

Public History

Department Information

- **Department Web Site:**
www.ndsu.edu/history/ (<http://www.ndsu.edu/history/>)
- **Credential Offered:**
B.S.; B.A.
- **Official Program Curriculum:**
catalog.ndsu.edu/undergraduate/program-curriculum/public-history/ (<http://catalog.ndsu.edu/undergraduate/program-curriculum/public-history/>)

Do you like to study history but wonder what you can do with a history degree? If so, the public history program at North Dakota State University may be for you. Public history is an umbrella field that encompasses archival work, museum studies, collections management, historic preservation, cultural resource management, and many other public facing historical professions. This innovative program trains and educates undergraduates in a variety of applied history fields. It provides students with the opportunity to explore a variety of careers and prepares them for employment or graduate school in the expanding field of public history. Examples of opportunities for public history majors include employment in historical societies, museums, archives, historic preservation, corporations, municipalities, labor and farm organizations, and state and federal government agencies.

THE PROGRAM

The core of the major is 51 credits, which consists of a well-integrated combination of courses designed to provide students with training in history and in the specific field of public history. The goal of the program is to provide a structured framework of courses and allowance for some flexibility to reflect personal interests. The public history major provides students with a solid foundation in history content and methodology and introduces them to the sub-fields of public history. A crucial part of the program is an approved internship of nine credit hours at a historical agency, often at local museums such as Bonanzaville in West Fargo or the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County at the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead, Minnesota. The internship is an opportunity for practical, on-the-job experience in public history.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Recent graduates in public history are employed at the State Historical Society of North Dakota, the National Park Service, and at regional county museums and historic sites. Currently, the U.S. Department of Labor predicts that openings at public history sites is “projected to grow 9 percent from 2018 to 2028, faster than the average for all occupations.” Further information on career opportunities can be found in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* published by the U.S. Department of Labor. Some students decide to pursue further graduate study after completing a public history degree at NDSU. Several of our recent graduates have been admitted to leading graduate public history programs such as the Cooperstown Museum Studies Program and Middle Tennessee State University.

THE CURRICULUM

Students begin with 9 to 15 credits at the 100-200 level to provide a foundation for their later work. Public history courses at the 200 level may be used to meet this requirement. Year-long survey courses in U.S. history and Western Civilization are provided to give students a basic knowledge of the history of the United States and of the wider cultural heritage of the western world. After completing 100-200 level courses, students complete a course on historical research and writing. At the junior or senior level, students take a sequence of courses in American, European, and World history. These courses provide students with in-depth historical content. Courses in museum collections management, digital history, and public memory and memorialization are also required. The resources of the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies at the NDSU Archives are used in these classes. Three to nine more credits of history at the junior or senior level are required to gain further historical knowledge; these courses are chosen after consultation with an advisor. A three-credit senior seminar is required of all history majors as a capstone experience.

Courses such as introduction to public history, museum studies, collections management, and digital history are designed to instill knowledge of specific areas in public history. The introduction to public history course provides an overview of the field and an opportunity to create a public history project. The museum studies course familiarizes students with the theory and practice of museum work and provides experience creating an exhibit. The collections management course focuses on the care and management of museum collections. These courses and the required historical content courses provide students with an understanding of cultural, political, social and economic changes through time and teach students how to craft an interpretation of those changes.

Finally, a nine-credit internship provides practical experience in the field of public history. The State Historical Society of North Dakota (and other local and regional historical agencies) provide opportunities in areas such as collections management, archival work, historical editing, historical preservation, and interpretation of historic sites.