



**UL
PUBLIC
HISTORY**
Community-
Engaged History

The Public Record:

News from UL Public History

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From the Director



DR. IAN BEAMISH

Associate Professor &
Director of Public History
ian.beamish@louisiana.edu

I am Ian Beamish, Director of Public History here at ULL for the past year and a half and I would like to welcome you to the first issue of the UL Public History

Program's newsletter, The Public Record. With the addition of Sarah Rodriguez, the Associate Director of Public History, we aim to become a nationally-known public history program and this new publication is one small part of increasing our connections with alumni, a major pillar of our strategy. We hope to connect with alumni who no longer reside in the Lafayette area, highlight the evolving work of the program and its graduates, publicize upcoming events and opportunities, and offer funding and support to alumni. I highly encourage those of you reading this to urge friends and colleagues with ties to the program to subscribe. → [Subscribe for opportunities and funding updates.](#)

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L A F A Y E T T E *

From the Associate Director

SARAH I. RODRIGUEZ

Associate Director of Public History
& the Guilbeau Center
sarah.rodriguez@louisiana.edu



My name is Sarah I. Rodriguez, and I am the Associate Director of Public History and the Guilbeau Center at UL Lafayette. I have worked at UL getting familiar with the Public History program and its partners since February 2025. I earned a B.A. in History with a minor in Economics from William & Mary in 2018 and a M.A. in History, concentrating in Public History, at the University of West Georgia in 2022. My first museum job was as a tour guide for 4th and 5th grade student groups visiting the archeological site and museum at Historic Jamestowne. Since then, I have worked at other museums in Virginia and Georgia, completed archival work for the Invisible Histories Project, led the Oral History program at the Southern Foodways Alliance, and taken on various other roles throughout the public history realm. I am passionate about history's ability to build empathy and transform our current perspectives and lived experiences. I am excited to connect with alumni of the UL program and to support our current students with working professionals in the field.



Program Mission

- **Train students for public history practice** in settings that require shared authority, civic engagement, and reflexive educational work, preparing them for careers in museums, archives, digital humanities, preservation, and community organization.
- **Support public history work across Louisiana and beyond.**
- **Advance community-driven historical practice** through fieldwork and public engagement.
- **Promote ethical and inclusive historical work** rooted in relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility.

From the Guilbeau Center



The Guilbeau Center has been hard at work in Spring 2026 to serve the needs of the UL, Lafayette, and surrounding communities. Graduate Research Assistants Morgan Pierce and Ezra Jett, both pursuing their M.A.'s in History at UL Lafayette, have kept the Center open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 to 1:30 and provided guidance and resources to visiting students, faculty, and community members. Undergraduate Research Assistants Brittany Hohensee and Bruce Tête have done amazing work helping organize the Center's files and provide outreach through our social media. The Center's staff just completed a large initiative to film and record all sessions at the recent Louisiana Historical Association's conference in Lafayette, utilizing the resources available at the center. The call for applications for the Spring 2026 Community Solidarity Fellowships has gone live: → [See details here.](#)

Visit → GuilbeauCenter.com to learn more.

Alumni Professional Development Grant



The Guilbeau Charitable Trust is pleased to announce the new Guilbeau Professional Development Grant for alumni of the UL Public History MA program.

Funds may be used for:

- training workshops
- conferences
- professional courses
- skill development opportunities

Funds should be spent within 12 months of award and recipients will be asked to send a receipt/proof of how funds were used in order to be eligible for future grants.

To Apply:

Submit a one-page proposal, brief budget, your graduation year, and CV/resume to sarah.rodriquez@louisiana.edu.

Award amount:
up to \$750

Application deadlines:
Jan 1 & July 1

Career Opportunities

American Alliance of Museums
→ aam-us-jobs.careerwebsite.com

National Council on Public History
→ ncph.org/jobs

Southeastern Museums Conference
→ semcdirect.net/jobs

MuseWeekly
→ udel.edu



Employers

Submit jobs, internships, and announcements for UL Public History students and alumni. Contact:
sarah.rodriquez@louisiana.edu

Call for Alumni Input



Participated in **Museum on the Move**? Help shape what comes next. → [Complete the survey.](#)



Dr. Ian Beamish

Associate Professor

Director of Public History

Public History, Tourism and Memory, Nineteenth Century US



Dr. Robert Carriker

Professor

Public History, 20th-Century U.S., and Western History



Dr. Deborah Clifton

Adjunct Professor

Curator of Collections

UL Lafayette Science Museum



Dr. Theodore Foster, III

Assistant Professor

Civil Rights History and Historical Memory



Dr. Jacob Gautreaux

Visiting Instructor

Louisiana and Environmental History



Dr. Michael Martin

Professor

Department Head

History, Geography, and Philosophy



Dr. Marissa Petrou

Assistant Professor

Director of Guilbeau Center for Public History

Public History and German Studies



Dr. Liz Skilton

Associate Professor

Associate Director of Research

Blanco Public Policy Center



Sarah I. Rodriguez

Associate Director

Public History and the Guilbeau Center



M.A. History - Public History Concentration



Ashley Birdsall

Capstone: A Lady's Natural Science – 19th-century chemist & mineralogist research in partnership with the Oxford History of Science Museum

Expected graduation: Fall 2026



Connor Cruse

Research focus:
American public history

Current project: Historic Black Descendant Communities Initiative in partnership with Iberia African American Historical Society (IAAHS)

Expected graduation: Fall 2026



Madelynn Dunn

Research focus: Military history – WWII, Vietnam, and the Marine Corps

Expected graduation: Fall 2026



Morgan Pierce

Radio Producer – Radio Acadie (KRVS 88.7 FM) – “Zoom in Zoom Out”

Research focus: 19th-century Louisiana – Civil War & Lost Cause memory

Expected graduation: Fall 2027



Emily Lindner

Current project: Digitizing St. Landry parish records (Center for Louisiana Studies); research on the origins of the Rougarou in Louisiana folklore

Expected graduation: Spring 2027



Carson Savoie

Research focus: Mid-twentieth-century Black Freedom Movement

Current project: Digital exhibit highlighting networks that built & sustained the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

Expected graduation: Spring 2026



Alumni Spotlight



XIAN MAYNOR

PUBLIC HISTORIAN

Shadows on the Teche

Since graduating from UL, I have begun working as the public historian at Shadows on the Teche in New Iberia, Louisiana. In this role, my work varies day to day, with a primary focus on exhibit design, tour development and interpretation, public programming, and expanding the ways visitors engage with the site through diverse interpretive media.

Recently, I delivered a lecture on international war correspondent William Howard Russell, exploring his impact on modern journalism and the evolution of war reporting. I am also currently leading the interpretation and acquisition of archival materials for two digital initiatives at the museum. These projects aim to give visitors access to historical narratives and primary sources that are not typically visible during a standard tour, creating a more immersive and comprehensive experience. Additionally, I am preparing the museum for our next public program which will focus on the relationship between religion and freedom movements such as abolition and the Civil Rights Movement.

Public history, at its core, is the practice of presenting and interpreting history for audiences beyond traditional academic settings. Through tours, lectures, exhibits, and digital innovation, my work seeks to make history accessible, engaging, and meaningful—demonstrating how the past continues to shape our present.



Public History in Action



UL Lafayette graduate and undergraduate history students attend the American Historical Association's 2026 annual meeting in Chicago with Associate Director of Public History Sarah Rodriguez (far right).

Support from the Jamie and Thelma Guilbeau Charitable Trust allows UL Public History students to attend professional conferences, conduct research, and pursue internships across the country. In January 2026, graduate and undergraduate history students attended the American Historical Association Annual Meeting in Chicago with Associate Director of Public History Sarah Rodriguez, connecting with historians and public history professionals from around the world.



Student Feature: Inside the New Orleans Jazz Museum → [nolajazzmuseum.org](http://nola jazzmuseum.org)

BY ETHAN CAMPISI, FALL 2025 UGRA

The New Orleans Jazz Museum is a site dedicated to the celebration of the genre of Jazz music and its origins in the city of New Orleans. The museum features exhibits dedicated to its history, influence, and spotlights of its most famous figures. In addition to exhibits, the museum also offers educational programs to visitors from K-12 students to adults. Other educational opportunities may involve summer camps and internships. One of UL History's graduate students, Connor Benoit, worked with museum director Greg Lambousy on archival and outreach work during his Summer 2025 internship at the Jazz Museum. The museum's performance center also hosts many live performances, oral histories, and lectures, highlighting how the museum reaches out to the local community. The New Orleans Jazz Museum's mission is to provide an energetic and interactive experience for people to help educate them on jazz's rich history in the city where it was founded.



Image courtesy of the New Orleans Jazz Museum





CARSON SAVOIE

Summer 2025 Intern, Chicago SNCC History Project

Over Summer 2025, I participated as an intern in a series of workshops and archival research visits with the Chicago SNCC History Project. SNCC, which stands for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was one of the major organizations active during the Black Freedom Movement of the 1960s. The Chicago SNCC History Project was formed in 2005 and is dedicated to preserving the history of the organization and its members by collecting oral histories with SNCC veterans, creating an archive housed in the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection, and hosting an annual summer internship. For the Chicago SNCC History Project, the goal of their work is to build the capacity within communities to learn, present, and discuss the historical context of the Long Black Freedom Struggle in critical relation to contemporary global struggles. During this internship, I engaged with a series of weekly workshops which centered on telling history from “the inside out,” as in, a narrative of history which deconstructed white supremacist mythologies of the past. At the end of the summer, we conducted a collaborative oral history and hosted a book launch event for SNCC veteran MacArthur Cotton.

ETHAN CAMPISI

Undergraduate Research Assistant, Public History Program, Fall 2025

I am a fourth-year undergraduate in history as well as a UGRA for the Public History department. During the fall 2025 semester, I worked on the newsletter for the program. I’m also involved with the UL chapter for Phi Alpha Theta as the organization’s Historian. As Historian, I document events to put together in our end-of-year Phi Alpha Theta scrapbook. My research interest is in indigenous history, and last semester I wrote a paper in my Historical Writing and Research seminar on indigenous masculinity and football at the Chemawa Indian School in the early twentieth century.



ASHLEY BIRDSALL

Student Representative to the Public History Committee



Ashley is a Masters Candidate in the Public History program at UL Lafayette. Her capstone project is partnered with the Oxford History of Science Museum. Titled “A Lady’s Natural Science,” Ashley’s capstone is a research project on a nineteenth century chemist and mineralogist whose materials are housed with the archives of the History of Science Museum. Ashley is the 2025-2026 Student Representative for the Public History Committee and the 2025-2026 President of the Epsilon-Xi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta.



Recent Faculty Activity

New Publication

“Beyond Keeping the Lights On: COVID-19’s Impact on Lower Mississippi River Valley Museums and Public History Sites,” The Public Historian 47, no. 3 (August 2025)

Published by Dr. Liz Skilton and Dr. Ian Beamish, the article highlights research conducted with UL Public History students:

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Amaya Gradnigov | Emily Lindner | Kerstyn Jones |
| Amber Gates | Greg Thomas | Luca Lancon |
| Anna Dardeau | Jacilyn Rabb | MJ Fasullo |
| Benjamin Omelev | Jeanne-Claire Benton | Brad Parfait |
| Carson Savoie | Kaci Breau | Rex Jones |
| Christine Savoie | LaTassia Dunn | Shydee Johnson |
| Derrasia Williams | Lauren Weimer | Tanya Greene |
| Elliott Wade | Lindsey DeLaughter | Taylor Townsend |
| | | Wesley Brown |

Conference Activity

Oral History Association Conference - Sarah I. Rodriguez acted as the chair for a panel on oral history and memory at the Oral History Association 2026 conference in Atlanta, GA in October 2025. The panel brought together folks working in oral history relating to music therapy, Black aging and place-making, and hospice care.

Queer History South - Dr. Marissa Petrou and Sarah I. Rodriguez participated in a roundtable about the community advisory board for the Southwest Louisiana LGBTQ+ Archive, along with Jae Regan and Jolie "Bug" Daigle. The virtual conference brought together archival professionals and community activists from around the country.

Forthcoming Scholarship

Dr. Ian Beamish and Dr. Liz Skilton recently submitted the manuscript for their edited collection *“Conjuring a New Old South: Culture & Tourism Along the Lower Mississippi Valley”* to UNC Press for consideration.

Opportunities

Upcoming Events

Friday, May 15, 2026 - Spring Semester Commencement
→ [Learn more.](#)

Friday, June 19, 2026 - “The Juneteenth Symposium: Faith and Freedom” will be held at the Shadows on the Teche Visitor Center in New Iberia, Louisiana. This Juneteenth event brings together scholarship, public history, and community engagement to reflect on African American struggles for liberation and self-determination. → [Learn more.](#)

Proposal deadline: April 13

Contact: bpolk@iaahsonline.org

September 16-19, 2026 - NCPH-AASLH joint conference in Providence, Rhode Island. → [Learn more.](#)

Stay Connected

→ [Subscribe to the UL Public History Newsletter.](#)

If you are an alumni, → [add yourself to our directory.](#)

Share Your News

You’re invited to submit announcements, project updates, internships, and job opportunities for future issues.

Contact: sarah.rodriquez@louisiana.edu

Dr. Ian Beamish, Director of Public History | ian.beamish@louisiana.edu

→ [Public History at UL Lafayette](#)

→ [Public History on Facebook](#)

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