George Mason University * History 690 * Fall 2014

Administration of Archives and Manuscripts

Instructor: Jesse A. Johnston (jjohns76@gmu.edu)

Schedule: Thursdays, 7:20 - 10:00 pm
Arlington campus, Founders Hall room 121

Office hours: By appointment
(I will usually be available before class but am happy to arrange other times.)

Description
Administration of Archives & Manuscripts introduces principles and practices of managing records and administering archival collections. The course will focus on archival theory as a framework for archives management, build knowledge of representational and descriptive practices in archives, and develop “archival intelligence” that can usefully inform research. Students should leave the course with an expert understanding of archives that is applicable to a range of archival settings. Designed for graduate students with special interest in archival sources, those specializing in applied history, and other humanities fields.

Learning Objectives
Our class work will focus mostly on the theory and history of archives, though we will also discuss practical skills. For those who aim to gain further practical experience, please consider the option of doing a short practicum for your final project. In general, you will gain and/or improve:

- Awareness of the ways that organizations and individuals use records and archives for research, ongoing operations, accountability, and organizational memory;
- Comfortability conversing in and writing with the terminology and concepts used in archives and records administration;
- An overall understanding of the literature and theory around archiving;
- An understanding of archival principles and practices;
- Familiarity with the basic components of programs including inventory, classification, appraisal, disposition, acquisition, arrangement, description, preservation, reference, access, use, outreach, and public programming. Understand the relationships between these program elements;
- An appreciation of the importance, power, and purpose of documentary and other records;
- Strengthened ability to synthesize and understand a complex body of literature;
- An “archival intelligence,” which includes understanding of archival principles and generation of research questions using archival sources.

In addition, while this is not a course about technology, we will use a range of tools in addition to Blackboard, such as medium.com for writing and a wiki for class notes. I therefore hope that you gain familiarity, or strengthen your comfortability with, making scholarly contributions using a range of digital tools. Specifically, you should gain basic understandings of: editing a wiki, XML markup used for archival finding aids (EAD), and posting writing online.
Materials
We will be drawing our readings mostly from articles in print and online journals, as well as a few book chapters. When these are not available openly online or in electronic form through the library, the instructor will post a copy for your educational use on the course Blackboard site. In cases where the readings are not available online, they should be on Blackboard at least a week in advance. Pro tip: I have provided “doi” indicators for some of the articles; if you have doi’s, you can search and find articles at dx.doi.org; most will then be accessible via the library’s website or services like JSTOR.

Please join the Society of American Archivists email listserv, which will require a free user profile (though you should not have to be a paying member of SAA). If you’re interested in becoming professionally active as an archivist, consider joining SAA as a student, and you might also consider the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC), which will be in Baltimore Oct 16-18.

I’m planning to use medium.com as a tool for the short essays assignment. Please take a little bit to learn more about what this is. I’ve provided links and explanations in the description of the essays assignment.

Although there are no required books to purchase for this class, we will be reading a few chapters from each of the following, and you are certainly welcome to purchase them if you wish:

- Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg, Processing the Past (Oxford Univ. Press, 2011) [on reserve at Arlington campus]
- James M. O’Toole and Richard J Cox, Understanding Archives & Manuscripts (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006) [Reference copy at Fenwick Special Collections]
- Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil, eds., Currents of Archival Thinking (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Libraries Unlimited, 2010). [on reserve at Arlington campus]

If you’re seeking work as an archivist, keep an eye on the many online sources where such jobs are announced. One of the longest-running and most comprehensive is Archives Gig, which you can follow via email, RSS reader, Facebook, etc.

Assignments
Instructions for assignments will be distributed separately. All assignments will be turned in on Blackboard or online (unless arranged otherwise with the instructor). Some assignments will involve a link to a Website; for others that require submission of a written document, please upload a document format (.doc or .docx; please do not use). Files should be named with your surname and the assignment name; for example, my reading summaries for week 1 could be a file named johnston_week1_readings.doc.

Evaluation
- Preparation & Participation: 30%
- Archives Web Presence Analysis: 15%
• Three Short Essays: 15%
• Final Project: 40%

Assignments will be weighted as outlined above. To figure out your course performance, add all points and use the following scale:

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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Class Protocols

Academic Integrity
The integrity of the University and the broader educational and academic communities are affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. In group assignments, all contributors should be recognized. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using a standard (and reasonably precise) format. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

Learning Needs
If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Computer/Screen Device Usage
You are welcome to use computers for class work. Please make sure that you are staying on task, using your computer to help you engage better, and never using it in ways that distract your fellow classmates. If necessary, we will revisit and revise this policy as necessary.

Here are a few guiding principles:
• **Use** your laptop to take notes, research items related to the activities and topics of the day, or other course-related activities. Resist the temptation to email, chat, IM, game, or off-task.
• **Engage** in class. Do not let your screen become a barrier to interaction and engage, but rather let it facilitate exchange of ideas and classroom contact - don't use it if you know you are not good at multi-tasking or prone to distraction.
- **Show** sensitivity to others. You should not display images or content that might be distracting or offensive to your classmates.

**Class Diversity**

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. You are asked to be sensitive to these issues in the classroom as well as in any group work that you do throughout the class. (Read the [GMU Diversity policy](#).)

**Communication**

Since I work full time, I may not immediately respond to messages sent to my gmu.edu email during the day. You should expect to get a response from me within one or two days, at most.

**Course Schedule - Topics & Readings**

**Week 1 (Aug. 28) - Introductions: Getting to Know You; What are archives?**

The goal of today is to get to know each other, share our expectations for the course, and to go over the course logistics. *To think about and discuss this week: what are “records”? What do they mean to you? Note any mentions of records in the news or notable/surprising occurrences of the concept that strike you.*

**Records & Archives in the News: Items from the Summer**

- Jarrett Drake, on documentation and policing in the wake of Ferguson events
- “What Do You Mean by Archive? Genres of Usage for Digital Preservers.”

**Optional Reading**

Week 2 (Sep. 4) - Why do archives exist? Histories & Cultures of Recordkeeping
We will discuss some of the epistemic features of archives, including the concepts of archive, record, the relationship of archives and accountability, and the historical development of archives in the US.

Required Reading

Optional Readings
  http://archivists.metapress.com/content/w42580v137053675/
  http://archivists.metapress.com/content/G817417023661U02

Resources
In preparation for the Archives Web Presence Analysis assignment, we will browse through and discuss a few examples of digital archives/collections.

Week 3 (Sep. 11) - Nature of Archives
We’ll continue considering fundamental “nature” of archiving, discussing social dimensions of records, reliability and authenticity, authority.

Readings

Optional Readings

Week 4 (Sep. 18) - Core Concepts
This week we will explore some of the core organization concepts of archiving, including definitions of record, the principle of provenance, principle of original order, the series/fonds/record group concepts, access and control.

Readings
● Howard Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest," *Boston University Graduate Journal* 19 (fall 1971): 37-44. [pdf on course site]


**Optional**

http://journals.sfu.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria/article/view/11231/12170


**Week 5 (Sep. 25) - Functions I (Ingest) / visit to GMU Special Collections & Archives**
We will discuss major functions of an archives program, particularly those on the “front end” (i.e., how things get into archives), including collection development, acquisition, appraisal and selection, control, and disposition.

*Guest lecture, Yvonne Carignan, Head of Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University.*

*Class will meet at SC&A in Fenwick Library (Fairfax Campus), 2nd floor, wing C.*

**Readings**


**Optional**

Week 6 (Oct. 2) - Functions II (Processing and Description)
We will discuss other functions of preparing archival material once they are acquired, including accessioning and processing (“arranging and describing”) archival materials.

Readings

Tech Task
We will discuss Encoded Archival Description, which is an XML schema for presenting archival finding aids online. If there was a lot in that sentence that sounds unfamiliar, please read the W3C “XML Essentials” page at [http://www.w3.org/standards/xml/core], and consider the W3schools XML tutorial (very basic) at [http://www.w3schools.com/xml/].

Resources - choose one to discuss in class (we'll coordinate division on the wiki)
- Society of American Archivists, Describing Archives: A Content Standard, 2d ed. (http://www2.archivists.org/standards/DACS - browse through opening section and following as interested)

Week 7 (Oct. 9) - Functions III (Preservation and Access)
We will discuss archival functions (but wait, there's more!) dealing with how materials are kept for the long term and made useful: preservation, reference, access/use and outreach.

Readings

Optional
http://archivists.metapress.com/content/3x85283576r43387/

http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/47875.

Resources
● Browse the Digital Preservation Management tutorial at http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/dpm/ (this is an essential resource if you are managing digital collections)
● Conservation Knowledgebase (American Institute for Conservation) 
http://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Main_Page
● NEDCC Preservation Leaflets (ranges from planning to preventive care to emergency planning, and more) http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview
● National Park Service Conserve O Grams 
http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conserveogram/cons_toc.html

Week 8 (Oct. 16) - Managing Archival Repositories and Programs
We will discuss program missions and mandates, types of archival institutions, and archival management.

Readings
● Michael Kurtz, Managing Archival and Manuscript Repositories (Chicago: SAA, 2004), selections: Ch. 5, “Planning and Reporting” (67-88); Ch. 10, “Managing Archival Facilities”; Ch. 11, "Financial Management”; Ch. 12, "Fund-Raising and Development" (159-220).

Week 9 (Oct. 23) - Audiences in Person and Online
Who uses archives? We will read analyses and case studies about analyzing users and user needs, both in person and online. Questions to think about: how are archival records used? How are they found? How does changing use affect archival programs and functions? What are the ethics of making this public, or keeping them private?

Readings

Optional

October 30 [no regular class]
No class this week. Instructor will be out of town. Work should be finalizing on short essays drafts due November 1 and planning final project reports.

Week 10 (Nov. 6) - Legal, Policy, and Ethics Issues
Who owns archives? Who has the rights to access (or restrict access) to archival materials? When are restrictions justified? Who controls the past?
  [http://archivists.metapress.com/content/16rh811120280434/](http://archivists.metapress.com/content/16rh811120280434/)
  [http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html](http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html).
  [http://archivists.metapress.com/content/0073888331414314/](http://archivists.metapress.com/content/0073888331414314/).

Optional
  [http://archivists.metapress.com/content/5n20760751v643m7/](http://archivists.metapress.com/content/5n20760751v643m7/)

General Resource
Week 11 (Nov. 13) - Current Issues, or, “What is the Future of the Past?”
In this final part of the course, we will discuss current issues facing archives and archivists, including digitization and born-digital; archives and memory; community/participatory archives.

Readings
- Michelle Caswell, *Public History* article in press (pre-print distributed on course website).

Optional

Week 12 (Nov. 20) - Audiovisual / Digital
Growing diversity of media in archival collections present challenges. We will discuss particularly challenges posed by audiovisual collections and born-digital collections.

Readings

To Watch
- Digitizing ANC archives / digital film doc clip
- Film archives Afghanistan clip

Optional
- Alec Wilkinson, “A Voice from the Past,” *The New Yorker*, 19 May 2014 [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/19/a-voice-from-the-past](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/19/a-voice-from-the-past); and the

  [http://oclc.org/research/activities/hiddencollections.html](http://oclc.org/research/activities/hiddencollections.html)

November 27 [No Class - Thanksgiving Recess]

Week 13 (Dec. 4) - Final Presentations

Presentations of final projects. All written work on final project and anything else outstanding at this point shall be due by the designated final exam time. *This course will not have a final exam, but all work should be completed by the end of the course's designated final exam time: December 11, 7:30–10:15pm.*

Additional Resources

If you are working in an archives and are seeking further practical overviews or guide, check the following:


Journals Online

- *Archival Science* available through GMU library login ([http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=2211022](http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=2211022))
- *Archivaria* [http://journals.sfu.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria](http://journals.sfu.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria)