

History 381: Issues in Public History  
Fall 2011  
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### **Boise Wiki assignment**

It's time to practice doing history for a public audience. Our first step is to write articles for the Boise Wiki at <http://www.boisewiki.org>.

The Boise Wiki will likely eventually take a form similar to that of the Davis Wiki ([daviswiki.org](http://daviswiki.org)). However, currently it is a tiny site; last spring, my graduate students kicked it off with some brief articles about the history of Boise. Our class this fall will continue that work.

We will be talking more in class about what constitutes a good wiki article—how to pick a topic, what writing voice to use, how much citation is reasonable, etc.—but for now here's your assignment:

**Write five articles for the Boise Wiki, one article in each of the following categories:**

- the history of a place in Boise (e.g. a building, park, school, intersection)
- the history of an interesting person or organization whose life or work intersected significantly with Boise (e.g. a politician, a dance company, a philanthropist, a business leader)
- the history of an event or movement in Boise (e.g. Art in the Park, the Boys of Boise, a local human rights effort)
- the history of a piece of Boise's material culture (e.g. public art, a statue, the excellence bell on campus, the inscriptions in the sidewalk on the Basque block, the cross on Table Rock)
- a themed mini tour that includes a map of Boise

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Before you write your article, do a search of the wiki to discover if there are already articles on that topic. I do not want to see duplicate articles. If you do want to build on a short article that already exists, that's fine.

Articles should be at least 200 words in length, and ideally will be 250-500 words, though in many cases longer articles are appropriate.

You should draw on both primary and secondary sources, though I understand primary sources will not be available for all articles. Try to pick at least three topics on which there will be some kind of primary source material (photographs, newspaper articles, archival material) to draw on.

Article topics are first come, first served. If you would like to claim a topic, let me know, and I will start a Google doc where we can keep track of who is writing what.

By their very nature, wikis change frequently, as anyone can edit any page. It's possible, then, that another student will make contributions or corrections to a page you started. Accordingly, you'll need to turn in to me **a printed version** of each wiki article that is primarily your work. If you built on an existing article, provide me with "before" and "after" versions of the article. If someone else provided extensive revisions to your article after you posted it, turn in a version that best represents *your* efforts.

Finally, you need to write **a one- or two-page (single-spaced) reflection** of your experiences of writing on the wiki. You might consider addressing any or all of the following questions: Why did you choose the topics that you did? What technological frustrations did you experience, and how did you overcome these hurdles? What are your thoughts about writing pieces of what may become a very large, collaboratively written history of Boise? What are the advantages and liabilities of writing local history on a wiki? What advice would you offer future Boise Wiki contributors?

Articles will be graded based on quality of the research and writing, as well as their potential interest to a public audience.

**All five articles, plus the reflection, are due November 29 at the beginning of class.**