Course Syllabus, Fall 2017
Advanced Archival Description (HIST-GA.2031), New York University
College of Arts and Sciences

Tuesdays, 4:55-7:35
King Juan Carlos Center, Room 607

Instructor Information
Hillel Arnold, email: hillel.arnold@nyu.edu *Please put HIST-GA.2031 in subject line of all
course-related emails* Office hours are by appointment, please arrange in advance by
email. I encourage you to contact me if a conversation during office hours can be helpful
to you. Office is in the King Juan Carlos Center, room 704.

Course Description
This course explores the purposes of archival description and the place of description in
the continuum of archival practice, especially the relationship to arrangement, and to
discovery and reference. The course exposes students to the application of archival
description and introduces the tools used to create description: content and encoding
standards, controlled vocabularies, content management systems. The course also
emphasizes the importance of understanding our users and applying this knowledge to
influence descriptive practice, local practice and implementation, and online discovery
environments.

Course Objectives
● To understand the relationship between archival arrangement and description, and
  apply this to create description which describes the structure, content, and context
  of collections.
● To understand and apply the principles and methods of archival description for
  describing archival materials according to standards adopted by the US archival
  community.
● To understand the importance of evaluating user communities and user needs, and
  apply this knowledge to the creation of archival description and access systems.
● To understand the principle of interoperability of metadata, and use this knowledge
  in creating archival description and making descriptive system decisions.
Methods

Each class will be a combination of short lecture, and discussion or activity. Students will be expected to actively engage in all discussions and activities; completing reading assignments before coming to class is expected and will be critical to this participation and engagement. To support this participation, all students are expected to post two questions or points for discussion brought up by the week's readings on the NYU Classes discussion board prior to the beginning of each class.

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Textbooks and Readings

*Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections: Reducing Processing Backlogs*, by Daniel A. Santamaria, ALA Neal-Schuman; Chicago, 2015.  

Additional articles are cited in the syllabus below, listed during the week in which they will be discussed. Unless otherwise noted, all of these articles are available on the open web or in journals which the NYU library subscribes to and are available to you full-text through BobCat. Articles not available through BobCat will be posted on the NYU Classes site.

Software

We will be using software packages in the second half of the semester which you will need to download onto your laptop and use in class; both are available online for downloading. Further instructions on installation are available on the NYU Classes class site, in the *In-Class Exercise Tools* folder:

- ArchivesSpace ([http://archivesspace.org/](http://archivesspace.org/)), a community developed archival content management system.
- oXygen software ([http://www.oxygenxml.com/](http://www.oxygenxml.com/)) for encoding in XML, for this course using the EAD schema. (Download the trial version, which is free)

**Grading**

In Class Participation, In Class Exercises, Discussion Board Postings 20%
Reaction Paper 15%
Processing Plan 20%
DACS assignment 15%
Final Paper Proposal 2.5%
Final Paper Outline 2.5%
Final Paper 20%
Presentation 5%

**Assignments**

**In-class participation and exercises: 20 points**

Class participation is vital to your learning experience. All students are expected to come to class having completed the readings for the week, and to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. To support class discussion, students are required to post two questions or points for discussion each week on the NYU Classes discussion board, brought up by the week's' readings. Postings must be submitted two hours prior to the beginning of class at the very latest, earlier posting is strongly encouraged.
We will work through a number of activities and exercises as a group in class throughout the semester, designed to help you understand the ideas and tools presented in the readings. You must attend and participate in class order to benefit from these activities; participation will be evaluated on quality, not quantity.

**Reaction Paper: 15 points**

You will write an 1100-1500 word paper reacting to one or more of the articles assigned in week 2 and 3 readings. Summarize what you believe to be the author's arguments, and then write about your own reaction to the readings. You may bring in ideas from other class readings or your own practical experience. Further instructions will be posted to NYU Classes site.

**Processing Plan assignment: 20 points**

You will be given time in class during week 4 to examine a collection held in the Tamiment Library at NYU, and should complete a processing plan for the collection and a short paper reflecting on the process. A processing plan template and further assignment details will be
posted on NYU Classes. Please note, you will need to make additional time outside of class to examine the collection during Tamiment’s open hours.

DACS assignment: 15 points
You will create a multilevel, added value, DACS compliant description for the same collection assigned to you during the Processing Plan assignment. Annotate each part of your finding aid with the DACS rules you used to create each part, and an explanation of choices made in applying the rule. An assignment template, and further detail and instruction will be posted on NYU Classes.

Final Paper: 20 points + 2.5 points each for proposal and outline
You will write a 3500-4000 word research paper exploring an issue or idea related to archival description, representation, and access. This should be taken as an opportunity to delve more deeply into any of the topics we cover over the course of the semester. A paper proposal and outline are due on incremental dates throughout the semester. Further detail and instruction will be posted on NYU Classes.

Final Presentations: 5 points
You will give a 5-minute lightning talk during the last class, presenting and distilling the major ideas from your final paper. You will have access to a computer and projector if you have slides to accompany their presentations; please bring these on a USB flash drive to load onto the classroom computer.
## Course Schedule Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>September 5</td>
<td>Intro – the ethics of access, the purposes of archival description</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>September 12</td>
<td>Archival Representation, User information seeking behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>September 19</td>
<td>Relationship to Reference <strong>Reaction paper due at beginning of class</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Description in the continuum of archival practice, Accessioning</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>October 3</td>
<td>Relationship of arrangement and description <strong>Final Paper Proposal due via NYU Classes on October 6th by midnight</strong></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>Writing the finding aid; Transparency, archivist as actor on the collection <strong>Processing Plan Exercise due at beginning of class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>October 17</td>
<td>Description as Data: Metadata, standards, structured data intro; controlled vocabularies <strong>Revised Collection Description from Processing Plan due via NYU classes by midnight</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>October 24</td>
<td>Content Standards: ISAD(G), ISAAR(CPF), DACS, Data Value Standards</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>October 31</td>
<td>Encoding Standards: EAD, MARC, EAC-CPF <strong>DACS assignment due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>November 7</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS, Final Paper outline due via NYU classes by midnight</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>November 14</td>
<td>Metadata and Interoperability, data and power</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>November 21</td>
<td>Archival Description on the Web; Usability</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>November 28</td>
<td>Decision making, priority assessment, the descriptive program <strong>Final Papers due at beginning of class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>December 5</td>
<td>Final Presentations &amp; Wrap Up Discussion <strong>Final Presentations given in-class</strong></td>
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Class 1: Intro – ethics of access, purposes of archival description  
No readings.

Class 2: Archival representation; user information seeking behavior  

Read:  

Class 3: Relationship to Reference  

Assignment: Reaction Paper due at the beginning of class

Guest Speakers: Janet Bunde, University Archivist, NYU Archives; Philip Sutton, Librarian, Milstein Division of U.S. History, Local History, and Genealogy, NYPL; Rachel Wimpee, Historian and Project Director, Rockefeller Archive Center.

Read:  
Class 4: Description in the continuum of archival practice, Accessioning

*Please bring a pencil and notebook to this class so you can participate in the processing project.*

**Guest Speakers:*** Weatherly Stephan, Librarian for Archival Arrangement & Description, NYU; Rachel Searcy, Accessioning Archivist, NYU.

**Read:**

Class 5: Relationship of arrangement and description, how to “process”

**Read:**
• Daniel A. Santamaria, Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections: Reducing Processing Backlogs, Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2015, Chapters 2-3 (pages 15-38)
• Jennifer Meehan, "Making the Leap from Parts to Whole: Evidence and Inference in Archival Arrangement and Description, American Archivist (Vol 72 No 1) Spring/Summer 2009: 72-90.

Skim:
• How to Proceed: A Processing Manual for the Special Collections Technical Services Department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: http://www.lib.unc.edu/wikis/archproc/index.php/How_to_Proceed
• Daniel A. Santamaria, Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections: Reducing Processing Backlogs, Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2015, Appendix F (pages 201-210)
• Also, see http://www.lib.unc.edu/wikis/archproc/index.php/Main_Page to see the range of resources and documentation they provide for processing staff.

Class 6: Writing the Finding Aid; Transparency, Archivist as Actor on Collections

Assignments: Processing plan exercise due at the beginning of class.

NOTE: Meet in Room 743, Bobst.

Guest Speaker: Marybeth McCartin, Instructional Services Librarian, NYU Libraries

Read:
• Finding Aid examples posted to NYU classes site
• Daniel A. Santamaria, Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections: Reducing Processing Backlogs, Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2015, Appendix E (pages 191-200)
Class 7: Metadata, structured data, standards intro; controlled vocabularies

Assignment: Revised description due via NYU classes

Read:

Skim:
- Library of Congress Subject Headings: [http://authorities.loc.gov](http://authorities.loc.gov)
- Art and Architecture Thesaurus. [http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat](http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat)

Class 8: Content Standards: ISAD (G), ISAAR (CPF), DACS

Read:
- *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*. 2013. Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists. Read p. vii-xxiv, 3-11 (intro material and chapter 1); skim the rest
- Daniel A. Santamaria, Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections: Reducing Processing Backlogs, Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2015, Chapter 6 (pages 69-84)

Skim:
- Tamiment Library AT local implementation manual (available in Classes site)

Class 9: Encoding standards: EAD and EAC-CPF

Assignment: DACS Assignment due at the beginning of class

Read:
- Richard V. Szary, “Encoded Archival Context (EAC) and Archival Description: Rationale and Background,” Journal of Archival Organization (Vol. 3 No. 2&3) 2006: 217-227
http://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/RiC-CM-0.1.pdf

Sara Allain. “Archival description technology: a part of our history”. Lightning talk at Code4Lib 2017. https://youtu.be/xRuPShYelm4?t=2h16m15s Slides at https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1n-0bpqM6MC1B_ZKOWvu714c4pk-ksLF1pmO5B03WQhY/edit

Skim:
- EAD Tag Library http://www.loc.gov/ead
- Spend some time looking at the SNAC project website http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/ and playing around with the prototype http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/xtf/search.
http://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/RiC-CM-0.1.pdf

Class 10: No Class, professor at TAG Conference

Assignment: Final paper outline due via NYU Classes at the beginning of class

Class 11: Metadata and interoperability; data and power

Read:
- Tim Sherratt, “It’s all about the stuff: collections, interfaces, power and people,” paper presented at the National Digital Forum, November 30, 2011:


Skim

- Crosswalks on the EAD Tag Library website: http://www.loc.gov/ead/tglib/appendix_a.html

Class 12: Archival Description on the Web, Usability

Read:

- Steve Krug, Don't Make Me Think Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web and Mobile Usability, pages 11-100.

Class 13: Decision Making, Priority Assessment and the Descriptive Program

Assignment: Final Paper due at beginning of class

Read:


University of California, “Guidelines for Efficient Archival Processing in the University of California Libraries”
http://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu/groups/files/hosc/docs/_Efficient_Archival_Processing_Guidelines_v3-1.pdf

Class 14: Final Presentation Lightning Talks, Wrap Up Discussion

Assignment: Lightning talks presented in class

No readings.