

**Public History Workshop: International Student Biography**  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
HISTORY 401 (001): spring 2026, 3 credits



*Bodunde Motoni of Nigeria, December 1994. Photo by Lillian Trager: UW Digital Collections.*

**MEETINGS:**

Wednesdays, 8:50-10:45 (5257 Humanities Building)

**INSTRUCTOR:**

Paul Grant - [pgrant@wisc.edu](mailto:pgrant@wisc.edu) 5212 Humanities Building - office hours: Tuesdays, 11-1 and by appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Public History is a way of thinking about the historian's craft, with an emphasis on the human outcomes of our research. This course explores public history through the lens of the international student experience. We will look at the history of the UW, international student organizations, and the drama of return: what happens when students re-encounter their homelands. By studying history in this way, you will grow better at understanding human experience in its global, historical contexts.

**Canvas Course URL:** <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/498747>

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## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Dates indicate assignments due.

### **Week 1: Introduction to Public History**

Meeting: January 21

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 1

By next week: read Nnedi Okorafor, *Binti* (entire)

### **Week 2: Understanding International Students**

Meeting: January 28

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 4

By next week: read Chinua Achebe, *No Longer At Ease* (roughly first half)

### **Week 3: Understanding the University of Wisconsin**

Meeting: February 4

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 5

Group project: Wikipedia

By next week: read Chinua Achebe, *No Longer At Ease* (to end)

### **Week 4: Understanding Memory**

Meeting: February 11

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 9

Group project: interviewing each other.

### **Week 5: Understanding Biography**

Meeting: February 18

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 6

### **Week 6: Understanding Narrative**

Meeting: February 25

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 10

### **Week 7: Presentation 1: Posters**

Meeting: March 4

Present a one-slide narrative of an international alum's life.

By 3/8: submit slide plus presentation script(s).

### **Week 8: Museums**

Meeting: March 11

Field Trip Workshop: on-campus museum, details to be announced.

**Week 9: Monuments**

Meeting: March 18

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 13

Field Trip Workshop: Bascom Hill Historic District

**Week 10: Presentation 2: Interviews**

Meeting: March 25

Present on your interview with an international alum. Include at least one audio clip embedded in PowerPoint; include your own explanation and analysis.

By 3/29: submit interview write-up, including audio.

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**No Meeting April 1 (Spring Break)**

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**Week 11: International Students and Religion**

Meeting: April 8

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 14

**Week 12: International Students and Immigration**

Meeting: April 15

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 16

By 4/21: send 2-3 PowerPoint slides to Dr. Grant for final presentation.

**Week 13: Presentation 3: Student Organizations**

Meeting: April 22

Portfolio presentations, including PowerPoint (2-3 slides).

**Week 14: International Students and Homeland Conflict**

Meeting: April 29

Group debriefing

In-class reading and workshop: Cauvin, chapter 17

By 5/5: submit student organization historical portfolio

**EXAM WEEK (No exam)**

Due dates:

5/8: Exit interviews (individually, with Dr. Grant)

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## COURSE RULES AND GUIDELINES

### This course in UW-Madison context:

**Catalog Description.** Introduction to the practice of public history. Public historians ground their work in rigorous, academic research with the goal of presenting history in a collaborative and publicly focused manner. These projects come in many forms including exhibits, walking tours, podcasts, documentaries, web projects, and place-based interpretation, to name a few. Learn how academic history gets presented to the public, not only by reading about public history, but by doing it.

**Requisites.** *History 201 or 3 credits in History or History of Science.*

**Course Designations and Attributes.** *Level – Advanced; L&S Credit - Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S.*

**Instructional Modality.** Live in classroom. Attendance required.

**Credits.** This is a 3-credit course. The credit standard is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instruction, student meeting times during my office hours, reading, writing, library excursions, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a capstone course for the history certificate, this seminar aims to develop you as a future public intellectual—to send you out into the world competent to apply the historian's craft to your public life.

### Content Knowledge:

- The diverse fields of public history.
- The history of the University of Wisconsin, mainly in the twentieth century.
- The history of international students and their lives upon return.
- Relationship between global forces and local particularities in all of the above.

### Skills:

- Practical training in oral interviews.
- Greater skill at public presentation.
- Greater cross-cultural skills.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

As noted in the Course Guide, this course is using an Engage eText. Your eText(s) is/are available from the Engage tool in your Canvas course page. We will be using *Public History: A Textbook of Practice* (Second Edition) by Thomas Cauvin.

The cost of this eText (plus tax) will be bundled into your tuition. You do not need to purchase this eText from the publisher, however, if you wish to [opt-out](#) of using the eText, please contact me at [pgrant@wisc.edu](mailto:pgrant@wisc.edu) before doing so. If you have already purchased this eText (**must** be the same edition) in a prior course, you will not need to opt-out.

To access your eText(s) and learn more about Engage, follow these steps:

1. In the navigation menu on the left side of your Canvas course, click on **Engage eText**.

2. Select **Launch Unizin Engage** to open the Engage reading platform and access your eText.
3. If you'd like to access the Help menu, do the following:
  - a. Select the **Additional Options** (three vertical dots) icon in the upper right corner of the reader.
  - b. Locate the **Help and Feedback** section.
  - c. Choose **RedShelf Solve (FAQs)** for documentation and how-to's, **Accessibility Support** for assistance with accessibility, or **Submit a Ticket** to submit a support request to RedShelf.

Please familiarize yourself with the Engage platform before the first day of class. Additional resources can be found in the [Unizin eReader User Guide](#) and in the [UW-Madison KnowledgeBase](#). You will be able to [print](#) the eText if needed (there is no cost to print besides the cost of printing itself), via the Engage tool. A Unizin-branded watermark will appear on the pages.

If you wish to request an accessible version of the eText, please contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. More information is available [here](#).

**Additionally, students will read:**

- Nnedi Okorafor, *Binti* (2015)
- Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* (1960)

These two works of fiction—one speculative and involving interstellar travel and interspecies conflict will be assessed in a video essay assignment in week 4.

**ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING SCALE**

Grades are assigned on the basis of accumulation of points over the course of the term (up to 100; see below). In theory, each student could get an A (or could fail).

**Grading scale:**

Fewer than 60 points = F; 60-70 = D; 70-77 = C; 78-82 = BC; 83-87 = B; 88-92 = AB; 93 or greater = A

**Workshops:** 30%

<u>Components</u> (in-class assignments, no external prep needed):	
Thirteen instances, each worth two points:	26%
Group debriefing (discussion on last day of class)	2%
Exit interview (office hours, exam week):	2%

**Productions:** 40%

<u>Components</u>	
Video essay responses to the Okorafor and Achebe novels (due 2/15):	10%
Poster (actually a projector slide) on a 20 <sup>th</sup> century international alum (3/8):	10%
Interview (including write-up) conversation with international alum (3/29):	10%
Portfolio of an international student organization's history (5/3):	10%

**Oral Communication:** 30%

<u>Components:</u>	
Attendance and participation:	15%
Weekly seminar attendance: 14 instances, each worth 1%:	14%
Week two office visit with Dr. Grant	1%
Three presentations before the class:	15%

Present your interview with an international alum:	5%
Present your poster on an international student:	5%
Present your historical archive of a student organization:	5%

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS:

### Reading

You will read a textbook and two novels. In addition, you will do whatever external reading is needed to understand the people with whom you are in conversation.

### Writing

In two different projects, you will research an international alum's life, and organize it for presentation: a poster summarizing the student's experience in Madison and upon return, and an interview with a living alum.

### Research Planning

You will take initiative to identify a student organization whose members might appreciate a being given an organized archive and historical outline: a portfolio you can place with members for their own use.

### Workshops

You will work over historiographical problems via in-class workshops. These are intended to generate conversation as we puzzle over methodological and ethical questions in public history.

### Discussion

You will regularly articulate your ideas in front of others:

- Group process: part of your grade comes from your work at thoughtful interaction with your classmates, both written (peer reviews) and spoken (including thoughtful listening).
- Public speaking: each student will present multiple times before the class.
- Research conferences: twice during the semester, students will have individual conferences with Dr. Grant on their plans: once in week two, and once during exam week to ascertain next steps, whether in historical research or career.

## ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES

**Canvas.** Many, but not all, assignments are disseminated and graded in Canvas (see URL above). Do not plan your work according to the due dates in Canvas; most assignments will require offline work (such as interviews and collaboration with student organizations).

**Classroom Technology.** You should bring a computer to class. If you do not have one, you should check out a loaner from the library. At the same time, computers of any variety should remain closed unless we are working together. That is: take notes on paper.

**Attendance.** Aside from the unpredictable, students are expected to commit to full attendance and participation. To miss a single session is to miss an entire week; if

**Generative Artificial Intelligence.** Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot have, at best, only moderate value for the creation of historical knowledge. At best, they can facilitate presentation of that knowledge. Your task is to learn to tell the difference.

In this course, you will sharpen your skills as a researcher and writer, in particular by learning to pose compelling research questions and locate high-quality, reliable sources. By relying on AI tools too early in the research process, you short-circuit your ability to think creatively and expansively about which problems really interest you.

For these reasons, this course will adopt the following policy on generative AI:

- Distrust and Verify. Some international students come from countries whose history is largely controlled, on the internet (and thus within the datasets generative AI models are trained on), by non-natives. Thus, all AI-generated content is to be treated as hostile to the lives of the students you are working with.
- Do the reading. This is hard work, and the rewards are not immediately apparent. The goal of these assignments is to build up your toolkit of research and analytical strategies, not to produce polished essays. Substituting AI for your own thinking would make these assignments superfluous.
- Revision. you are permitted to use AI tools such as Grammarly to polish your language after writing a draft.

**History Lab.** The History Lab is the Department of History's in-house writing center. Our graduate student staff offer expert, one-on-one advising on your History projects, both in-person and virtually. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, or revising your drafts—the History Lab staff will help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Visit our [website](#) to schedule an appointment with a Lab TA, or to find tips, guides, and other resources for all of your writing assignments.

**Academic Integrity.** By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary [sanctions](#) include, but are not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

**Late Work.** All assignments are due on the day indicated above (sometimes on paper, and sometimes online). All work submitted late without prior arrangement will receive a five-point grade reduction each day (e.g., an 85% grade would become an 80% after one day late).