University of Maryland
College of Information Studies
LBSC 788

Seminar in Archives, Records, and Information Management
Spring 2011

Syllabus
[This course was originally designed by John Fleckner, The Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History; some information provided by Dr. Bruce Ambacher]

Tuesdays, 5:30 – 8:15

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The class will meet on campus in HBK 0109.

Instructor
I am a senior program officer at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). One of the three, federal, cultural grant-funding agencies, IMLS is the chief source of federal support for the nation’s libraries and museums. At IMLS, I help coordinate the 21st Century Librarian Grant Program, which provides funds to eligible “library entities,” supporting education and continuing education activities (scholarships, workshops, etc.). Before coming to IMLS, I taught “foundations” and “special topics” in a college of education’s school library media program (as a non-school library person). Before that I was the consultant for special collections at the State Library of North Carolina (N.C. Department of Cultural Resources). As consultant for special collections, it was my job to serve the many small and often volunteer-run libraries, archives, and (sometimes) museums in the state through professional development programming consulting. In this position, I also served as the first project manager for NC ECHO, the statewide digitization program. I came to North Carolina’s state library agency after having worked as Local History and Genealogy Librarian (also known as the “county historian”) at Rowan Public Library in Salisbury, NC. There, I ran a medium-sized local history collection containing manuscripts, rare books, and reference materials. We also maintained an active oral history program. In addition to these positions, I have also worked as a manuscripts processing supervisor at the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and as a reference librarian at a community college learning resource center.

As you can tell, I come to archives from the manuscripts/special collections world, as opposed to the corporate or government archives sector. I am particularly interested in outreach and promotion of archives, as well as the role of archives in the support of formal education. In my most recent research, I evaluated the online teaching resources mounted by state archives and collaborative digitization programs to see how well they develop “historical thinking skills” in students.
Introduction and Course Objectives

- To develop substantial knowledge about an array of issues facing archives by reading deeply in the professional literature, discussing those issues with colleagues, and critically analyzing what is read and discussed.

- To develop professional research, writing, and presentation skills by doing research, writing, and presenting while being aided by peer feedback and review.

This course is a graduate seminar. Seminars teach through creative investigation and problem-solving rather than information provision and memorization. A seminar, generally speaking, takes place in small groups during recurring sessions. Relatively informal, each session is usually devoted to discussion about a particular subject with the instructor acting as a guide as opposed to lecturing. During research seminars, students learn the processes/methodologies of their subject and come to deal with the practical and intellectual limitations of those methodologies while becoming more familiar with subject content. As a result, research seminars are exercises in developing deep knowledge about a relatively narrow portion of a subject area. They require the active participation of students, often ask that students take a lead in presenting, and ask that students complete at least one research or demonstration project during the course. These individual course projects provide the set of experiences, which inform the individual class discussions. Seminars work when all participants are “teachers,” providing engaging examples, solid subject content, helpful suggestions, and thoughtful, positive feedback. This seminar will require peer review.

Individual Classes
Students are expected to have begun working on their course research projects in earnest by the sixth class meeting. After the sixth class, each session will be divided into two parts (not necessarily halves). One part of the class will be devoted to the investigation of a subject through readings, discussion, class activities, and guest speakers. The second part of the class will be devoted to the discussion of class projects. The amount of individual reading required for classes after session number six will be cut in half through the creation of two reading groups. This will allow students more time to work on their projects each week while still benefitting from a thorough investigation of issues as presented by various professional publications.

Almost all readings are in American Archivist, which is available online at: http://archivists.metapress.com/home/main.mpx All back issues of American Archivist, except the last three years, are available to anyone through the SAA website. You will need to login as an SAA member or through a portal at the University of Maryland (which holds an institutional subscription) to read the newer issues. Other readings will be on electronic reserve unless otherwise noted. Students should be prepared to discuss their own ideas and questions as well as those provided by the instructor.
Requirements for Written Work
Excellent written communication skills are essential to the provision of information in professional contexts. Written work will therefore be graded on the quality of writing as well as on its content and evidence of critical analysis. The mark for work that is not well written, clearly organized, and grammatically correct will be reduced accordingly.

Formatting
- Double space, in Times New Roman 12 point type, with 1 inch margins all around.
- Include a list of sources consulted.
- Cite sources in conformity with the most recent edition of Turabian, using either notes-bibliography style or in-text citations–reference list style. See examples at http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html.
- Number the pages, and staple them together. Please do not submit your assignments in a binder or folder.
- Limit headers or footers to page numbers only. Please do not include headers or footers that include your name or the title of the assignment.

Grades
A letter grade for each assignment, and for the course, will be assigned in accordance with University and College of Information guidelines:
A=Excellent (90-100); B=Satisfactory (80-89); C=Barely Adequate (70-79); D/F=Failure (<70).

Attendance
Attendance in class is expected. If you are unable to attend class for reasons of illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling absences beyond the student’s control, please let the instructor know (prior to class for non-emergencies).

Classroom Environment
The classroom environment should be professional and respectful.

Punctual arrival at classes contributes to the smooth operation of the class and the quality of the learning experience. Late arrivals, early departures, and wandering in and out of the classroom are disruptive and distracting. If you know you will be unavoidably detained or must leave early, please let the instructor know in advance. Please turn off or mute all phones and other communication devices during each class session. If you use your laptop in the classroom, limit the usage of the computer to course-related reasons (i.e., taking notes).
**Academic Integrity**
The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student, you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. The Code of Academic Integrity strictly prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of academic dishonesty. Instances of any suspected academic dishonesty will be reported and handled according to University policy and procedures. For more information on the Code, visit [http://www.shc.umd.edu](http://www.shc.umd.edu).

Plagiarism is of particular concern in the networked, digital environment. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their source both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing using footnotes or in-text citations. For further information about proper citation of sources, consult the UMD Libraries website at [http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/honesty.html](http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/honesty.html) and [http://www.lib.umd.edu/PUBSERV/citations/index.html](http://www.lib.umd.edu/PUBSERV/citations/index.html).

**Extensions**
Late submissions of written assignments will carry a penalty unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. If an extension is granted, the work must be submitted within the extension period to avoid grade penalties. Unexcused delays in submission of the assignment will result in a reduction of the grade by one category for each day the paper is late; for example, a paper that would have received a B+ if submitted on time will receive a B if it is submitted a day late, a B- if it is two days late, and so on. **THERE WILL BE NO EXTENSIONS AWARDED FOR THE FINAL PAPER.**

**Students with Disabilities**
Students with disabilities who require academic accommodations must inform the instructor of their needs and provide written documentation about the appropriate academic accommodations from Disability Support Services ([http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS)) at the beginning of the semester.
Assignments

1) Research methodologies team presentation
Due: February 8th or February 15th
5% of final grade

Students will pair up and together make a brief 15-20 minute-long presentation concerning a research methodology used in the study of archives issues. The presentations should provide a basic summary of the methodology, including its strengths and weaknesses, along with 3-4 examples of how this methodology has been used recently in archival research. Presentations should answer the following questions: What does this methodology provide that other forms of research do not? What logistical issues should a researcher take into account, if he or she were considering using this methodology? How generalizable are the findings for this type of methodology? How replicable?

2) Selection of topic
Due: February 22nd
5% of final grade

Students will submit a two-page statement concerning their topics. This should include a clear statement of the research question, the kinds of sources of information needed to answer the question, and the methodology or methodologies being considered. The paper should answer the “so what?” question: why is this topic significant? This paper, with necessary revisions, may be reused (in part or whole) as the introduction for the course research project.

3) Positioning paper
Due: March 8th
10% of final grade

This 2,000-3,000 word paper critically reviews the literature on the selected topic and places the proposed research paper within this context. In other words, this assignment “positions” the research to be undertaken for the major paper within the ideas and arguments in the profession (and more broadly) about the topic. The “positioning paper” may make use of popular sources (including web sites) but must include at least seven books or articles from professional or scholarly journals. This paper, with necessary revisions, may be reused (in part or whole) as the literature review section of the final research paper.

4) Peer Review
Students will provide formal written feedback on position papers to their peers.
Due: March 15th

Students will read the position papers of 2-3 three colleagues and provide several paragraphs of constructive criticism. This peer review will then be emailed to the the
writer of the positioning paper before class on March 15th. The instructor will absent himself from a portion of the class on the 15th while students then discuss the peer reviews with each other. While this assignment does not contribute directly to the final grade for the course, it should provide significant indirect impact on the final grade as it will serve as a review of a significant portion of the final project.

5) Course Project
   Due: May 10, 2010
   60% of final grade
   The main product of the seminar will be a major research paper (approximately 6,500 words or 25 pages) on the topic selected in consultation with the instructor. (This includes sections that may have already been turned in as other course projects: selection paper and positioning paper). The final paper will be evaluated on the thoroughness of the research (including use of primary sources), originality, writing style, use of footnotes, and clarity in presenting and proving a thesis. Students may submit a draft of their paper for initial review by the instructor. Final papers should be submitted by email to the instructor. Students will receive a written critique of their papers. The papers should address a significant archival question, issue, or problem and draw on the relevant professional literature but, also, go beyond secondary sources to provide your own research. Research papers may draw on survey data, interviews, unpublished writings, and other primary information sources.

6) Work in Progress Presentation
   Due: April 26th, May 3rd, May 10th
   10% of final grade
   Students will make presentations of about fifteen minutes and lead a class discussion on their research paper topic. No later than the Friday evening before their work in progress presentations, students will provide the class with a copy of their “in-progress” course project. Students are expected to have read these submissions and come prepared with critical, helpful comments and questions. Because these presentations will be over several weeks, students will be at different points in their work by the time they present. Those that come earlier in the semester have more time to benefit from the peer feedback, those that come later have more time to prepare their papers for the presentation.

7) Class participation
   20% of final grade

Institutional Review Board
No later than February 16, Students should become familiar with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and its potential application to their work. http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/ Research intended for publication that involves human subjects (including surveys) may require IRB approval. Dr. Bruce Ambacher has volunteered to speak with students about the IRB and act as the faculty sponsor for students in this seminar.
Course Calendar

1. January 25th  Overview of the course, review of objectives.

   Introductions and logistics.

   Activities:
   
   - Listing of what the class believes are the most important issues facing archives today.
   - We will divide up into groups with each group analyzing a different archives journal, followed by reporting back.
   - Students will pair up for Research Methodologies presentation. The “methodologies lottery” will be held. The ten methodologies: survey, focus groups, interviews, ethnographic observation, concept/content analysis, experimental design, historical research, case study, Delphi method, bibliometrics/citation analysis

   [Begin identifying the topic of your course project.]

2. February 1st  Research in archives.

   Read and come to class prepared to discuss:
   

   All in *American Archivist* 63 (Fall/Winter 2000)


   And if you are really interested in the topic:
   
Activity: Students will break into groups and analyze the abstracts and slides of three of the presentations made annually at the SAA Research Forum. These materials may be found at http://www2.archivists.org/proceedings/research-forum. Groups will report back to the class.

[Continue to identify your topic.]

3. **February 8\textsuperscript{th}  Research Methodologies Presentations #1**

   The first five teams will make their approx. 20 minute long research methodologies, each followed by a brief class discussion.

   Brief discussion: Literature Reviews: Purposes and Pitfalls

4. **February 15\textsuperscript{th}  Research Methodologies Presentations #2**

   The second five teams will make their approx. 20 minute long research methodology presentations, each followed by a brief class discussion.

   Brief discussion: Validity and reliability in research methodologies

5. **February 22\textsuperscript{nd}  User studies in archives**

Read and come to class prepared to discuss:

- Elsie Freeman Finch, “In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User’s Point of View,” *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 111-123.
Activity for the class: Pair off and interview each other about experiences in archives (as researcher/user, worker, or nonuser/visitor). Reporting back on “findings.” Do we see trends? What kind of research is this? How viable are our “findings.” How reliable? What might we want to do to strengthen our methodology?

[Deadline Topic Selection paper.]

6. March 1st  Preservation issues in Archives.

Read and come to class prepared to discuss

- The summary report of the Heritage Health Index, which is located here: http://www.heritagepreservation.org/hhi/full.html Also, scan some of the sections of the full report, which is located at the same site.
- Scan the resources made available at General Preservation Guidance Website, NARA: http://www.archives.gov/preservation/holdings-maintenance/general-guidance.html

Complete this tutorial: http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/dpm/dpm-eng/eng_index.html

A brief discussion about preservation research. The class will look at brief reports from 3 projects: 1) HVAC and filtering performed by NEDCC and the Pennsylvania State Library; 2) permanence of ink jet printing by Rochester Institute of Technology; 3) ethnographic study of video game creators (how is this preservation research?!) 

Guest: Karen Motylewski, IMLS liaison to the Preservation Directorate, Library of Congress (?)

7. March 8th  Student research in archives. (Pease Award winning articles: OUR GOAL!)
Reading Group A


Reading Group B


Activity: The Archives online presence. The class will examine the Web presence of various archives and think about the various research projects that could be developed around these resources.

[“Position Papers” are due!]

Visitor: Lucy Barber, Deputy Executive Director, National Historic Publications and Records Commission


All students


Group A reads


Group B reads


Brief discussion on authority and crowd-sourcing and research opportunities in descriptive practice. How do we enhance geographic access to archival materials (the genealogist’s choice of access)?

[Peer reviews due.]

9. March 22nd  SPRING BREAK

10. March 29  Digital Materials

Read and come to class prepared to discuss:

All students

• Visit the online Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology found here [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=638](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=638)

Choose five of the terms and be prepared to talk about how this term/issue it is associated with has been impacted by the digital age.

Group A. reads


Group B. reads


Guest: Chuck Thomas, Senior Program Officer, Institute of Museum and Library Services on relationship between institutional repositories and archives and recent developments in preservation of electronic records.

11. April 5th  No Class—Scheduled individual student consultations (approx. 15-20 minutes each). Instructor will be on campus several nights this week as required to meet with students.

12. April 12  Ethics and Archives

All students scan:
  http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_ethics.asp#code
  http://www.arma.org/about/overview/ethics.cfm
- Association of Colleges and Research Libraries (ACRL), Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS), Standards for Ethical Conduct for Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Librarians, with Guidelines for Institutional Practice in Support of the Standards, 2d edition, 1992.  
  http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html

Group A reads

Group B reads
- Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,  
  http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html
13. April 19\textsuperscript{th} TOPIC TO BE SELECTED BY CLASS

[Light reading week as you finish up your projects; Most of this class will be devoted to discussing student projects.]

14. April 26 Work in Progress Presentations

The first eight Students will make their approx. 20-minute long project presentation, each followed by a brief class discussion.

15. May 3 Work in Progress Presentations

The second eight Students will make their approx. 20-minute long project presentation, each followed by a brief class discussion.

16. May 10\textsuperscript{th} Work in Progress Presentations

The final, four students will make their approx. 20-minute long project presentation, each followed by a brief class discussion.

All students read and come to class prepared to discuss

- Tom Nesmith, “Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives,” \textit{American Archivist} 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 24-41

Based upon what we have done in this class, how would you update these articles? What specific topics/ideas might you want to see covered in a future article along these lines? In this class?