

PUBLIC HUMANITIES

PhD course (7, 5 HP), offered in collaboration between the departments of History and History of Science and Ideas, Uppsala University autumn 2023 – spring 2024.

The course is open for PhD candidates in the humanities and aimed in particular at those working on historical topics.

The course starts in October 2023 and ends in April 2024. It consists of five seminars (Zoom) and two workshops (on site). As a part of the examination, students will do a small study of public outreach and will present it both orally and in written form at the final seminar.

A short version of the course (3 HP) will also be offered (the seminars and the workshops, minus the paper on a case of public outreach, and a slightly shorter reading list).

Last day of registration is 1 September 2023. It is done through email to either Maria Ågren (Maria.Agren@hist.uu.se) or Sven Widmalm (Sven.Widmalm@idehist.uu.se). No more than 15 students will be accepted.

Aim

The course will acquaint students with ongoing discussions concerning the interface between academic research in arts and humanities and the general public. It will raise questions concerning the social responsibility of scholars and give participants an opportunity to develop their communicative skills in relation to scholarly issues.

The course will contribute to the participants' ability to reach the following goals proscribed in the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100):

- demonstrate the capacity to contribute to social development and support the learning of others both through research and education and in some other qualified professional capacity
- demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics, and
- demonstrate specialised insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used

Learning goals

The students should

- be able to account for central concepts like “linear model”, “impact” (*samverkan*), “co-production”, “story-telling”, expertise and “shared authority”, including how they are used in academic contexts as well as by stakeholders;

- be able to explain how the concepts “public humanities” and “public history” are used in Anglo-American contexts and relate them to “impact” (*samverkan*) as well as the Swedish concept “the third task” (*tredje uppgiften*);
- be able to give accounts of concrete examples of public humanities or public history;
- be able to give accounts of some problematic uses of history;
- have done concrete work on a few cases of public outreach.

Schedule

NB Dates may be subject to minor modification

Seminar 1

18 October, 9.30-12.00

Sven Widmalm, professor, Uppsala University

Introduction

Sven Widmalm gives an introductory lecture on how the utility and application of research have been understood historically. The concept co-production, used by Finn & Smith, will be discussed from a broader perspective. Course readings and cases of public outreach that lend themselves to study objects for the examination are presented.

Readings for seminar 1:

Gardner & Hamilton, “Introduction”, in *Oxford Handbook of Public History*, pp. 1-21

Finn & Smith, “Introduction”, in *New Paths to Public History*, pp. 1-25

Workshop 1

23 October, 10.15-12, 13-16

Ola Larsmo, Uppsala and Linköping/Bernhard Schirg, Oxford

Venue: to be announced later.

Humanities for the 21st century. Paths into Public History

Welcome and introduction

Brief presentation of attendants

First session: Ola Larsmo, author, honorary doctor at Uppsala University

- The concept of "Holocaust distortion" has emerged as a huge problem for debate and research concerning contemporary history. This is more than obvious in Sweden, where a number of propagandistic sites on the web, as well as youtube movies etc try to rewrite the history of antisemitism in Sweden and the role the country played in World War II - for clearly party affiliated political purposes. The major role here has been played by the "Sweden Democrat Party", with its roots in Swedish extreme right-wing circles. In 2018, the party released its "documentary" rewriting the history of the Social Democratic party, depicting them as Nazi collaborators. That film now has more than 800,000 views on YT.

Where should we draw the line between historical debate and propaganda? And what aspects of Swedish contemporary history are now purposefully being edited out of the collective consciousness? The workshop will discuss these and other questions from the perspective of Ola Larsmo's experiences as a populariser of the history of eugenics and World II history and as a keen participant in media discussions concerning such issues.

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/news-archive/what-holocaust-distortion-and-why-it-problem>

Second session: Bernhard Schirg, Dr., University of Hamburg, Oxford University

- The stories we need
- Presentation of examples from reachingforatlantis.de and toolong-didntread.de (forthcoming)
- Who needs our stories – public outreach and (net)working with institutions – examples from Sweden and abroad
- Discussion

Seminar 2

17 November, 9.30-12.00

Maria Ågren, professor, Uppsala University

The authority and responsibility of scholars

How should scholars interact with non-experts without coming across as arrogant? In American discussions, the idea of 'shared authority' has been broached. It implies that researchers should engage in dialogue with stakeholders, including the general public, with a view to mutual learning. Is there a limit to the usefulness of such an approach? Are there components in 'the scientific attitude' that are unnegotiable? Humanist scholars are authorities in their own areas but may also challenge other authorities. How should these roles be combined?

In addition to the requested reading, the seminar will draw upon participants' own experiences of public history.

Readings for seminar 2:

Hoffman, "Writing history as it happens: the historian's dilemma in a time of health-care reform" in *Communicating the History of Medicine*, pp. 66-88

Sevcenko, "Public Histories for Human Rights: Sites of Conscience and the Guantánamo Public Memory Project" in *Oxford Handbook of Public History*, pp. 142-158

Reed & Smith, "Collaborating Across Heritage and Higher Education to Reveal the Global History of Osterley Park House" in *New Paths to Public History*, pp. 47-72

Ågren, "David versus Goliath: the Girjas Case. Public History in the Court Room", in *Public History in Action*

Seminar 3

1 December, 9.15-12.00

Olle Terenius, researcher, Uppsala University

Wikipedia

The seminar gives an exercise in writing Wikipedia entries. Students will write about topics that are relevant in their thesis work.

Seminar 4

12 January, 9.30-12.00

Lars M. Andersson, senior lecturer, Uppsala University

Politicized history

How should the professional historian act when she needs to criticize politicized or otherwise dubious historical writings? What are the pitfalls? When is it best to keep mum? Good and bad examples of how public intellectuals have acted in such circumstances will be discussed.

Readings for seminar 4:

Evans, "History, memory, and the law: the historian as expert witness", *History and Theory* 41 (2002), pp. 326-345

Evans, *Lying about Hitler*, pp. 1-39

Illouz, "A Brief History of Bullshit. Why We've Learned to Ignore Truth" in *Haaretz.com*, pp. 1-9

Jebari, review of Arpi & Cwejman in *Tidskrift för politisk filosofi*, pp. 1-13

<https://www.tidningencurie.se/debatt/var-forskning-har-kapats-av-politiker/>

Seminar 5

2 February, 10.15-12.00

Jenny Beckman, senior lecturer, Uppsala University

Fact resistance

It would appear as if humans have never had so many facts at their disposal as today, and basing decisions with far-reaching impact on facts should not be a problem. Yet, phenomena such as "fact resistance" and "alternative facts" show that facts – often produced by scholars and other experts – do not necessarily prevail.

Readings for seminar 5:

Will be announced later.

Workshop 2

5 April, 10.15-12.00, 13.00-15.00

Venue: to be announced later.

Presentation of case studies on public outreach

In addition to the explicitly assigned reading (under each seminar), students who wish to take 7, 5 HP should read c. 300 pages of their own choice from the *Oxford Handbook of Public*

History and/or New Paths to Public History and/or Applied History Manifesto and/or Public History in Action. Students who wish to take 3 HP should read c. 100 pages of their own choice from the same volumes.

Literature

NB May be subject to minor modification

- Graham Allison and Niall Ferguson, *Applied History Manifesto* (2016)
- Richard Evans, "History, memory, and the law: the historian as expert witness", *History and Theory* 41 (2002)
- Richard Evans, *Lying about Hitler* (2001)
- Margot Finn & Kate Smith, *New Paths to Public Histories* (2015), available as e-book from UUB
- Beatrice Hoffman, "Writing history as it happens: the historian's dilemmas in a time of health-care reforms" in Solveig Jülich & Sven Widmalm, ed., *Communicating the history of medicine: Perspectives on audiences and impact* (Manchester University Press 2020)
- Eva Illouz, "A Brief History of Bullshit. Why We've Learned to Ignore Truth" in *Haaretz.com*
- Karim Jebari, review of Arpi & Cwejman in *Tidskrift för politisk filosofi* vol. 3, 2018
- Oxford Handbook of Public History* (2017), available as e-book from UUB
<https://www.tidningencurie.se/debatt/var-forskning-har-kapats-av-politiker/>
- Public History in Action*, eds. Carl-Filip Smedberg, Armel Cornu-Atkins & Sarah Vorminder. Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia 2023

Some further reading may be added

Web resources

- Citizen assemblies: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/16/citizens-assembly-ireland-abortion-referendum?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_E-post
- Citizen History Projects: <https://aaslh.org/5-citizen-history-projects-you-should-know-about-part-2/>
- Correlates of War: <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>
- Helena: <https://helena.org/projects/america-in-one-room>
- History and Policy <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/>
- <https://fitchburgstate.libguides.com/fakenews>
- Public History Review <https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/phrj>
- The Applied History Manifesto: <https://www.belfercenter.org/project/applied-history-project>
- The Conversation <https://theconversation.com/uk>
- The History manifesto: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/what-we-publish/open-access/the-history-manifesto>
- The International Federation for Public History <https://ifph.hypotheses.org/>
- The Public Historian <https://online.ucpress.edu/tph>

Case studies of public outreach

You will gain insight into a concrete example of how researchers can interact with the general public. The task includes both participating in the activities and reflecting on this experience with the help of the concepts that the course introduces, such as co-production, *shared authority*, expertise, responsibility of the researcher, etc. Below are three examples of possible case studies, but you can also suggest cases yourself. You should write a short paper about your case (about 3-5 pages) and also present it at the final seminar. You should relate to one or more of the links listed under Web resources.

Examples

Example 1: Crowd-sourcing

Research can sometimes benefit from knowledge and skills found among the general public. This applies, inter alia, to research using material in archives and libraries that can be made more searchable and/or enriched if digitized and provided with different types of metadata. So-called crowd-sourcing can be used by research institutions, archives and research groups. It exemplifies cooperation between academics and the general public. See, for example, how the British Library has used the method: <https://www.libcrowds.com/>

Find an example of crowd-sourcing and investigate how it works. What are the pros and cons of this approach for the department/researcher? For the people who contribute through crowd-sourcing? Why do people engage in such activities? What is required for the benefits to outweigh the disadvantages (for all parties)?

Example 2: Sci-Fest

Every spring Uppsala University organizes a multi-day event called Sci-Fest. Sci-Fest is aimed primarily at small children, schoolchildren, their teachers, and parents. Researchers show examples of research in different disciplines, explaining what it is about. As far as possible, they try to find illustrative examples that are concrete and hands-on. There is a preponderance of science and technology if you look at the number of stands. See <https://www.scifest.uu.se/>

Join Sci-Fest in March 2021 and investigate how the event works. Why are so few humanists taking part? What are the aims of the researchers that do, and what makes them want to participate? What do visitors get out of the event? Are there any elements of co-production or impact (*samverkan*) at these events?

Example 3: Remain silent, mock, or object? How historians should deal in public with preposterous interpretations of the past

Fake news, confirmation bias, propaganda and sheer lies sometimes appear as components in what is presented as historical scholarship. To some political parties, it may for instance be tempting to overemphasize their own importance or hide embarrassing historical evidence in order to be 'on the right side of history'.

A common adage tells us that it takes 30 seconds to present a lie and 30 minutes to disprove it. Liars, propaganda makers and forgers of history are therefore always one step ahead of the academic scholar expected to disclose their lies, often in media contexts where scholars are untrained to be and seldom perform at their best.

Your task is to analyze and comment on examples of problematic history writing, find out how these examples have been received by professional historians, and formulate what you think would have been a better response.