from the readings into class discussion when practitioners visit.

In-class presentation (10%): During the second week of class students will sign up to present during the semester. Each student must research a public humanities project that draws on the collaborative methods under discussion that week. The student presentation will draw on course readings to address the main strengths and weaknesses of the project being reviewed. The presentation serves as an entry point to class discussion.

Reading Responses (20%): Students will post at least 9 reading responses to Blackboard before class during the semester, summarizing the major points of the readings and raising questions for class discussion. The instructor will distribute a template in class.

Mid-semester paper (due Oct 11 by 7pm, 20%): Students will submit a 7-page paper that critically engages with two readings from the semester. This may be an in-depth analysis of a public humanities project or an extended analysis of a theme presented in the course, but it must draw on class readings and demonstrate proficiency in the class material as a whole.

Final Project (due Dec 10, by 7pm, 30%) Final projects will draw on the university archival and library collections. The process for completing this project is as follows:

Step 1: Select an Archival, Museum, or Rare Book Collection. The instructor will identify several archival and library collections at Johns Hopkins University, focusing on documents related to student activism at JHU and social justice in Baltimore more broadly, from the 1950s through the present. Students may choose one of these collections or propose one of their own. (Deadline: Oct 18.)

Step 2: Conduct Research and Submit a Short Description: Students will conduct research in their chosen collection and submit a brief description of their research, no more than one page, outlining their major findings. (Deadline: Nov 15.)

Step 3: Final Paper due Dec 10 (12 pages): Submit an in-depth proposal for a collaborative public humanities project of your own making based on your chosen archival collection. The criteria for evaluating this assignment is 1) how actively and closely you engage with the reading materials and class discussions in your project proposal, 2) the quality of your research, and 3) how creatively you can build on and synthesize course material in the creation of your own collaborative project.

Course Policies / Expectations

The JHU Statement on Academic Ethics: “The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitation academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you
witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board Web site (http://ethics.jhu.edu) for more information. Any work you do for this class must be your own or part of an explicitly allowed collaboration (these will be spelled out in writing). You must acknowledge any help you receive (from published sources, the Internet, experts you interview, classmates etc.) in proper form (notes, bibliography). You many not reuse work from another class to fulfill a requirement without explicit authorization from the instructor. Unethical behavior may result in failure of an assignment, failure for the course and/or, where appropriate, reporting to the university authorities.

**Laptops and electric devices:** The use of laptops, phones, or tablets will be allowed until such time that they disrupt our collective work.

**Office Hours:** By appointment via email. I encourage you to visit me to discuss our class, your assignments, or related matters.

**Accommodation:** If you need any accommodations to be able to participate in this class and complete assignments, please contact the instructor privately as soon as possible. Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu. See also the website below: http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/disabilities/

**Names and Pronouns:** The roster generated through our Student Information System (SIS) has a field for “Preferred Names.” If you use a name that is different from your legal name, please introduce yourself to the instructors by that name so that we can adjust our records. We also suggest that you follow the link below to make sure that your Preferred Name is included in future SIS Rosters. In introducing yourself please also let us know your preferred pronouns. Please do not hesitate to correct us if we use an incorrect gender pronoun for you. See also the below guide on name changes and privacy in the university computer systems: http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/lgbtq/trans-resources/name/

**SCHEDULE**

**Part One: Foundations**

**Week One / Sept 5: Introductions**

*Introductions and community-based learning*

Introductions and in-class reading.

Dr. Shawntay Stocks, JHU Center for Social Concern, will discuss community-based learning and cultural competence.
Week Two / Sept 12: Methods and Overviews
Introduction to the theory and methods inspiring a “public turn” in the academy


Optional Video:
Seth Moglen, “Bethlehem: American Utopia, American Tragedy,” about Lehigh University’s Southside Initiative in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyT5W15HX54

>>OPTIONAL SPEAKER SERIES: Prof. Lawrence Brown, Sept. 17 noon

Week Three / Sept 19: Collaborative Oral History and Ethnography
What are the politics of storytelling? How do social movements wield narrative? Brief oral history training.


Week Four / Sept 27: Decolonizing Methodologies and Indigenous Research
Counter-practices of research within both Western critiques of Western knowledge and global indigenous movements. How is academic research implicated in imperialism?

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (1999)
**Week Five / Oct 3: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis**

Functioning as a critique of anthropology’s “colonial gaze,” performance ethnography upholds an ethos of social responsibility toward ethnographic informants.


**Week Six / Oct 10: The Use and Abuse of Participatory Action Research**

Exploration of participatory action research, which begins with assumption that co-researchers hold unique knowledge invaluable to framing research questions, project design, and interpretation.


**>>OPTIONAL SPEAKER SERIES: Brett Stoudt, Oct. 11 noon**

**Week Seven / Oct 17: The Archive, Power, and the Production of History**

Introduction to archival research. Discussion of the “archive,” historical narratives, and power. Focus on historical relationship between Johns Hopkins University and Baltimore.


Part Two: Case Studies & Praxis

>>> OPTIMAL SPEAKER SERIES: Stéphane Martelly OCT 23 noon, Montreal Life Stories

Week Eight / Oct 24: Montreal Life Stories, Oral History, and “Sharing Authority”
We focus on an oral history project exploring Montrealers’ experiences and memories of mass violence and displacement. Through Montreal Life Stories, a team of university and community-based researchers recorded life story interviews with more than 500 Montreal residents and integrated them into the life of the city.


Week Nine / Oct 31: Baltimore Theater Action Group and Participatory Theater
A “theater of the oppressed” attempts to bring spectators into an active role with the drama, upending typical distinctions between actor and spectator.

>>Course meeting co-taught by the Baltimore Theater Action Group, a collective of artist educators, artists, activists, students and other Baltimore community members who promote dialogue, encourage social action, foster personal transformation, and perform participatory theater. Many members trained extensively with Augusto Boal, Living Stage Theatre Company.


Week Ten / Nov 7: Theater Action Group and Participatory Theater PART 2
A “theater of the oppressed” attempts to bring spectators into an active role with the drama, upending typical distinctions between actor and spectator.

>>Course meeting co-taught by the Baltimore Theater Action Group
Readings TBA

**Week Eleven / Nov 14: Preserve the Baltimore Uprising and Participatory Archives**

*Discussion of participatory archives: an organization, site or collection in which people other than the archives professionals contribute knowledge or resources resulting in increased understanding about archival materials.*

>>Course meeting co-taught by Preserve the Baltimore Uprising, a digital repository that seeks to preserve and make accessible original content that was captured and created by community members, grassroots organizations, and witnesses to the protests that followed the death of Freddie Gray on April 19, 2015. Guest instructors: **Tawanda Jones and Joe Tropea.**


Tawanda Jones Interview on Preserve the Baltimore Uprising: [http://baltimoreuprising2015.org/files/original/9e90eb8957cc78c85d8ca8b44aa5ef7e.mp3](http://baltimoreuprising2015.org/files/original/9e90eb8957cc78c85d8ca8b44aa5ef7e.mp3)

**>>OPTIONAL SPEAKER SERIES: Nicole King, Nov 20 at noon**

**Week Twelve / Nov 21: the Peabody Ballroom Experience and Queer Public History**

*The Peabody Ballroom Experience is a collaboration between Johns Hopkins University and Baltimore’s ballroom community, a performance-based culture comprised primarily of queer and trans people of color.*

>>Course meeting co-taught by Londyn Mugler, an Icon in the ballroom scene, Peabody Ballroom Experience advisory committee member, and part of the Baltimore City Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Commission


Week Thirteen / Dec 5: Project Presentations and Workshop

Readings TBA