

REPORT ON THE UNDERGRADUATE AND MA PROGRAMS IN HISTORY

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January 30, 2016

## Report on the Undergraduate and MA Programs in History

I would like to begin by thanking the department and administration at CCSU for providing the materials and access necessary for this report. Aside from a very warm welcome, I received extensive, detailed, and well-organized documentation from the department in advance of my visit, as well as additional information on faculty and course offerings at my request. I also very much appreciate the efforts of the chair of the department, Katherine Hermes, and the department secretary, Audrey Riggins, to make sure that my campus visit was as productive as possible, and I am grateful to the many members of the History Department who took the time to meet with me during my visit. I have now done over a dozen of these external reviews and experience has taught me that one quick and easy measure of a department's sense of community and commitment is the number of faculty who make themselves available to the external reviewer(s). The fact that I was able to meet with so many of the department faculty, including several who were on leave and could easily have begged off, is in itself an indication that the History Department is functioning as a community, and that the faculty generally feel they have a stake and a role in its future.

### Department Resources

Faculty:

As in any History Department, the most important resource in History at CCSU is the faculty. In terms of size, its current roster of 17 full-time/tenure-line professors would put it at the lower end of medium-sized departments. Judging from their CVs, the majority of the faculty are active scholars who publish books and articles, present papers at scholarly conferences, participate in the editorial boards of major journals, and win grants and fellowships. Let me say that this is especially impressive given the heavy teaching load at CCSU—literally twice what it would be at a Research I university—and the limited financial, sabbatical, and library resources to support research. **Yet many of the History Department faculty are publishing at a rate comparable to that of historians at Research I institutions and have high profiles in their areas of specialization.** While some of the tenured faculty have not published a book-length monograph, all have multiple, refereed articles to their credit, and several indicate book manuscripts in progress that they likely would have already completed in a more research-oriented context, with a lighter teaching load and more leave time.

I realize that many members of the department end up teaching fewer than 4 courses a semester due to “reassigned time” for administrative duties and other commitments. Nonetheless, it might make sense to consider a slight reduction across the board that would allow faculty to be more productive and more visible in their subfields. The load could probably be reduced to 4-3 without a significant impact on the course offerings, especially if one more faculty member is added to the department. A teaching load of 3-3 would put CCSU in line with other state universities that are primarily undergraduate teaching institutions, but the 3-3 teaching load might only be feasible if there were sharp limits on “reassigned time,” given the number of courses the department needs to offer for the general education requirements.

Considering the general climate of austerity in funding for state universities, it is encouraging to see that there continue to be internal grants to support both research and curricular development, and that the

department has travel funds for faculty participating in meetings of professional organizations and learned societies. I especially want to applaud the department's decision to make some of these funds available to regular adjunct faculty. Given the high quality of the faculty in History—which the administration can point to as evidence that there is no necessary opposition between an emphasis on teaching and achievements in research—I would strongly recommend that internal funding continue to be made available, and even increased to the extent fiscally feasible, and that faculty be encouraged to apply for external fellowships. Fellowship and grant-writing workshops, for History and other faculty in the humanities, might be offered periodically. Occasional teaching relief for a faculty member close to completing a major project would also help maintain the level of productivity, though I realize that the heavy demands for (required) course offerings may limit how often this could be done.

#### Departmental Climate:

Although members of the History Department expressed concern about Connecticut state efforts to “reform” the state university system, and were understandably uneasy about the campus' future in this regard, **the climate within the department struck me as almost entirely positive.** I would attribute this partly to the excellent leadership that the chair provides. Several faculty members mentioned how fortunate the department is to have a chair they deemed to be hard-working, dedicated, exceptionally fair in her judgments, and supportive of her colleagues. Prof. Hermes' performance is even more impressive given that the department has exactly one full-time staff person. Although faculty noted the heavy work demands at CCSU, it clearly makes a difference that Prof. Hermes' colleagues feel that the responsibilities are distributed in an equitable way. Assistant professors indicated that they felt the standards for tenure and promotion in the department were clear and reasonable, and this does not seem to be a source of tension in this department as it is in some others I have visited.

Another obvious contributing factor to the positive environment in the department is the recent move to new quarters. Members of the department were eager to show off the well-appointed classrooms and attractive office spaces, and a few insisted that I visit the old quarters (which I did) so that I could fully appreciate the upgrade. The administration is to be applauded for re-locating the History Department to this excellent **new building; this sends a message to the students and the faculty that the university values the humanities** (and it's also worth keeping in mind that an upgrade in facilities for historians does not usually involve investment in expensive laboratory equipment, while the pay-off in terms of climate and morale may be even greater). Yet another element that I think contributes to the positive climate in the department is (from what I can sense) a reasonably **good relationship with the dean and the university administration.** As the department's self-study notes, the biggest “threat” it faces is “the increasing hostility to liberal arts and humanities majors among the general public.” Indeed, that could be said for the entire historical profession. But the faculty at CCSU seem to be doing a very good job of addressing this threat and of distinguishing between the more immediate challenges in their work environment and the broader problems that humanists are confronting everywhere.

#### Adjuncts/Part-time Faculty:

Among the aspects of my visit that most impressed me was the number of part-time/adjunct instructors who made time to meet with me. Given that adjuncts typically have an even more demanding schedule than tenure-line faculty, it says a great deal that a half-dozen of them showed up to meet with me and to talk about their experiences in the CCSU department.

While I think it is admirable that the university requires all undergraduates to take at least one history course, an inevitable consequence is the need to offer a very large number of lower-division courses,

and this, in turn, means that the department relies more heavily on adjuncts to teach than I would normally regard as ideal. That said, I am impressed by the quality of the adjuncts that serve as classroom instructors, most of whom have advanced degrees from major institutions and are active scholars. This may be due to CCSU's location, but I also think that the chair of the department is aware of the value of the adjuncts to the department and she and her colleagues have made an effort, within the constraints of the fiscal situation, to make the adjuncts feel welcome and a part of the departmental community. In my meeting with them, the part-time instructors noted that they can request travel funds up to \$750 a year for conferences, and expressed their appreciation for access to cubicles and locked filing cabinets that make it easier for them to meet with students and to have a work-base at CCSU. To be sure, they expressed dissatisfaction with the level of pay per course; in this regard, it is worth keeping in mind that better pay for adjuncts allows them to confine their efforts to fewer schools and devote more time to their students in those locations. The adjuncts also acknowledged the opportunities offered by CCSU for further curricular and pedagogical development, but indicated that they would very much welcome access to programs for scholarly development as well.

#### Community Outreach:

Given that CCSU is a public university with a limited endowment and thus dependent upon the commitment of the state of Connecticut to high-quality, affordable higher education, the History Department has a direct stake in demonstrating the value of the university, the humanities, and the study of history to the larger community. To the department's great credit, despite heavy teaching and administrative loads, many of its members are actively involved in community outreach programs. The strong commitment to public history in the department certainly contributes to its stellar performance in this regard. Aside from the various innovative community engagement programs initiated by Professors Leah Glaser and Daniel Broyle, also notable is the participation of Prof. Matthew Warshauer in the Civil War Commemoration, Prof. M.B.B. Biskupski's lectures and programming on Polish history and the Polish-American community, Prof. Gloria Emeagwali's service as co-chair of the Amistad Committee, and Prof. Hermes' many activities related to Native American and local history. In addition, Prof. John Tully has initiated and participated in a remarkable amount of programming related to "Teaching American History" and other activities for the advancement of social-studies education.

I can see that a deliberate effort is being made to engage with the region's growing Latino community, but I think even more could be done along these lines. With regard to the small but growing Brazilian/Lusophone population, I would expect that the presence in the department of a well-known and well-connected historian of Brazil, Prof. Mary Ann Mahony, who has established connections with the regional Brazilian consulate to co-sponsor various Brazil-related activities, will facilitate engagement with that community.

#### **Structure of Undergraduate Curriculum/Learning Outcomes**

The undergraduate curriculum is well structured. It follows a fairly conventional progression from a 100-level two-semester survey course (either in World Civilization or US History), to more focused survey courses at the 200-level (Latin America, East Asia, Modern Europe, etc.), to more topical courses or nationally-bounded courses at the 300-level, and culminating in 400-level senior seminars and research-oriented courses. The structure of the curriculum, and the prerequisites and requirements for the major, create a logical sequence of courses that (ideally) prepares the history majors, in their final year, to complete a substantial research paper and feel that they have mastered a wide range of historical

materials and methods. In some ways, it is a fairly traditional History curriculum, though the shift away from “Western Civilization” to “World Civilization” certainly reflects the new consensus in the discipline. I gathered from my conversations that a few faculty would like a return to the classic “Western Civ” course, but that would both ensure that large portions of the globe would be excluded from both of the required survey courses, and would be out of step with the general direction of historical pedagogy.

I can see that the department is making commendable efforts to add courses to its curriculum that are innovative in their themes and formats without necessarily disrupting the sequential character of the course offerings. These include the “Reacting to the Past” [RTTP] courses that are being offered (I think appropriately) at the 100-level. Although I have some reservations about these courses, which focus heavily on role-playing, they have been demonstrated to be effective in engaging students’ interest and may prove to be a means to attract more majors and higher enrollments in upper-division courses. Moving beyond the introductory (100-200) level, the “Historical Imagination” (301) courses, required for the BA and BSEd in History, guarantees that all History majors have some exposure to historiographical debates and research methods prior to the required (490) senior seminar. The requirement that all History majors take two courses each in US, European, and Non-Western history ensures that the students are exposed to a wide range of historical material and experiences. In contrast, the major does not include any requirement with regard to historical eras; many similar departments require their majors to take at least one course in early modern or pre-modern history. This might be something to consider in the future, especially since at least a half-dozen members of the department regularly offer courses in pre-modern or early modern history. But at a moment when the number of majors is a concern, it probably does not make sense to add more prerequisites or requirements.

Based on the structure of the curriculum, the sequence of courses it offers, and the requirement that all majors take two courses (301 and 490) that deal with historiography, interpretation, and research methods, I find that CCSU is already adhering to what are widely regarded as the best practices for the teaching of history to undergraduates. The department has also adopted what I would judge to be the soundest method of evaluating what students gain from majoring in History. Rather than testing for the accumulation of factual knowledge, which inevitably fades with time, the department focuses on the more enduring analytical skills and habits of reasoning that students are expected to acquire—the ability to distinguish history from historiography, a primary from a secondary source, one interpretation of an event from another, an argument based on evidence rather than just supposition.

Many history departments, under pressure from university administrations, have developed rather perfunctory methods for gauging learning outcomes. That is not the case here: the department seems to have given a great deal of thought to this process and developed a reasonable and systematic means to measure students’ competencies and progress by gathering information from papers and essay exams produced in the 100-level (general education) courses and the 301 and 490 courses. Such measurements can never be exact—there is no rubric or metric that will make complete precision possible in the humanities—so small differences from one year to the next (unless downward or upward trends are continuous over several years) should not be regarded as consequential. But I am impressed that the department was able to use its data to identify a significant weakness (“recognizing interpretive differences”) in the students’ understanding of historical reasoning and adjusted the curriculum for the 301 course accordingly. This strikes me as a sensible and legitimate use of learning outcomes data, but again, I would caution against over-reliance on such data to make curricular decisions. Thus the department expresses a desire to raise the percentage of students at the 400-level evaluated as “very good” or “excellent” on the questions that make up the learning outcomes rubric. One way to do that would be to construct the curriculum so that all 300 and 400-level courses directly address these questions. But part of what make upper-division courses attractive (both to take and to teach) is that

they are less standardized than survey courses and more likely to reflect the particular interests and approaches of the instructor. In other words, I would encourage the department to continue evaluating outcomes and being alert to areas that need improvement, but to avoid drifting toward “teaching to the test,” so to speak.

### **Majors/Enrollments**

The History Department reports, with understandable concern, that the number of its majors recently dropped by 35%, from a peak of 383 in 2008 to 248 in 2013. Any significant drop in majors is worrisome, to be sure, but the decline at CCSU is not as severe as at many other institutions around the country, where the number of majors has dropped by approximately half. As a chair of a department, I participate in the American Historical Association’s listserv for History Department chairs and a principal theme in the email exchanges as of late is the hemorrhaging of students to more “vocational” and “marketable” majors such as computer science or economics or business & administration. In light of this nationwide trend, the numbers at CCSU are hardly alarming, especially since enrollments, as opposed to majors, seem to be quite robust even beyond the 100- and 200-level courses that satisfy general education requirements. The only area of lagging enrollments is at the 400-level, and even those—at 75% of capacity—are actually quite reasonable. Smaller courses at that level may increase the appeal of the History major, and being able to offer a wide variety of upper-division courses is crucial for an academically strong and culturally diverse curriculum.

The department has already adopted several of the strategies that I would suggest to recruit more majors. The website is attractive and user-friendly. My one suggestion would be to make it a little more gender-balanced—with the exception of Rosie the Riveter, the most visible images are of men or are male-oriented. Given that there has been a gender imbalance in majors (as is not unusual in History departments), populating the website with a few more images likely to be appealing to women undergraduates might not be a bad idea.

I was pleased to see that some of the 100-level and about half of the 200-level courses are taught by tenured or tenure-track members of the department. Although I have no doubt that many of the adjuncts are excellent instructors, I would urge the department to make sure that its most engaging tenure-line faculty regularly teach some of the lower-division courses. This is the perfect context for recruiting students into the major, and I assume this would be most effectively done by full-time members of the department, who have more time to meet with students outside of class and to cultivate the interests of those inclined toward majoring in history.

The fact that many 200-level and even some upper-division courses satisfy requirements for other majors certainly helps the department to maintain or increase enrollments. The various minors that either involve courses in history (e.g., Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies) or are situated in History—especially Public History—should also serve to boost majors and enrollments. Elsewhere public history programs are hived off onto separate MA tracks with little connection to the undergraduate curriculum; **this department is to be commended for integrating its strong public history concentration into its undergraduate offerings, and into its community outreach initiatives.** The department has already established curricular connections with International & Area Studies, but it could explore ways to expand that collaboration. Evidence from other campuses indicates that a link between History and some iteration of global studies increases enrollments in upper-division History courses.

Along these lines, in addition to the projected Digital Literacy/Liberal Studies minor, the department should consider developing concentrations in legal history, the history of capitalism, environmental history, medical history or history of technology (or some combination of these), subfields that might appeal to the professionalizing impulses of today's undergraduates.

The department might also offer additional study-away programs. Those currently taught and led by Louise Williams (Ireland) and Mark Jones (Japan) provide the students with exciting opportunities, but I suspect for many undergraduates the financial costs of travel to these sites are discouraging. Aside from raising funds for study-away scholarships, the department might consider creating courses (especially condensed "off-semester" courses in January or May) that would involve study and research in closer locations such as Washington, DC, or Puerto Rico. This would seem especially appropriate for the undergraduate minor in Public History.

There are also some areas (the Middle East, China, South Asia) currently not covered, or only irregularly covered, by the department's curriculum that elsewhere attract strong enrollments, and might draw on a new pool of majors. See below for some suggestions in this vein.

BSEd in History:

In addition to the data provided in the department program review, I met with John Tully and Kate McGrath to discuss the undergraduate major in History and Social Studies Education. Prof. Tully is highly regarded in teaching US history circles, and he and Prof. McGrath impressed me as quite dedicated to this program and its role in preparing **first-rate social-studies educators**. Some social studies teacher-training programs are struggling, enrollments-wise, because of the uncertainties of the job market for public-school teachers, but the BSEd program at CCSU seems to be maintaining a steady number of majors and graduates.

Although there is some debate about where social studies education belongs (i.e., in a department of history vs. a school of education), I think most historians, myself included, would regard a history department as the best location. At the same time, the historians involved in the program have to make sure that the pedagogical aspects of teacher training aren't neglected or treated as merely ancillary. The two faculty members most involved in the program seem very alert to this, and the requirements for the BSEd impressed me as striking a good balance between the academic side of teacher preparation (with requirements very similar to those for the BA in History) and the pedagogical/practical side.

With regard to adjuncts, the program makes wise use of the skills and experience of retired schoolteachers in the region, but Profs. Tully and McGrath did note that the adjuncts don't necessarily reflect the more diverse cohort currently preparing to be teachers and they are seeking ways to address that problem. In light of this, I do think that some of the faculty needs described below will be especially relevant to the students in the BSEd program.

### **Needs**

Faculty:

The most obvious need identified by the department (and with which I completely concur) is for a historian of the modern Middle East. Given the times we are living in, it borders on malpractice to have a History Department without a full-time, tenure-line historian of the Middle East and/or the Islamic

World. Not only is there an urgent need for students to have more exposure to the history of the Middle East, but an appointment in this area would also expand the department's currently rather slim offerings in non-Western history (by my count, the tenure-line faculty includes 7 US historians, 6 European historians, 3 Non-Western historians, and one historian of the ancient world).

I realize that the department is not likely to expand significantly over the next few years, and that it cannot expect to cover all major geographic areas and time periods. But should resources become available, I would suggest a position in Latino history given the large Latino population in the Hartford area. Another historian of Asia—either of China or South Asia—would also help to fill in some of the immense gaps in the department's "Non-Western" coverage. And the point here is not so much that all regions need to be equally covered, or that the department needs to re-make itself to reflect the ethnic composition of the student body, but that all of our students need to have certain competencies—including approaches to history that have emerged from the postcolonial world—that they are unlikely to develop in a department with so few historians working on areas outside the US and Europe. In this vein, when making future hiring decisions, the department might consider defining fields in such a way as to facilitate the hiring of historians whose work extends beyond a single geographic field (e.g., Global/Environmental, Atlantic World, the Indian Ocean, British Empire). This would be a way to expand coverage without necessarily requiring multiple lines.

The department has identified an appointment in the History of Technology as a means to address the appeal of STEM fields and to make connections with those fields. I think there is also the expectation that the person appointed in this position could contribute to Public History and the impending Digital Liberal Studies minor. This appointment seems like an excellent idea, but I would recommend figuring out beforehand whether the goal is to hire someone who could be a pivotal figure in a "technology and society" minor or someone who could advance digital history and contribute principally to Public History. It would be difficult to imagine a single candidate who could fulfill all these expectations.

Facilities:

As noted above, one of the most impressive features of the department is its excellent office facilities and up-to-date classrooms. Perhaps the only flaw that I detected was the absence of a classroom configured specifically for seminar-type classes (the one room with a seminar table is multi-functional). If students are seated for a lecture class, it can be difficult to get them to shift into a seminar-discussion mode in which they are talking with each other, and not just back and forth with the instructor.

The only complaint I heard about workspace was from the adjuncts. While they appreciate the relatively good work conditions at CCSU (cubicles, locked filing cabinets), they still feel they should have access to an office—even if a shared office, used on a rotating basis—to be more effective as instructors and colleagues.

### **MA Program in History**

The MA in History has been an object of much discussion in the discipline in recent decades. Given that a history M.A. on its own opens up few jobs, and most highly-ranked doctoral programs now admit students directly with a BA, there is some doubt about the utility of a master's program in history. I would say that there is now a sense that most general MA programs in History (as opposed to focused programs such as the MA in Public History) serve three constituencies: Middle- and High-school

teachers who wish to expand their knowledge and need to upgrade their credentials; aspirants to doctoral programs who feel they need to improve their portfolio before applying to PhD programs; local individuals interested in history with no specific career motivation. Since MA students typically work at least part-time while earning the degree, and have little access to financial aid, CCSU's ability to offer a relatively inexpensive MA program in History, with courses taught by active, publishing scholars, is a genuine service to the population of central Connecticut.

Although there has been a slight dip over the last two years, the number of students in the MA program has remained fairly steady and the enrollments in the 500-level courses have been quite impressive. The enrollment data supplied by the department indicates that, over the last three years, the two required gateway courses (501 and 502) have been fully enrolled or over-enrolled, and many of the 500-level topical seminars have been well-enrolled or full. In other words, there appears to be a significant demand for the general MA program in History, and the department seems to be dedicating an appropriate portion of its resources to the program. If anything, I suspect that most semesters another one or two 500-level courses could be scheduled and would fill, and I would strongly recommend that the department offer at least one 500-level course each year not exclusively on Europe or the US.

The structure of the MA program adheres in most ways to the standards in the discipline; the one unusual feature is the two-course gateway requirement. I gather that prior to 2014 the department attempted to cover both historiography and research methods in a single semester in the course *The Professional Historian* (501), but found (through learning outcomes data it collected) that some of the students were not fully grasping what constituted historiography and what its significance might be for their own research. It was then decided to dedicate 501 to research methods and create a separate course on historiography. This was a laudable use of learning outcomes data, which often strikes me at the graduate level as a waste of time (after all, the papers produced by a relatively small number of students can be assessed individually, rather than serving as the basis for generalizations about what the students in the cohort are learning). But even I will admit that learning outcomes data would more quickly reveal a general area of weakness that wouldn't be evident to the changing cast of faculty teaching the graduate courses. Not only did the department identify this weakness, but it quickly took steps to address it. And while the main intention was to improve student performance, the requirement of these two courses probably also serves to create a stronger rapport—a cohort, if you will—among the MA students who enter in a particular year, something that is especially valuable and valued when dealing with a group of students many of whom study part-time and work off campus.

Since the master's thesis occupies a major portion of the student's time in the program, I would encourage the department to create small grants to allow students to make research trips to sites such as the National Archives in College Park, MD, or the Kennedy Library in Boston or the Schomburg Center in New York. Periodic workshops bringing together thesis writers to present their work in progress and discuss the challenges of writing would help students stay on track and reinforce their sense of being part of an academic community. Master's students should also be encouraged—including with small travel grants—to attend and present their work in regional conferences (such as NECLAS—the New England Council on Latin American Studies). As demonstrated by the volume edited by Matthew Warshauer that incorporated several research papers authored by his MA students, given the right resources and motivation, students in the master's program can produce scholarship worth sharing with other historians, either in conferences or in print.

As for time to completion of the MA, in most MA history programs the expectation is that students will finish the thesis and receive the degree in 1.5 to 2 years, but only if they are enrolled full-time. Since the majority of students are enrolled part-time, 3 to 4 years to finish seems quite reasonable.

I also think it was a good decision to assign two faculty members (in different fields of concentration) to be graduate program directors for the MA, both for academic and practical reasons. Given the fact that the department has only a single staffperson, it seems crucial that faculty take on responsibility for advising students and minimizing the administrative burden of the MA program.

Finally, just as important as collecting data on learning outcomes is collecting data on career outcomes. Again, some of the students may enroll in the MA program simply because they enjoy history, which I would regard as a perfectly legitimate motive for further study, but others certainly seek the degree with specific ambitions and expectations, and it would be wise to see if their goals are realistic. Also, getting a better sense of what graduates do with the MA might move the department to make modifications in the MA program in light of those outcomes.

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January 25, 2016

## **Report on the MA in Public History**

The following report on the MA program in Public History at Central Connecticut State University is based on materials and data provided by the History Department at CCSU as well as on conversations with the main faculty involved with the program and with students enrolled in the program.

### **Public History: The State of the Field**

Over the last 15 years Public History has emerged as one of the most dynamic subfields in the discipline of History, and one that has been successful at drawing interest from undergraduate and graduate students at a time of (otherwise) declining enrollments in History. Not surprisingly, more “traditional” institutions of higher learning, especially in the Northeast, have been slow to recognize Public History as an intellectually legitimate and exciting field, but gradually its significance has been grasped, and embraced, by the historical profession, and the American Historical Association has devoted considerable energy over the last eight years to integrating public history into its annual meetings and delineating “best practices” for tenure and promotion standards in public history. I have noted at my own institution that not just MA but doctoral students have expressed a desire for more training in public history and more support for alternative career paths.

In light of this, I think the Department of History at CCSU should be congratulated for its prescience in hiring someone as early as 2001 to teach courses in Public History, and then securing approval a year later for an MA Program in Public History, one of the first in the region. The CCSU program was notable not only for recognizing early on the value and virtues of public history, but also for integrating it into a department of history, rather than hiving it off in a school of architecture or a separate museum studies program (or in the case of my own institution, creating a separate MA track, staffed entirely by clinical and adjunct faculty who have little or no connection to the rest of the department). I gather the initial emphasis of the program—reflecting Prof. Briann Greenfield’s areas of concentration—was on museums and material culture. What allowed CCSU to become a more comprehensive center for training students in public history was the hiring in 2006 of Prof. Leah Glaser, who had worked in the National Park Service and had expertise in both historic preservation and local history. This enabled the department to offer a wider range of public history courses, and to offer them regularly enough to allow a full-time student to finish the MA in two years. With the departure of Prof. Greenfield in 2014 to become executive director of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the department hired (first on a visiting line, and then in a tenure-track position) Prof. Daniel Broyld, who brought both expertise in Public History and in African-American studies to the program, adding both methodological and thematic diversity. More recently, Prof. Prescott has been offering courses in digital history, further expanding the range of the Public History MA and keeping it current with new developments in the field.

### **Faculty**

The rise of public history as a major subfield has brought with it the challenge of rethinking and diversifying the criteria by which we evaluate historical scholarship since the most important works produced by public historians are not necessarily the standard monographic books and articles by which historians have been traditionally judged. Although I very much support this move to re-define and

diversify criteria for hiring, tenure, and promotion, I also believe that public historians who publish books with university presses and contribute articles to scholarly journals are more likely to engage actively with their colleagues and with graduate students in other subfields of history, and be able to draw on other programs within and outside the department. Therefore, I think the two core public-history faculty members, Prof. Glaser, who is the program director and associate professor of history, and Prof. Broyld, assistant professor of history and African-American Studies, have the sort of scholarly profiles that allow them to be fully integrated into the larger mission of the CCSU History Department, and even to influence the direction of the department. Aside from her many public history projects, Prof. Glaser has published an important monograph with a leading university press, and a number of articles in books and journals. Prof. Broyld has a book forthcoming, also with a leading university press, and several other publications. And between them they cover a fairly broad geographic and methodological terrain, and can offer a degree of diversity that many public history programs lack.

In addition, several members of the History Department, though not primarily public historians, are actively involved in Public History and offer courses for the MA; these include Professors Heather Prescott, Matthew Warshauer, John Tully, Robert Wolff, and Glenn Sunshine. In contrast to other public history programs, which struggle to gain respect and legitimacy within their departments, the Public History program at CCSU is able to draw on faculty who work on questions of memory, commemoration, digital methods, and historical literacy.

### Curriculum/Enrollments

In a sense, the curriculum for the Public History MA mirrors the profiles of the core faculty members in that it gives the students a solid grounding in a wide range of historiography and historical methods, while also providing intensive instruction and hands-on training in public history. I think it was an excellent decision to require the Public History students to take the two gateway courses—The Professional Historian (501) and Historiography (502)—required of the other MA students. Once again, the program is designed in such a way as to make the MA in Public History part of the larger field of History without in any way diminishing the rigor of its students' training.

Judging from the course listings for the last four semesters, the core public-history faculty members alternately teach courses in American Material Culture (404/504) and on Local and Community History (405/505), both of which are offered in a format that combines MA students and upper-division undergraduate minors. The MA students are also required to take the Seminar in Public History (510) and Topics in Public History (511)—the latter, over the last two years, has been devoted to such themes as Museum Interpretation, Historic Preservation and Digital History. Finally, aside from three electives in related fields, the MA students also do internships (521) and a public-history project course (595), which ensure that they will have sufficient practical experience by the time they complete their degree.

This is a rigorous, coherent curriculum, made stronger by the fact that the courses are all taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty in the History Department. [As a base of comparison, I can cite the Archives and Public History MA program at NYU, directed by a non-tenured clinical professor who teaches the main required courses; additional courses are all taught by adjunct faculty.] It is this feature of the program that allows it to be so well-embedded within the department and to recruit faculty from other subfields to teach courses under the Public History rubric on a variety of themes. It also enables the public historians to simultaneously offer an undergraduate minor in public history. Given how central questions of memory and memorialization are to certain subfields of history at the moment, I

think it makes no sense to draw sharp boundaries between “public historians” and the rest of the department.

Perhaps the only suggestion I have for revising the current curriculum would be to require that all students in the MA program have at least some training in digital sources and methods. Prof. Prescott has begun to offer a course in digital history, but I don’t believe it’s currently a requirement for the MA. And as mentioned above, some training in entrepreneurial/business skills should be incorporated into the curriculum (though not necessarily as an entire course).

The enrollment data that I reviewed indicates that the applicant pool and the number of admitted students has moderately decreased over the last six years, from an average of 25 students in the program to about 20. Since during that same period graduate applications nationally have dropped across the board, and typically at a rate higher than 20 percent, this does not seem to be a cause for alarm. The course enrollments in public history are also generally quite robust, with most of the seminars reaching their cap or very near full.

### **Use of Learning Outcomes Data**

The five learning outcomes for the MA in Public History indicated in the department program review all strike me as quite appropriate as well as feasible in light of the current structure of the program. The addition of a separate historiography course (502) to the overall MA curriculum—a decision based on learning outcomes data—is a positive development for students in both the regular MA program and the Public History program. One of the major challenges for public historians is to navigate the need for a clearly-conveyed message in a project and the multiple historical interpretations attached to a particular process or event. In light of this, graduate training in historiography seems absolutely vital so that clarity does not come at expense of scholarly sophistication.

The one goal that the program might want to add to the five current learning outcomes is for the students who complete the degree to demonstrate some basic entrepreneurial skills. This concern will be revisited below.

Perhaps equally important to consider is how well the program is “learning”—that is, keeping up with the new directions and demands of this rapidly evolving field (such as work in digital sources and methods). Even more than in other subfields, it is crucial for funding to be available that will enable the faculty involved in the program to participate in conferences and attend workshops on new technologies and methodologies.

### **Placement**

Although I didn’t have access to a full report on the placement record of the Public History program, ample anecdotal evidence from faculty and students and the website indicate that so far the record has been very strong, and that **the reputation of the program and its excellent network of contacts with potential employers have been a major factor in students’ success on the job market.** At a time when employment is such a stressful issue for most undergraduate and graduate students, and especially those earning degrees in History, it was refreshing to meet with a group of students who felt that they were **getting ample guidance and assistance with the process of finding a job, and were optimistic** that

they would be successful in securing employment that used their skills and knowledge. Students spoke enthusiastically about having opportunities to publish or to play a significant role in a major public-history project. Most of the students secure an initial job placement before they complete the degree, so the transition from student to professional seems unusually smooth.

The majority of the students graduating from the program find employment in the region, which is to be expected, but there is some concern that the local “market” for public historians may soon reach its saturation point. Actually, a number of the students quoted on the website have positions outside the Connecticut or New England area, including one who works in historic preservation for FEMA, another who is employed by an oral history project at the Library of Congress, and yet another who is a curator at the Wells Fargo History Museum in Philadelphia. Hence, there is already evidence that the Public History program’s reach exceeds its immediate location. Furthermore, positions in public history are not fixed in number the way departmental vacancies for PhDs tend to be. Organizations, agencies, and institutions that, in the past, didn’t think of public history or historical preservation as part of their operations are now more inclined to hire a historian, so the market, local and national, may still be growing. And with some modest training in marketing and business management, some of the program’s graduates might be able to create jobs for themselves by working on a freelance, project by project, basis. Therefore, I understand the concern about the finite nature of the local job market, but I think there may be still be room to grow.

### **Needs/Concerns**

The core public history faculty indicated a strong interest in hiring a historian whose work would focus on the Latino communities in the greater Hartford area, and would be in History and Latino studies, with an emphasis on public history. The Latino Studies field has grown considerably over the last decade and I think it would be possible to identify someone who could simultaneously address needs in Latino history and public history. Such a hire might have the effect of broadening the span of the Public History program and perhaps enabling it to have more of a hemispheric, rather than strictly North American, reach. Faculty also expressed interest in eventually hiring a historian of technology, or a specialist in environmental history, either of which would boost the program in Public History’s connections to the STEM fields (and an environmental historian could expand connections to the National Park Service). I’m sure this would be a good thing both for the MA program and for the department as a whole, but given the limited resources and the changing (or changed) demographics, I would prioritize the hire in Latino history.

A very reasonable concern expressed by the Public History faculty is that their program, which was such a pioneer in the region and has been so successful, will nonetheless be overshadowed by better-funded newcomers to the field who are jumping on the public-history bandwagon. To be sure, CCSU’s reputation in the field, and the many connections it has to potential employers, give it resources that a new program cannot easily duplicate. I also don’t think that online courses in Public History represent much of threat—given the hands-on, place-sensitive nature of the field (or at least a portion of it), it’s not a subject area that lends itself to virtual instruction. Still, I think it is important that the CCSU administration recognize the prestige that the public history program brings to the department and the university, and the exceptional role it can play in community outreach and in educating the public on the value of history and the humanities.

One way to recognize this would be to provide more funding for student recruitment, especially from out of state. Tuition remission and even small stipends would allow the MA in Public History to attract applicants from outside Connecticut and reinforce CCSU's standing as a leading center of Public History in the Northeast. I also think a significant effort should be made to publicize the program beyond the immediate area. Whereas the regular MA in History is not likely to attract many applicants beyond central Connecticut, I think the Public History program—with its strong track record of placing its graduates in good public history positions—is much more likely to do so.

It might also be noted that at a time when this history department (and history departments more generally) are somewhat concerned about the drop in the number of women opting for the history major, Public History is one of the subfields that has proved consistently attractive to women. I also think the appointment of Prof. Broyld, specialist in African-American history, and a future appointment in Latino history would make Public History a potential engine for greater diversity in the department.

### **Concluding Remarks**

I want to end by emphasizing how impressed I am by the Public History program at Central Connecticut State University. The MA in Public History and the undergraduate minor in Public History are distinctive and innovative features of the CCSU History Department and a source of prestige for the entire university. There are, of course, other strengths in the department, including Polish Studies and the teaching of history, but I think Public History has the potential to bring together faculty and students from several subfields, and to connect the university to the larger community, in a way that is unique. I agree with the faculty in public history that it's still a widely misunderstood or under-estimated field, so I hope this report will contribute to clarifying its significance and securing it the support it deserves.

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January 30, 2016