Engaging with Public Engagement: Public History and Graduate Pedagogy

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Does an increased enthusiasm for publicly engaged scholarship and service learning at many universities translate into a tangible commitment to such projects? How can historians reconcile their participation in public scholarship with trends that have promoted neoliberal models of university finance and governance, which often put the university at odds with the public outside and inside its walls? In the fall of 2005, a group of history and American studies PhD students at the University of Minnesota developed a student-created and student-driven seminar titled "Public History and Urban Space." In this article we explore our work in the semester-long seminar, examine subsequent attempts to complete public history projects, and grapple with the above questions that lie at the heart of both the possibilities of public history and its limitations in the contemporary university.

Any attempt to practice public history within the academy must confront the realities of the contemporary neoliberal university.[1] Although there is growing enthusiasm for publicly engaged scholarship at many universities, the neoliberal initiatives of many institutions threaten to transform public engagement and community involvement into mere rhetoric, or worse, into programs that are little more than an opportunity for universities to market expertise to surrounding communities. In some cases, universities' support for public engagement and community involvement may also function to redirect attention from activities that are at odds

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with the wishes of the community, such as the acquisition of land or disruptive construction projects. More subtly, neoliberal models of university governance manage public scholarship in an actuarial fashion and render such programs accountable to the university's corporate goals. When submitted to such bottom-line logic, the possibility of radical or critical public scholarship can be limited.

Despite these concerns about the neoliberal university, it is incredibly difficult to do public history without institutional support. While all scholarship requires a support structure, public history's interdisciplinary approach and multimedia methods of communication make it especially dependent on institutional support from universities, museums, and funding agencies. The challenge for faculty and graduate students pursuing publicly engaged scholarship that works both within and against the neoliberal university is thus to navigate and hopefully transform the institutional matrix of the university in ways that assemble its resources in support of public history projects and reflect the true complexity of collaboration. Some specific institutional changes can be easily achieved, such as increasing funding, supporting cross-disciplinary collaborations at the faculty and graduate levels, and allowing greater flexibility in students' degree programs. Yet the neoliberal university represents an uneven terrain, with individuals and groups often working at cross-purposes. As our experience in creating a student-driven public history graduate seminar demonstrates, public history offers a unique site for exposing these contradictions. For example, the push for increased interdisciplinary cooperation and intellectual entrepreneurship in the neoliberal university threatens those groups whose value and work cannot be easily quantified in financial terms. But it also allows students a new flexibility to collaborate and create their own courses, thus decentering traditional power arrangements and the strict disciplinary logic of graduate training. Our seminar experience suggests that public history can offer a space for history students and faculty to develop a new, critical PhD pedagogy that responds to and confronts existing models for history graduate education.

Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota

The desire to bring history to a broad public has a complicated history of its own. As John Kuo Wei Tchen wrote in 1989 on the struggles he encountered in founding the Chinatown History Museum (now the Museum of the Chinese in the Americas):

> Certainly many historians and curators care a great deal about the general public and would like their work to reach people effectively. Yet their good intentions are often thwarted by institutional and organizational constraints. Professors gain tenure and advancement largely by publications in the "right" historical journals and the "right" university presses. Teaching counts, but it is not a major factor. And in the rather effete world of much university scholarship, publicly oriented history is considered derivative and not truly a part of scholars' work.[2]

The dilemmas and barriers that Tchen cataloged almost twenty years ago have not disappeared, even if the present-day academic environment is — rhetorically, at least — more open to public engagement. There is, in fact, a long history of academics struggling with the challenge of reaching a public outside the university yet failing to formalize such an approach beyond the level of intent. As Mary Kelley pointed out in her 1999 presidential address to the American Studies Association, the field of American studies, originally imagined as a discipline with the obligation "to talk with everyone interested in American culture," still wrestles to fulfill its founding imperative for relevant public scholarship.[3] Within the fields of history and American studies today, there is little consensus about how scholars can pursue publicly engaged work.

Recent developments at the University of Minnesota have seemingly opened new spaces for publicly engaged scholarship. For example, Harry Boyte, a professor at the University of Minnesota and the codirector of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, argues that the concept of "everyday politics" offers a useful road map for scholars hoping to imbue democracy with new meaning and detach politics from the exclusive domain of professional politicians. In Boyte's opinion, public engagement should be a literal process and not an empty gesture. Public voices should be truly represented in political processes regarding the allocation of resources, the creation of social programs, and other policy decisions.[4] Boyte cites the University of Minnesota's Council on Public Engagement (COPE), formed in 2002, as a prime example of how other universities might organize their resources and expertise in a manner that "promotes an expansive understanding of democracy and what higher education can contribute to it."[5] COPE, and the affiliated Office of Public Engagement led by the associate vice president Victor Bloomfield, offered awards and grants to University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff involved in publicly engaged projects.

Bloomfield, who in addition to his administrative duties published a blog on public engagement, also wrote "Civic Engagement and Graduate Education: Ten Principles and Five Conclusions," which explains the need for a civically engaged graduate education. As Bloomfield's second principle succinctly states: "Consciousness of the social meaning of scholarly work is an essential part of graduate education."[6] COPE works "to cultivate, to encourage, and to recognize public engagement opportunities on every campus across this institution."[7] As COPE's Web site acknowledges and Boyte highlights, the impetus for engagement derives from the university's historic status as a land-grant institution founded with the public's interests in mind.

COPE is a positive and concrete step in supporting publicly engaged work, and its grants in particular provide the type of essential financial backing that initiatives in public history require yet are rarely able to access on a departmental level. COPE is not an isolated example of the university's commitment to participate in the

life of the community. Over the years, the Career and Community Learning Center has actively encouraged undergraduate students to participate in service learning projects and has worked in the past with professors and graduate instructors to incorporate service learning components into the classes they teach. COPE, however, has attempted to expand on the service learning model by cultivating sustained partnerships with community members and by adopting a collaborative approach seeking to challenge perceptions that service functions as a type of philanthropy or as a résumé builder for students.

Yet the existence of programs like COPE also reveals the pitfalls of institutionalizing public engagement. Public history programs relying on institutional support within the university are at risk when institutional priorities inevitably change. In 2005, the University of Minnesota launched a much-publicized campaign to become one of the top three public research universities in the world within a decade, a goal not unique to Minnesota and a reminder that self-promotion is a fixture of the higher education landscape. As part of this campaign, the University of Minnesota commissioned an ominously named Metrics and Measurements Task Force with the charge of identifying "the right metrics" to gauge Minnesota's progress in reaching its goal. Within the category of public engagement, the commission offered the metric assessments of "citizen satisfaction" and "intellectual property commercialization," further defined as "a ratio of core licensing income to research expenditures" and "student participation in public engagement activities."[8] The very idea that public engagement and citizen satisfaction can be measured quantitatively and assessed in relation to the larger goal of being one of the top research universities undermines the more noble (and perhaps naive) goals that Bloomfield and Boyte outline as the rationale for public engagement. The neoliberal need to measure the efficiency, success, and profitability of public engagement projects in a concrete fashion is at odds with the desire to stimulate open-ended and fluid collaborations between the university and its surrounding communities.

Our larger point is not that COPE and other efforts to promote public engagement are superficial or lack commitment; rather, it is that the university as a whole is moving in many directions simultaneously. In 2005, when graduate students at the University of Minnesota attempted to unionize — an effort that ultimately failed — Bloomfield urged students at a Graduate and Professional Student Assembly meeting to become active members of their communities. One visibly upset participant in the meeting asked why students' work to organize a union was not considered just the type of project that Bloomfield advocated. As this anecdote reveals, University of Minnesota officials often embrace, sometimes inadvertently, a very concrete and limiting definition of the community that graduate students are supposed to aid and organize: one that exists exclusively outside the campus walls. Similarly, in April 2007, the university hosted the Public Engagement Day designed to celebrate the work of staff, students, and faculty. Although it acknowl-

edged the many public projects University of Minnesota students and employees had undertaken, noticeably absent from Public Engagement Day was an examination of the university's relationship to community engagement on an institutional level. There was no discussion of the university's plans to build an outdoor football stadium adjacent to the campus (a project many feared would severely disrupt traffic and commerce in the area) or of the recent expansion of its business school. The latter construction project continues the general growth of the campus into a formerly residential neighborhood on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Architecturally, the business school's design and layout create a wall separating the university from the largely East African immigrant population of the area. These projects are also a form of community engagement (or in the case of the business school, disengagement) and thus need to be considered as such.

Public History and Urban Space

Our fall 2005 seminar, Public History and Urban Space, emphasizing post–World War II urban history anchored in the Twin Cities, attempted to meet this call for community engagement through public history. The course proved unique in a number of ways. The seminar originated with graduate students' interest in public history, and the students initially proposed the course to the department. After discussing shared research interests, students collectively chose readings and formed the goals for the course in advance of the semester. Despite our earlier concerns about the University of Minnesota's overall public engagement strategy, it should be noted that the history department's flexibility was a key component of the seminar's success. The "elective" nature and collaborative design of the seminar revealed the department's flexibility toward PhD students' degree programs and a willingness to challenge pedagogical norms. Our advisers were similarly open to the unique course and eager to see how public history would mesh with students' research agendas. Finally, Kevin Murphy, a professor with experience in public history and community activism, facilitated and served as the faculty instructor for the course in addition to his regular teaching schedule, for which he earned overflow teaching credit with the department.[9] Although this article focuses on structural barriers graduate students confronted when attempting public history work, it should also be pointed out that faculty members often encounter similar difficulties. That Murphy's involvement in the course came in addition to his regular teaching obligations, and that he only received overflow credit, demonstrates that there are institutional impediments to doing public history work on both faculty and PhD student levels.

Murphy provided practical and logistical support by facilitating class discussion, arranging archive visits, and suggesting contacts within the community. Yet collaboration among students ultimately determined the direction of the course. We decided on a series of required readings for discussion, including Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place*, Thomas J. Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, and Samuel

Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, while also taking on supplemental readings specific to individual research interests.[10] Our chosen readings not only encompassed the disciplines of history and American studies but were also informed by our own diverse areas of interest and included works utilizing disparate but useful case studies and methodologies. For example, Hayden's and Delany's books were selected because they model public history methods and problematize community, place, and the cultural production of urban space. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* was chosen because it offered a common starting point for locating our projects within urban historiography. This collaborative approach to the production of the syllabus represented a departure from the typical graduate seminar, where a professor selects all or at least some of the readings. Instead, our student-driven seminar discovered that collectively choosing common readings, with faculty input, constituted an important method for discovering what interests and questions united our disparate interests. Our collaborative approach to syllabus creation provided an opportunity to clarify seminar goals, consider the state of the field based on our collective knowledge, and test out a different syllabus structure that mixed collective and individual readings. This process proved especially fitting for an exploration of collaborative methods in the context of institutional expectations, allowing an important measure of self-fashioned learning within the disciplinary and departmental logic of graduate training. Our positive experience in crafting a collaborative syllabus suggests that public history methodologies can radically transform the power dynamics in a graduate seminar.

The seminar's final product took the form of elaborated proposals, or "project scripts," that presented the future objectives and potential outcomes of our projects. Students worked individually and in pairs researching in area archives, conducting oral histories, and developing project proposals. By placing primary emphasis on the projects themselves, this course deviated significantly from standard graduate pedagogy. Research seminars, while arguably project based, usually revolve around evaluating scholarship with the understanding that students will follow similar means in the production of their own scholarly writing. In other words, the question of how historical knowledge will be communicated is rarely considered in graduate seminars alongside the content of that knowledge. Our course, however, was designed to help students produce public history projects that engaged difficult current research through nontraditional projects such as Web sites, walking tours, and museum exhibits. Any discussion of public history methodologies or the evaluation of other works of public history was filtered through our desire to create tangible projects. Within our seminar, discussions of historiography and theory did not occur in an abstract realm. Instead, they were at all times fused with the practical concerns of communicating these ideas to a diverse and largely nonacademic audience. Public history work moves graduate students from a degree program driven by interpretations of the archive in article or dissertation form—the way history PhD

pedagogy was and still is modeled at the University of Minnesota—into the wider realm of community participation.

The Projects: Practical Challenges and Critical Possibilities

The projects our class proposed covered a breadth of topics, forged unlikely collaborations between students, and contributed uniquely to each student's course of study. The projects' themes emphasized a wide range of local history, including the relationship between urban renewal and antipornography legislation in Minneapolis during the 1980s, vice crusading and representations of Minneapolis's urban environment in the 1950s, contemporary perceptions of gay residents in real estate marketing, African American community organizing in the 1970s, the "backlash" conservatism of Minneapolis's law-and-order mayor Charles Stenvig, and urban American Indian residential mobility patterns. All these projects reveal how a public history approach to graduate research forces students to rethink assumptions about the nature and political impact of historical research and scholarship. None of the projects involved students simply communicating a well-known historical interpretation to the public. Instead, each student took a complex current research issue and explored it in a public framework. The results suggest how public history—and especially critical, student-driven public history—can transform graduate pedagogy inside the classroom and beyond. Here we focus on two student projects to illustrate the opportunity for intellectual and professional growth that public history offers for graduate students and to highlight the challenges it poses.

Jeffrey Manuel and Andrew Urban, both PhD students in U.S. history, pursued a project that combined Manuel's interest in post–World War II conservative politics and Urban's previous public history experience with the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Although the Twin Cities are popularly known for their progressive politics, Manuel and Urban discovered that the postwar Twin Cities contained a complicated political legacy. They researched the career of the Minneapolis mayor Stenvig as a window into the history of Minneapolis's 1960s and 1970s so-called backlash conservatism. Stenvig was an independent politician elected mayor of Minneapolis in 1969, after a divisive campaign in which he pledged to "take the handcuffs off the police" in his confrontations with racial and student "militants." As a police officer and former head of the Minneapolis Police Federation, Stenvig openly challenged civil rights programs in the city—he labeled them unfairly preferential to minority groups—and appealed to churchgoers through a grassroots campaign against the moral decline he associated with the counterculture. Manuel and Urban's project culminated in a museum exhibit, Law and Order: The Career and Legacy of Minneapolis Mayor Charles Stenvig, which was on display at the Elmer L. Andersen Library on the University of Minnesota campus from March to May 2007. The exhibit was also featured during the 2007 Organization of American Historians conference held in Minneapolis.

Lisa Blee and Julie Weiskopf proposed to create a Web site that examined the intersection of American Indian strategies of housing mobility and residential accommodation. The Twin Cities are home to over half of Minnesota's Indian population and are the birthplace of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Yet despite this large and politically active urban Indian population, Indian people have struggled for visibility and access to local resources. In response to institutional racism, Indian people pursue strategies of mobility within the city, moving along kinship networks. The proposed Web site was designed to explore these issues in three distinct yet interrelated ways. The first drew on biographies and oral interviews of Indian residents to create individual virtual tours of each person's city, exploring questions of why individuals moved and how these moves related to broader political and social changes. Second, Blee and Weiskopf proposed to compile these interviews and other sources to map various trends in Minneapolis, including housing discrimination, demolition and urban renewal, kinship networks, and the locations and activities of Indian organizations. The final section of the proposed Web site was to establish how Indian people created unique forms of stability by establishing Indian institutions — most notably, Little Earth of United Tribes (LEUT), the nation's only Indian-owned and Indian-run public housing community, and several survival schools dedicated to free, alternative education specifically designed for the needs of Indian children. By amassing interactive media recordings, transcribed oral history interviews, photographs, and scanned select documents in one location, the Web site was also designed as an online archive of this history. After the semester, Blee and Weiskopf conducted further research, initiated oral interviews, and secured a small grant from the university to build their Web site, yet their project remains unfinished.

Pursuing public history projects allowed all of the seminar participants to form unlikely collaborations inside and outside the university, to develop new practical skills, to confront directly the challenge of meaningful collaboration, and to navigate the politics of representing the history of living subjects. Since our projects were linked by a shared time period and geographic focus, we were able to support each other through informal collaboration as the projects developed. For example, Manuel and Urban spoke frequently with Caley Horan, who developed a project on Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon's 1983 antipornography ordinance. They discussed the politics of morality in 1970s Minneapolis, noting how conservative politicians such as Stenvig made strange bedfellows with queer activists in their effort to close adult bookstores. Exploring our research topics through public history gave us the rare opportunity to coauthor work. As is the case in most PhD programs, graduate pedagogy in the University of Minnesota's history department emphasizes individualized expertise in an environment in which students compete to earn individual distinction. By creating a student-driven course in which seminar participants had the flexibility to choose their topics and by emphasizing public his-

tory pedagogy, our course made collaboration possible. For example, Weiskopf, an Africanist studying state-sponsored removal and resettlement schemes in Tanzania, collaborated with Blee, an Americanist researching American Indians. Despite their different areas of expertise, they found common ground in a project on American Indian residential mobility. Manuel and Urban's collaboration involved less stretching—bridging nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. history—but it nonetheless suggests how public history pedagogy can disrupt the compartmentalization of historical knowledge. Had any of the seminar participants been obliged to produce a traditional seminar paper requiring specificity and the mastery of a given field of historical knowledge, collaboration likely would not have been possible or practical. Put simply, as pedagogy, critical public history emphasizes what history PhD students have in common rather than the differences between their research topics. Although every student in the seminar had a unique research agenda, our public history approach emphasized our common experiences as graduate students struggling to connect historical knowledge with the here and now. As graduate pedagogy, critical public history thus works against the disciplinary logic that normally organizes graduate education within specific geographic and temporal fields of study and instead allows for direct and meaningful collaborative work. Integrating public history into the graduate curriculum offers PhD students a concrete venue for unusual but ultimately valuable interdisciplinary collaborations. For example, when Manuel and Urban were planning the design of their exhibit, they found willing collaborators at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. History exhibits and Web sites allow for mutually beneficial relationships among students in different fields, since historians typically focus on "content" while designers emphasize "communication." Formalizing such unusual connections would prove beneficial to the collaborators as well as to the university's interdisciplinary mission. On a broader level, graduate pedagogy involving critical public history offers a useful site for contesting neoliberal imperatives within the university. Our course suggests that collaborative, student-created seminars offer valuable training that cannot be easily quantified or rewarded within a university structured to promote individualized scholarship.

The collaboration with groups outside the university forced us to confront the mixed legacy of academic involvement in the Twin Cities. Although public historians may be enthusiastic about what we can offer to community partners, collaboration with outside groups often offers a reminder that these relationships contain a power dynamic that carries potentially profound consequences. While planning their Web site on the American Indian community in Minneapolis, Blee and Weiskopf discovered that earlier studies by university experts had shaped representations of Indian people in the city and subsequently influenced public policies that proved detrimental to Indian communities. While these dynamics complicated their attempts to create positive working relationships with partners in the Minneapolis Indian community, public history methodology suggested ways in which we could engage

honestly with these issues. Blee and Weiskopf planned to conduct a series of oral interviews of Indian residents, but they also believed that residents should have even greater opportunities to give testimony concerning Indian housing issues. They contacted a local Indian artist and planned to incorporate a computer station in her next public show. The station would have the Web site running and would allow the exhibit's visitors to record their own testimony of housing issues. Ideally, the collaboration with community members encouraged by this model of public history would demand a higher level of accountability from historians, even sympathetic graduate students, and would acknowledge forms of knowledge outside the academy.

Manuel and Urban's exhibit also negotiated the complex legacy of academic involvement in the Twin Cities area. As a politician, Stenvig had positioned himself as an outsider and independent who did not rely on sociologists at the University of Minnesota to tell him how to combat crime, for example. This attitude had ended the relationship between scholarship and politics established by midcentury Minneapolis mayors such as Hubert Humphrey and Arthur Naftalin, both scholar-politicians who moved easily between campus and city hall. Stenvig argued that liberal academics governed through abstract theories rather than the on-the-ground experience he gained as a police officer and a "simple" working-class man. Thus an academic study of a politician who actively critiqued academic knowledge inevitably raised the issue of the inherent power dynamic of academic involvement in political life. This critique of academic knowledge became evident during the exhibit's opening event, when several of Stenvig's former supporters were openly critical of Manuel and Urban's interpretation of Stenvig. In the broadest sense, our focus on public history demonstrated that scholarship has profound consequences, some good and some bad, and that historians should carefully consider how even the most sympathetic intervention can lead to unintended results. Nonetheless, it is an accomplishment that these discussions and issues were raised at all. Too often they remain unexplored in graduate training.

We also discovered that graduate public history projects offer a unique opportunity for methodological training unavailable in many other realms of graduate pedagogy. For example, the University of Minnesota provides only limited training in oral history methodology for history PhD students. Although Africanists do receive oral history preparation, practical experience in utilizing oral methodologies is usually postponed until dissertation fieldwork. By proposing a public history project that involved numerous oral interviews, Weiskopf was hoping to gain valuable experience using oral sources, including the opportunity to experiment with different recording devices, explore the nuances of group versus individual interviews, and effectively present her interpretations of oral sources to their origin in a medium beyond written academic work. Although this training can be obtained in a straightforward methodologies course, practicing these skills in a project-based public history seminar allows graduate students to work in a demanding situation that

more closely resembles the realities of dissertation fieldwork. Incorporating public history into the graduate curriculum can therefore better prepare students in the methodologies they will use in their dissertation.

Further, we pursued work in the course that was far from a temporary departure from the development of our professional careers. As graduate students, we are frequently reminded of the daunting task of finding a job at the end of our studies. Due to increasing pressures within the discipline and from university administrators, many history PhD programs are structured to produce "employable" graduates and to guide students on a direct and professionalized path toward the PhD. Success in the academic job market requires a dedication to peer-reviewed work such as book reviews, conference papers, and published articles, which often leads graduate students to see public scholarship as a lower priority than other projects. Yet we believe this approach too narrowly defines a set of employable academic skills. The course gave us some training in public history methods and theories not otherwise offered to graduate students at the University of Minnesota (which does not have a dedicated program in public history) and supplied us with practical experience in creating public scholarship within an academic structure and using university resources, which dedicated public history programs usually do not consider as they prepare students for jobs outside the university. For example, Horan found that her work on antipornography activism taught her to pursue interdepartmental collaboration and seek wider audiences through a publication in a popular history book project. To obtain the funding for their exhibit, Manuel and Urban created a grant proposal and ultimately were awarded a small National Endowment for the Humanities "We the People" grant through the Minnesota Humanities Council. The public history seminar thus provided practical experience in grant writing, an important academic skill rarely practiced in a traditional history PhD curriculum. We contend that the expanded skill set associated with work in public history can make graduates more valuable to prospective employers.

Yet the expansion of academic positions in public history—in part a result of the increasing number of universities that now offer dedicated programs in the field—is an example of the mixed blessing of public history within the neoliberal university. On the one hand, the increasing number of such programs will—theoretically, at least—lead to an increasing number of formal positions for public historians. But on the other hand, the rising number of terminal master's programs suggests that neoliberal imperatives can reduce the ability of students in these public history programs to interact with history PhD pedagogy. Such dedicated programs are created in part because they produce revenue for history departments and because a theme of demonstrable "usefulness" permeates neoliberal rhetoric about higher education. The result is that public history—and publicly engaged scholarship in general—is encouraged while simultaneously being pigeonholed as a particular set of practical skills directed at employment in nonuniversity public

history jobs. This separation discourages professors and students in dedicated public history programs from expanding public history methods such as collaboration and public scholarship into traditional history or American studies graduate seminars. Similarly, history PhD students are discouraged from employing such methods outside an "official" public history course. Public history in separate courses or programs—if reduced by neoliberal rhetoric to an employable skill set alone—is in danger of discouraging collaboration between departments and turns PhD students away from exploring alternative approaches to their field.

Every participant of this seminar acknowledged its importance in gaining critical skills and pushing methodological issues, yet pursuing public history also proved deeply challenging. The course was not designed to result in final papers, as is the usual graduate research seminar. Nor did the students expect to complete the projects for public display by the end of the semester. Rather, the course was designed as a workshop to discuss the theoretical and practical issues involved in creating and finishing the proposed projects. More than two years after the course ended, only one project—Horan's essay on antipornography legislation and Manuel and Urban's exhibit on the political legacy of Mayor Stenvig—has reached completion. In trying to complete the projects after the course ended, we were challenged in four distinct ways: time constraints, the perceived value of this work in relation to typical coursework, forming collaborations across disciplines within the university, and forming collaborative relations outside the university.

Time constraints proved a major hurdle in all our efforts and directly relate to how the university values public history work and allocates funding for graduate students. At the University of Minnesota, students are strongly encouraged to make "timely degree progress," a demand resulting from numerous pressures related to economic value. At the department level, a shorter time to the degree is generally believed to reflect the productivity of the graduate program. The university's cost-per-student calculation encourages rapid movement through the program, especially to complete coursework when the cost per student drops, to "free up" funds to allocate elsewhere.[11] The economic imperatives connected to graduate education have the potential effect of discouraging nontraditional educational endeavors in favor of the most time-efficient approach to completing a student's degree. Managing one's exam schedule often means making choices that ensure timely progress rather than fostering curiosity about other ways of producing history. As graduate students under pressure to progress through the program quickly, we had to take time away from our own coursework, teaching obligations, conference presentations, preparation for preliminary examinations, and dissertation research to spend time on our public history projects beyond the original semester. It would have been impossible to research, design, and implement a project within the confines of three or four months, especially while taking other courses and fulfilling graduate-student teaching or research appointments. The project scripts solved the problem of time

limitation by allowing students to visualize potential outcomes to their projects and by providing a basis for future support via grants and collaborative partners. Still, we all dedicated substantial time to further archival research, oral interviews, and applications for funding to support our projects despite receiving no formal credit for this work.

Despite the University of Minnesota's stated commitment to support publicly engaged work, we found that accessing the university's resources required great effort that was not always rewarded and often directly impeded the forming of useful collaboration outside of the university. For example, the University of Minnesota's Office for Information Technology (OIT) became an important collaborator for Weiskopf and Blee, who received from the office a Web grant to construct their proposed Web site. The OIT, whose mission is to support public scholarship through the Web, hired a student to create the Web site, but because of turnover and limited technical skills, the site progressed very slowly over nine months and was ultimately left unfinished. Without a complete Web site, Weiskopf and Blee were unable to manage the demands of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and those of their most important community collaborator, the board of residents at LEUT. Because the Indian residents of Minneapolis whom Weiskopf and Blee wanted to interview were categorized by the IRB as "vulnerable populations," the project required IRB approval, in itself a multimonth process. The students' and collaborators' schedules conflicted when the IRB required Weiskopf and Blee to gain formal, written approval from the LEUT board for the interviews (although they had already granted unofficial approval from a previous meeting). The board met on a monthly basis and required some time to place Weiskopf and Blee's project on the schedule. After Blee gave a presentation to the LEUT board in the summer following the course, the members understandably wished to see the finished Web site before formally approving it, and thus they tabled the matter. By the time the board approved the project—without viewing the finished Web site—the IRB application had expired. The university's research infrastructure is not tailored for one-semester (or even one-year) public history projects such as the one proposed by Weiskopf and Blee because collaborators—even those within the university—do not always operate within the same time frame. One practical solution would be to establish year-long public history courses in which students, especially returning students, are encouraged to choose their topic in advance and learn of any possible IRB involvement. But this experience points to the broader issue of the need to streamline university requirements, or at least make it possible to coordinate them with community partners inside and outside the university. Otherwise the rigid IRB structure and the impossibility of speeding up the OIT grant made managing the different schedules related to this project impossible. Interested students and faculty have especially powerful arguments for these reforms in the face of claims (and even some much-needed funds) in support of public scholarship initiatives.

Identifying community partners and forming collaborative relationships with them constituted a fourth challenge. The IRB process directly hindered Weiskopf and Blee from building collaborative relationships with community partners by creating an overly bureaucratic atmosphere. Weiskopf and Blee wished to work with American Indian people and institutions outside the university to construct the project, an approach they hoped would ensure the Web site's utility and relevance to a diverse public audience. However, the IRB application process forced the students to create the project based solely on archival research rather than on the results of interviews (and before speaking with American Indian people about how they would want their interviews to be used), which effectively prevented collaboration in the construction of the project. Rather than approaching the LEUT board as potential collaborators, Blee and Weiskopf were forced into an exchange by the IRB in which the students had to ask for the approval of a project that they had created without input from the LEUT residents. This only reinforced the problems of previous scholarly studies in which American Indians participated as subjects without being granted input into the studies' structure, goals, and public presentation. Because Weiskopf and Blee wanted their project to serve scholarly purposes while also resonating with Indian individuals and institutions, this hurdle proved formidable in fashioning truly collaborative work.

Manuel and Urban's exhibit on Mayor Stenvig also required support from the public—indeed, the students directly faced the challenge of attracting an audience. Although the University of Minnesota offered some publicity resources, such as an online calendar of events, the bulk of the exhibit's publicity came from Manuel's and Urban's personal contacts with various members of the Twin Cities' media, which forced them to navigate the tricky world of public relations. Luckily, several local journalists were interested in Stenvig's historical legacy and the exhibit was featured in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, the *Minnesota Daily*, and on KFAI radio. Manuel and Urban managed to secure a grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission and a small amount of departmental funding for their exhibit, which were used to purchase high-quality images, text panels, archival film footage, and to cover other installation costs for the exhibition. Presenting an exhibit open to the public requires a high-quality and costly display. Although money was made available for the exhibit, the unprecedented nature of graduate public history work at the University of Minnesota made the process particularly tedious and time consuming.

These challenges to public history in the history PhD curriculum are not insurmountable, however. With more flexibility from a number of sources, some of the major hurdles to completing our projects could be significantly diminished. Our public history seminar was made possible in the first place because of the flexibility of our professor, Kevin Murphy, in allowing us to collectively set the reading and goals of the course, and of the history department in allowing a nontraditional, student-

initiated course. But the success of public history work requires yet more flexibility to produce quality finished products, especially by streamlining bureaucracy at the university level and by creating a place for public history projects in the graduate curriculum at the department level. While we are surely not the first or last to decry university bureaucracy, changes at the department level are possible. The department could provide funding for public history projects—ideally independent from the already allotted research fund set aside for dissertation research and conference travel—specifically earmarked to encourage public scholarship, interdisciplinary inquiry, and collaboration as part of graduate training. Granting graduate credit for public history work beyond the bounds of a semester-long seminar and creating a standard for assessing work quality would not only help students explore new possibilities as they make degree progress but would also fulfill the department's concerns about productivity set by university imperatives. These changes would perhaps work with the imperatives of the neoliberal university, but as long as neoliberalism remains the context in which radical pedagogies operate, critical public history offers a useful site for exploring—and exploiting—its inconsistencies.

Conclusion

The University of Minnesota's history department has not offered the public history course to PhD students since the fall of 2005. This absence is explained in part by the unique nature of the course, which has made it difficult to replicate. As funding-related pressures to meet departmental expectations of timely degree progress increase, fewer graduate students are able to devote the time and initiative necessary to create and carry out a course not offered formally by the university. Faculty members face similar pressures that discourage long-term commitment to a student-generated course. It would be unreasonable, for example, to expect a single faculty member to strike up interest in the course among each successive cohort of graduate students. These are practical concerns, but there are theoretical ones as well. Are there ways to ensure that a public history seminar offered on a regular basis by a history department would not transform into a course on methodology? Could a recurring, officially sanctioned seminar maintain a commitment to genuine public engagement while still meeting the standards of formal departmental sponsorship? If the course were institutionalized, could it sustain the critical stance toward certain institutional trends that made it so unique in the first place?

Like any graduate course in history, our public history seminar accomplished certain goals, but it also ran into significant roadblocks—some that we anticipated and several that we did not. The goal of the course was to test out public history in a graduate seminar and to evaluate what was possible in a PhD program at a university that claimed to value public engagement. Rather than marginalizing public history into a single course (as was the case in our circumstance) or simply removing

it to a separate department, institutions should integrate publicly engaged historical work into an already existing system of PhD coursework and academic training. But graduate students should also take the initiative in designing and facilitating courses that embrace public engagement. These courses should not only encourage public engagement but should also use public engagement as a site for self-reflexive scholarship that addresses how public engagement relates to the broader programs and goals of the university. Although our course took a particular form, public history need not be relegated to seminars specifically designed to promote it. In the future, public history projects should take a place alongside essays and literature reviews in PhD courses, regardless of their focus. This will require not only a willingness to think in new ways about the nature of academic and public education but also a serious commitment to rethinking how neoliberal imperatives in PhD education work against substantive public engagement in the classroom.

Notes

1. Our discussion draws from the rapidly developing body of literature on the relationship between the market, neoliberalism, and the modern university. See, for example, David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Verso, 2006); David L. Kirp, *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhodes, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); and Jennifer Washburn, *University, Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of American Higher Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
2. John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Creating a Dialogic Museum: The Chinatown History Museum Experiment," in *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine Kreamer, and Steven Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 297.
3. In 1945, at the University of Minnesota, Tremaine McDowell created the first American studies department with the belief that the field was uniquely positioned to close "the unnatural gulf which separates the campus from the world outside." As these comments indicate, the imperative for U.S. historians and scholars in American studies to engage the public is often couched in a civic discourse that suggests that work in these areas holds immediate importance to an American public. Mary Kelley, "Taking Stands: American Studies at Century's End," *American Quarterly* 52 (2000): 3.
4. Harry C. Boyte, *Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
5. Ibid., 136.
6. Victor Bloomfield, "Civic Engagement and Graduate Education: Ten Principles and Five Conclusions," www.engagement.umn.edu (accessed September 1, 2007).
7. "COPE: Council on Public Engagement," www.engagement.umn.edu/cope/ (accessed December 20, 2007).
8. "Transforming the University: Final Report of the Metrics and Measurements Task Force," www1.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/tf_final_reports_060512/m_&_m_final.pdf (accessed May 4, 2006).

9. See Kevin Murphy, "Walking the Queer City," *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 195–201.
10. Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).
11. "How to Cut Ph.D. Time to Degree," *Inside Higher Ed*, www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/12/17/phd (accessed December 18, 2007).

Engaging with Public Engagement: Public History and Graduate Pedagogy

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Does an increased enthusiasm for publicly engaged scholarship and service learning at many universities translate into a tangible commitment for such projects? How can historians reconcile their participation in public scholarship with trends that promote neoliberal models of university finance and governance, which often put the university at odds with the public outside and inside its walls? In the fall of 2005, a group of history and American Studies PhD students at the University of Minnesota developed a student-created and student-driven seminar titled "Public History and Urban Space." This article explores the results of this innovative seminar and focuses in depth on two student projects that illustrate the opportunities and challenges of publicly engaged graduate scholarship within the neoliberal university. A public history approach to graduate research forces graduate students to rethink assumptions about the nature and political impact of historical research and scholarship while offering a unique opportunity for methodological training unavailable in many other realms of graduate pedagogy. But as seminar participants confronted theoretical and practical issues involved in creating the proposed projects, they also encountered significant challenges to completing the projects as we had envisioned them. In examining the fate of the projects in this self-designed course, this article grapples with the above questions that are at the heart of both the possibilities of public history and its limitations in the contemporary university.

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