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BOOK REVIEWS

Julia Brock and Evan Faulkenberry, eds. Teaching Public History

Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2023. 280 pp.

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Reading the new book *Teaching Public History*, edited by Julia Brock and Evan Faulkenberry, I was struck by how many times *reflect* is used (a quick keyword search turns up more than two hundred appearances). This is apt for a volume that is as much about what it *feels* like to teach a public history class as it is about *how* to teach a public history class.

While the audience for this book is most likely other instructors of public history, the self-reflection herein could be useful across a range of readers. This range may include self-taught practitioners in the public history field beginning their own teaching journey, anyone curious about what field-specific training can look like in public history, or academic scholars evaluating candidates for admission, hire, or tenure who are unfamiliar with the substance of these courses. Therefore, this book, while not summarizing or assessing the state of the field, nor claiming to, presents a useful and novel snapshot of the ever-changing practice of teaching public history at this moment in time.

The eleven essays that make up this collection represent a broad array of scholars and practitioners who teach classes in public history at the collegiate and graduate level. While many of the contributors write about teaching an introductory course in the subject, others offer insight based on developing and teaching new classes created to complement particular research projects or university initiatives. It is particularly insightful to see how public history is situated within the universities represented here. Some of the contributors teach in degree-granting public history departments that have existed for generations, others exist in related departments. Some of the undergraduate public history courses are mandatory for all history majors, other courses are electives; some are undergraduate courses, others are taught at the graduate level.

A diverse variety of identities and perspectives among the writers also strengthens the book. For example, Torren Gatson writes about identifying as African American and teaching public history to students who primarily identify as White, and Romeo Guzmán shares his experience teaching a public history course about fútbol at a

Hispanic-serving institution. Another strength of this book is that most of the essays are twenty or fewer pages, making for quick, engaging reading.

But while these differences, along with a variety in classroom outcomes, are on display here, taking the essay collection approach as this book does also helps to reveal some commonalities across the field, as editors Brock and Faulkenberry note in their introduction. For example, the vast majority of these instructors incorporate collaborations with local public history institutions and initiatives into their syllabus and assignments, demonstrating the high value the field places on hands-on experience. These essays also recount a range of successes and failures in the completion of these hands-on projects, showcasing how difficult such experience-based learning can be to teach and facilitate.

For instance, contributor and editor Evan Faulkenberry details his partnership with a local historical society, but also how he "failed to appreciate the burden we placed on student groups to drive their own cars, pay for gas," and in so doing "sowed some indifference, and maybe even some antipathy, into the project." Thomas Cauvin writes about guest lecturers prompting subsequent class discussions about the role of money in gaining hands-on experience, raising topics like unpaid internships, graduate school costs, and entry-level salaries. He admits this reaction to his course design caught him off guard. "I conducted some online research and shared what I found with my students," he shares, "but I wished I had more time to prepare."

These anecdotes are not the only example in the volume where instructors face the fact that the public history classroom can never be fully separate from the realities of the students' lives, and the instructor's. Many of these essays reflect classroom semesters that took place over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly curtailed what was possible, particularly in the realm of experience-based learning. Contributors shared their attempts to adapt their syllabi and assignments to a remote-work model, while managing their own stress and fear. Some, like Abigail Gautreau, write vulnerably about an unexpected illness resulting in a canceled class, while Kristen Baldwin Deathridge writes about her frustrations shifting a class she's taught before to an online model, in the wake of the previous semester being an exhausting experience in remote instruction, and other difficulties of teaching amid a global crisis. Given that one oft-stated goal of high-quality public history is to use the past to foster empathy, the acknowledgment here of moments of instructor struggle, and extending grace to students attempting to manage a global crisis, feels apt. After all, this book is about teaching public history, not teaching public history perfectly.

Amid these broader meditations and zoomed-out insights, however, there is a great deal of practical advice detailed here, particularly in structuring and managing hands-on projects and assignments, and detailing what readings have been assigned and why (notably, five of the eleven essays mention assigning Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* [1995]). Lindsey Passenger Wieck and Rebecca S. Wingo's conversational, energetic detailing of their system of swapping teaching plans and co-managing a dynamic online syllabus made the method sound well worth trying, and even made summer syllabus prep sound downright fun (while raising the compelling question: why aren't academic syllabi traditionally peer-reviewed in the first place?).

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Abigail Gautreau's essay is organized around individual class dates, and lists out each assigned reading and field trip taken, along with a self-assessment of what worked well and what didn't, and her thoughts on why, for anyone tasked with teaching a public history course for the first time, this would be an excellent template from which to build. Jennifer Dickey details how she condenses a fifteen-week introductory course into a seven-week version, that is then paired with a similarly shortened museum studies introductory course. Anyone seeking to engage a similar model for a shortened semester, or pitch a collaboration between a history department and museum studies program, could learn a great deal from how Dickey negotiates just "seven weeks of heaven."

Overall, this book contributes much to a variety of fields. Obviously, it is useful for those already studying and teaching public history, or who will be. It also harmonizes nicely with readings in the history of postsecondary instruction, notably Jonathan Zimmerman's *The Amateur Hour: A History of College Teaching in America* (2020). Stemming from works such as Craig Wilder's *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (2013), many universities are engaging the tools of public history as they grapple with their own institutional ties to enslavement and Indigenous dispossession. The "town and gown" contradictions and frictions that public history instructors have long had to contend with as they partner with local institutions (especially as detailed here in Jim McGrath's essay on "Digital Restorative Justice in the Public History Classroom") can be insightful for any scholar, librarian, or administrator engaging restorative history approaches, or trying to build a case for why they should. *Teaching Public History* doesn't just *use* the word *reflect* often; it often *is* a reflection of the state of public history teaching today: collaborative, thoughtful, experience-based, containing multitudes, and doing quite a lot with the space it's given.

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Annie Abrams. Shortchanged: How Advanced Placement Cheats Students

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In *Shortchanged: How Advanced Placement Cheats Students*, education scholar Annie Abrams argues that the Advanced Placement (AP) program has strayed far from its architects' intentions, and that the current version harms students, teachers, and our