

History 490: American Places

Course Meetings: 224 CCC 4:30-7:00pm Wednesdays
Office Hours: MWF 1-2pm and Tuesdays 11am-2pm
473 CCC

UWSP – History Department
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Welcome to “American Places,” a capstone course in the History major. Each semester, the department offers a unique course that both draws upon students’ previous coursework and points them ahead to what they can do with their degree after graduation. “American Places” builds upon previous courses in American history and introduces students to the world of historic preservation.

When most people think of historic preservation, they tend to think about saving old mansions, but in fact there is much more to it than that. In Wisconsin alone, there are more than 2000 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Only a handful are Victorian mansions. Old factories, train stations, churches, and much, much more make up the list. While a diverse set, these properties are bound together by one simple fact: somebody valued the place enough to argue for its significance.

Students will do the same in this course. The large research project at the heart of “American Places” is a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Students will pick a place they think should be listed and then do the research and writing that comprise a nomination.

Before we delve into the writing of nominations, though, we need to understand how the National Register came to be and how it can be used today. The first six weeks of class, “Placing Historic Preservation,” use three books for that investigation. The short story is that “urban renewal” projects of the mid-twentieth century, which tended to be large construction projects such as highways and convention centers, often threatened existing neighborhoods. *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts in a Southwestern City* and *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn* tell the stories of how two cities embraced historic preservation in that context (although in very different ways). *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities* takes us to St. Louis, where historians and local activists are using historic preservation to not just save buildings, but to preserve communities, since listing on the National Register comes with significant tax credits that can help property owners keep their buildings in good repair.

With those case studies behind us, we will then turn to writing a nomination ourselves in a unit called “The National Register of Historic Places – Preparing a Nomination.” As stipulated in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, for a property to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, its nomination must be reviewed by a State Historic Preservation Review Board. (I happen to serve on Wisconsin’s board.) Then, the State Historic Preservation Officer either approves or denies the board’s recommendation. If the officer sees merit in the nomination, he or she sends it on to the National Park Service for final approval and listing in the National Register. In our course, we will use the actual forms and follow a similar process.

The last unit, “The National Register of Historic Places – Presenting a Nomination,” will include an oral presentation and poster.

Once we get going in the semester, students will come to see my perspective quite clearly. I champion historic preservation, but know that without an intentional emphasis on the history of traditionally marginalized people, it will not reflect the full richness of American history. Many of our conversations will be driven by this concern. Similarly, I also know that historic preservation tends toward a narrow focus on the buildings themselves, excluding the natural environment in which they necessarily rely. I believe that far too often Americans tend to see the “built environment” as distinct from the “natural environment”—a conceptual error with negative real world implications. The need to correct this thinking within historic preservation will motivate our conversations, too.

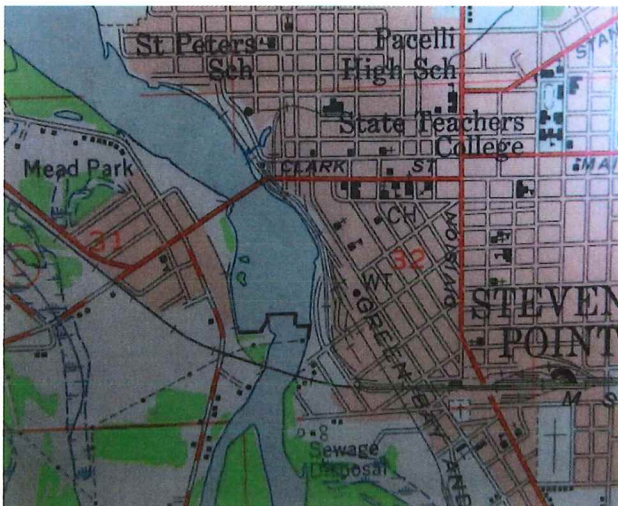
Weekly Public Market Scene, Stevens Point, Wis.



Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will:

- complete a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places that integrates understanding of American history, historical research methods, written communication, and oral communication.
- further develop research, writing, and oral communication skills necessary for a successful career in a professional field.



Office Hours: Please drop by the office. I set aside office hours so that I have the chance to talk with students one-on-one. In fact, I have expanded my office hours to make it more possible to visit. During those times (MWF 1-2pm and Tuesday 11am-2pm 473 CCC), I do not have any other commitments. My only commitment is to speak with my students. *You do not need an appointment.*

Given the individual character of your project this semester, I fully expect you to drop by the office, perhaps several times. Talking one-on-one is an efficient way to address the specific questions, concerns, or dilemmas of your project.

Expectations: I assume you have taken History 300 and can do basic historical research. I also assume you can dedicate serious time to the course. If you have doubts about your time and abilities, it is best to talk with me at the very beginning of the semester.

Required Readings: For our common readings, this class requires access to D2L (where part of our required reading is found), access to the internet (we'll use a number of websites), and three books:

Andrew Hurley, *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010)

Lydia Otero, *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010)

Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Recommended Readings: I expect students to have basic research skills, in particular: locating useful documents; understanding secondary literature; organizing research notes; using proper citation formats; and writing clearly. Most of us, including myself, need frequent fine tuning of these skills, so it is a good idea to keep some guidebooks within close reach. I highly recommend the ones below.

Wayne Booth, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

William Zinsser, *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction* (New York: Harper, 2016).

William Cronon, "How to Conduct Historical Research"

<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>

Grading: I use a traditional point system. Each of the assignments listed here are also listed on the Schedule in red. Each assignment also has a full description, which I call the "assignment sheet," available in D2L.

La Calle Reading Assignment #1 (10 points)

La Calle Reading Assignment #2 (10 points)

Inventing Brownstone Brooklyn Reading Assignment #1 (10 points)

Inventing Brownstone Brooklyn Reading Assignment #2 (10 points)

Beyond Preservation Reading Assignment #1 (10 points)

Beyond Preservation Reading Assignment #2 (10 points)

National Register Reading Assignment (10 points)

Nomination Prospectus (20 points)

Rough Draft Nomination (20 points)

Presentation (20 points)

Poster (20 points)

Final Nomination (50 points)

TOTAL = 200 points

Equity of Educational Access: If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.

Professional Development: Historic preservation might very well become a career path for some students in this course. If you are still enjoying “American Places” after a few weeks in, then visit the American Historical Association webpage on careers in historic preservation: <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/career-resources/careers-for-students-of-history/historians-in-historic-preservation>

Students interested in pursuing advanced study in historic preservation, or public history more broadly, should become familiar with Master’s programs in the field. A good place to start is the UW – Eau Claire history department, which offers a Master’s in Public History:

<http://www.uwec.edu/History/academics/PublicHistory.htm>

This course does require students to communicate in professional ways—through the written nomination, presentation, and poster—and also prepares students for the College of Letters and Sciences Undergraduate Research Symposium. There, students get more practice communicating in a professional setting. As your instructor for this course, I am more than happy to serve as your faculty mentor for your entry. Here’s all the info: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cols/Pages/ResearchSymposium/default.aspx>

One last comment regarding professional development: historic preservation is not a field only for historians, but includes real estate developers, community activists, urban planners, and entrepreneurs, among other professionals. Consider this course good background for any career in public life you may seek.

Course Policies: During the class, cell phones and other electronic devices are prohibited. If you are a parent or are otherwise obligated to be available to your family via cell phone, then please discuss that situation with me, so I know that you have a good reason for keeping your phone turned on.

The prohibition of electronics also extends to tablets and laptop computers (unless approved by the Disability Services Office). While laptops are great aides in studying, the focus in class is on class, not the computer screen. Further, the ability to take notes longhand is actually an important skill to develop, one that will be useful in any career you choose. If you do prefer to have your notes in a computer file, you will find that typing them from your handwritten notes will aid you greatly in digesting the material.

For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. As an instructor deeply concerned with fairness in the classroom, I pursue each and every case of plagiarism and cheating. Please note that turnitin.com is used for the essay assignments.

Note: The syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced in class may be necessary.

Schedule

Placing Historic Preservation

Week 1
Sept 7th

La Calle Reading Assignment 1 Due

Required Readings:

- Dolores Hayden, “The Sense of Place and the Politics of Place” (*D2L*)
- “Introduction,” “Chapter 1: La Calle, the Tucsonense Downtown,” and “Chapter 2: Asserting Economic and Spatial Dominance” in *La Calle*

Class Discussion: Summary; Scholarly Concepts; Sources

Week 2
Sept 14th

La Calle Reading Assignment 2 Due

Required Readings:

- “Chapter 3: Selling Tucson,” “Chapter 4: The Politics of Belonging and Exclusion,” “Chapter 5: Reaffirming Order,” “Chapter 6: The La Placita Committee,” and “Chapter 7: The Politics of Memory,” in *La Calle*

Class Discussion: Summary, Scholarly Concepts, Sources

Week 3
Sept 21st

Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn Reading Assignment 1 Due

Required Readings:

- “Introduction,” “Chapter 1: Urban Wilderness,” “Chapter 2: Concord Village,” and “Chapter 3: The Middle Cityscape of Brooklyn Heights,” in *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*

Class Discussion: Summary, Scholarly Concepts, Sources

Week 4
Sept 28th

Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn Reading Assignment 2 Due

Required Readings:

- “Chapter 4: The Two Machines in the Garden,” “Chapter 5: The Highway in the Garden and the Literature of Gentrification,” “Chapter 6: Inventing Brownstone Brooklyn,” and “Chapter 7: The Neighborhood Movement,” in *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*

Class Discussion: Summary, Scholarly Concepts, Sources

Strongly Recommended: Students should begin looking at the assignments for the next unit, “National Register of Historic Places – Preparing a Nomination.” In particular, students should start considering which place in the United States they would like to research. Meetings with the professor during office hours in Weeks 4, 5, and 6 will be highly beneficial for selecting a good research topic.

Week 5 Oct 5th	<p style="text-align: right;">Beyond Preservation Reading Assignment 1 Due</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Preface,” “Chapter 1: Preservation in the Inner City,” “Chapter 2: Taking It to the Streets,” “Chapter 3: An Experiment in North St. Louis” in <i>Beyond Preservation</i> • National Register of Historic Places, https://www.nps.gov/nr/ (skim for familiarity) <p>Class Discussion: Summary; Scholarly Concepts; Sources</p>
Week 6 Oct 12th	<p style="text-align: right;">Beyond Preservation Reading Assignment 2 Due</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Chapter 4: History that Matters,” “Chapter 5: Making a Place for Nature,” “Chapter 6: Scholars in the Asphalt Jungle,” “Conclusion: An Agenda for Urban Preservation” in <i>Beyond Preservation</i> <p>Class Discussion: Summary; Scholarly Concepts; Sources</p>
The National Register of Historic Places – Preparing a Nomination	
Week 7 Oct 19th	<p style="text-align: right;">National Register Reading Assignment Due Nomination Prospectus Due</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura Pulido, et al, <i>A People’s Guide to Los Angeles</i> (D2L) • National Register of Historic Places, https://www.nps.gov/nr/ • Wisconsin Historical Society, “National and State Register of Historic Places,” http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963805&dsRecordDetails=R:CS2836 • Course Discussion Summary (D2L) <p>Recommended Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How to Conduct Historical Research” http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm • “From Problems to Sources” (D2L) • “Chicago Manual of Style,” http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html <p>Class Discussion: sign up for individual meetings in Week 8 or 9</p>
Week 8 Oct 26th	Individual Meetings with Professor (scheduled for during class time; no regular class)
Week 9 Nov 2nd	Individual Meetings with Professor (scheduled for during class time; no regular class)
Week 10 Nov 9th	Film (viewed in class) and Discussion
Week 11 Nov 16th	<p style="text-align: right;">Rough Draft Due</p> <p>Draft Workshop</p> <p>Class Discussion: read and discuss drafts; sign up for presentation times in Weeks 12, 13, or 14</p>

National Register of Historic Places – Presenting a Nomination		
Week 12	Thanksgiving – No Class	
Week 13 Nov 30th	Presentations of National Register Nominations	Presentation Due
Week 14 Dec 7th	Presentations of National Register Nominations	Presentation Due
Week 15 Dec 14th	Presentations of National Register Nominations	Presentation Due Poster Due
Final Nomination Draft Due 2:30pm Thursday December 22nd in D2L		