

Black Arts Movement and Cultural Activism

26:050:521 / 21:526:410 Q2 / 26:510:551 Q1 / 21:014:401 Q1

Thursdays, 2:30pm-5:20pm
Engelhard Hall 215

Instructor Information:

Mary Rizzo
Associate Professor
History Department
Office: 247A Conklin Hall
Office Hours: TBD
Email: mary.rizzo@rutgers.edu
Twitter: @rizzo_pubhist

Teaching Assistant:

Erin Santana
PhD Candidate
Graduate Program in American Studies
Office Hours: TBD
Email: erin.r.santana@rutgers.edu

Course Description:

From 1966-1983, *Chicory* magazine published the poetry, art, and stories of predominantly Black working-class residents of Baltimore. More than a magazine, *Chicory* created a public sphere, where people whose voices are often left out of the public record could be heard and circulated. *Chicory* was also inspired by the Black Arts Movement, an artistic movement that arose alongside Black Power to advocate for self determination for Black people worldwide. It became part of a network of artist-activists in Baltimore.

In this experiential public history class, we will use this extraordinary resource to tell this history through an exhibition that will be on display at the [Enoch Pratt Free Library](#) in Baltimore in June 2022 and will travel through library branches after that. The exhibition will be co-created in partnership with [Writers in Baltimore Schools](#), [Dewmore Baltimore](#), [Bard Early College High School Baltimore](#), former *Chicory* editors, and Pratt library, and funded by the [Whiting Foundation](#).

Co-creation is defined as giving community members decision-making power in a project. As the authors of the [MASS Action Toolkit](#) describe, “Co-creators play a role throughout the whole project/exhibition. Community voice is a key piece of the narrative and is visible throughout the whole project/exhibition.” (106-7) Students in this class will research and write the exhibit text with guidance and feedback from young people in Baltimore. The Baltimore partners will also create their own pieces for the exhibit in Spring 2022.

This class will ground students in the history of Baltimore and the Black Arts Movement and the theory and method of progressive public history and exhibit creation. We will collaboratively move through the process of exhibit creation, from audience analysis to research to writing to evaluation.

I look forward to engaging in this process with you.

Community Advisory Board

A unique aspect of this class is our work with community partners. Public history is collaborative work with communities who shape the project. Our community partners, Writers in Baltimore Schools and Dewmore Baltimore, are nonprofit organizations that work with young writers of color in Baltimore. Bard Early College High School Baltimore is a college preparatory high school that emphasizes social justice. Our advisory board also includes Melvin Brown and Adam Jackson, two former *Chicory* editors, and representatives from Pratt library, the main library in Baltimore and the exhibit host.

Because our advisors are located in Baltimore, we will use Zoom and asynchronous methods to communicate with them throughout the semester.

Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will have:

- Learned about Baltimore's history, particularly with regard to race and social justice movements in the mid-20th century;
- Gained knowledge and put into practice theories and methods of progressive public history;
- Interpreted primary sources, especially cultural texts and creative expression;
- Synthesized secondary readings and interpreted primary sources into a public exhibition;
- Worked with community partners and community advisory board.

Expectations

This course weaves together three strands as indicated on the syllabus. Historical background readings focus on providing the content we need to contextualize our exhibit research and writing. Collaboration indicates weeks where we will work with our advisors and community partners. Finally, during weeks marked content development we will learn exhibit development and research and write the exhibit.

Another unique aspect of this class is that both graduate and upper-level undergraduate students are enrolled. **Everyone will be treated as both students who are expected to complete required readings and contribute thoughtfully to class discussions and as members of a project team who will work collaboratively to produce public history texts and materials.** Collaborative work is a key skill for all public historians (and pretty much anybody who isn't a hermit). We will practice it throughout this course.

Our semester plan is ambitious. That said, the pandemic continues to disrupt people's lives. It's impossible to know what the semester will hold. I will be as flexible as possible with you if you communicate with me about your needs and issues in a timely manner. In return, I ask for your flexibility with me in case situations change and we must adjust our class plans along the way.

Assignments

- Participation, Attendance and Peer Review: 10%
- Exhibit Review: Due: September 16, 10%
- Listening Session Analysis: Due: September 30, 10%
- Baltimore History Short Paper: Due: October 14, 15%
- Black Arts Movement and Chicory Instagram Posts: Due October 28, 15%
- Exhibit Section Text and Images: 30%
 - Section Big Idea

- Section Big Idea, Title, Question, Storyline and Sources
- Draft of Section
- Semester Reflection: 10%

Grading Scale

- A = 90-100
- B+ = 85-89
- B = 80-84
- C+ = 75-79
- C = 70-74
- D = 59-69
- F = 0-58

Late Assignments:

I expect assignments to be completed on the day they are due. If there are circumstances that prevent you from doing so, please contact me as soon as possible. Knowing when to expect papers to be submitted allows me to manage my time and be responsive to you. Because we are working with external partners, it is particularly important that you communicate with me about any late assignments.

Academic Integrity:

You will follow the University's Policy on Academic Integrity, which falls under the Code of Student Conduct. The policy and the consequences of violating it are outlined here:
<http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/office-dean-student-affairs/academic-integrity-policy>.

I strictly follow the University's rules regarding plagiarism and other academic irregularities. Please consult me if you have any questions about what is and is not appropriate regarding the use of sources or citation.

Attendance and Participation

You will be expected to attend class having completed readings and assignments and be prepared to actively participate (which means you should bring the readings and your notes with you to class). If you cannot attend class, please let me know at least 24 hours before class (except in the case of emergencies when you should let me know as soon as possible).

In order for us to accomplish our ambitious agenda, it is necessary for me to communicate with you and for you to communicate with each other outside of our formal class time. The easiest way to do this is by email. **You are required to check your email regularly and to respond to emails from me or your classmates in a timely manner.** If you use a different email address than your Rutgers' one, I suggest that you either forward email from your Rutgers account to your other address or you make sure that I have your correct email address.

Disability Statement

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must

contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:
<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973) 353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

Texts

The texts below are required. I recommend you buy them if you are interested in future work in public history, exhibition design, or the Black Arts Movement. However, you can also find these on reserve through the library (linked on Canvas under Reading List)

- Bracey, Sanchez and Smethurst, *SOS—Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014).
- King, Drabinski, Davis, *Baltimore Revisited: Stories of Inequality and Resistance in a US City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019).
- Serrell, *Exhibit Labels* (NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

Other readings are either linked below or available on the Canvas site for our class.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: September 2

Class Intro

Week 2: September 9

Creating Inequality in Baltimore - Historical Background

Topic: Today, Baltimore is a hypersegregated city. In 2015, the [median household income](#) for white people in Baltimore was \$60,550. For Black people, it was \$33,610. What are the historical causes of this inequality? How have politics, white supremacy, racism, and capitalism created these conditions?

- Lawrence Brown, "Negro Invasion," *The Black Butterfly*, 64-103.
- Karen Olson, "Old West Baltimore," *The Baltimore Book*, 57-80.
- Michael Casiano, "The Pot: Criminalizing Black Neighborhoods in Jim Crow Baltimore," *Baltimore Revisited*, 37-51.
- Lady Brion, "Two Baltimores," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLJqpmPnAT0> (watch from :40 to 3:45).

Week 3: September 16

Listening Session Planning - Collaboration

Topic: We will use a format regularly used by public historians called a "listening session," to learn more about what our Baltimore project advisors would like to see in our exhibit.

- Janeen Bryant and Kamille Bostick, "What's the Big Idea? Using Listening Sessions to Build Relationships and Relevance," AASLH Technical Leaflet.
- Guest visit by Melvin Brown and Everett Adam Jackson

Due: Exhibit Review

Week 4: September 23

Listening Session with Baltimore Partners - Collaboration

- Listening session via Zoom

Week 5: September 30

Uneven Development in Baltimore - Historical Background

Topic: Who gets to decide who a city is for? Through various policies from urban renewal to tax breaks, cities remake themselves. But who profits from these developments? Who is left behind?

- David Harvey, "A View from Federal Hill," *The Baltimore Book*, 227-252.
- Marisela Gomez, "Johns Hopkins University and the History of Developing East Baltimore," *Baltimore Revisited*, 243-256.
- Mary Rizzo, "Image and Infrastructure: Making Baltimore a Tourist City," *Baltimore Revisited*, 257-270.
- Matthew Durlington and Samuel Gerald Collins, "Rethinking Gentrification in Baltimore, Sharp Leadenhall," *Baltimore Revisited*, 286-292.
- Richard E. Otten, "Under Armour's Global Headquarters and the Redevelopment of South Baltimore," *Baltimore Revisited*, 306-312.
- "Ground Down and Depopulated, Poppleton Makes a Last Stand," *Baltimore Brew*, <https://baltimorebrew.com/2021/07/08/ground-down-and-depopulated-poppleton-makes-a-last-stand/>

Due: Listening Session Analysis

Week 6: October 7

Contestation and Resistance - Historical Background

Topic: Black Baltimoreans fought back against disenfranchisement, racism and oppression. This week's readings show the range of strategies and tactics used, from peaceful protest to cultural activism. In particular, these readings will help us think about the differences between liberalism and radicalism in the Black freedom struggle.

- Rhonda Williams, "We're Tired of Being Treated Like Dogs: Poor Women and Power Politics," *The Black Scholar*, Special Edition on Black Power Studies: A New Scholarship, Fall/Winter 2001, 31-41.
- Leif Frederickson, "The Riot Environment: Sanitation, Recreation, And Pacification in the Wake of Baltimore's 1968 Uprising," *Baltimore Revisited*, 87-102.
- Jennifer A. Ferretti, "Temple of the Drama: The Five-Year Protest at Ford's Theater," *Baltimore Revisited*, 152-158.

- Mary Rizzo, “The Most Authentic Microphone of Black People Talking Ever Devised: Chicory and the Poetry of Human Renewal,” *Come and Be Shocked*.
- Excerpt from “A Plan for Action,” Baltimore’s War on Poverty program, p. 1-3.
- Donald Grafton Gwynn, “White Liberals (Most of Them or All of Them, I Think Sometimes,” *Chicory*, June 1968. Go to Chicory digital archive and find this poem: <http://bit.ly/chicorymag>

Week 7: October 14

Exhibits - Content Development

Topic: What are the essential components of an exhibit? How do we organize information to be informative and enjoyable to visitors?

Read: Exhibit Labels, Part I, II and III.

Due: Baltimore History Paper

Week 8: October 21

What Was the Black Arts Movement? - Historical Background

Topic: How did participants in and scholars of the Black Arts Movement define it? As these readings show, BAM must be understood in relation to histories of Black radicalism both in the US and abroad.

- Komozi Woodard, “Groundwork,” *A Nation Within A Nation*, 49-68.
- John H. Bracey Jr., Sonia Sanchez, and James Smethurst, “Editors’ Introduction,” *SOS—Calling All Black People*, 1-10.
- Amiri Baraka, “Black Art,” in *Black Fire*, 302-4.
- Gloria Gree, “Black Poetry Does,” *Chicory*, May 1979. Go to Chicory digital archive and find this poem: <http://bit.ly/chicorymag>

Week 9: October 28

Black Aesthetics as Revolution - Historical Background

Topic: Is there a Black aesthetic? This question motivated a great deal of theoretical and artistic work by BAM activists. In these readings, we’ll examine how these thinkers saw culture as essential to revolutionary Black activism.

- Larry Neal, “The Black Arts Movement,” *SOS*, 55-66.
- Maulana Karenga, “Black Cultural Nationalism,” *SOS*, 51-54.
- Scot Brown, “Memory and Internal Organization Life,” *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization and Black Cultural Nationalism*, p. 38-73
- Combahee River Collective Statement, 197-208.
- “Helmeted Policeman” *Chicory*, October 1967.
- “Sweet Inspiration” *Chicory*, November 1972
- Cover, *Chicory*, November 1973

- OOAU statement, SOS.

Due: BAM and IG Posts

Module: Bringing it Together

Week 10: November 4

Section Big Idea and Panel description DRAFT idea due

Advisors give feedback asynchronously

Readings TBD

Week 11: November 11

Week 12: November 18

Week 13: December 2

In-class peer review and workshopping

Week 14: December 9

Presentation of Draft Exhibit to Partners

Final Exhibit Text and Project Reflection DUE TBD