Course Syllabus
HIST-GA 3901 Community Archives

Spring 2019
Thursdays, 4:55-7:35pm
King Juan Carlos Center Room 607

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Course Description
All communities create historical records, and recent decades have brought a growing critical awareness of how existing social hierarchies influence the creation and maintenance of historical archives. Community archive projects locate the power to preserve and shape history, heritage, and memory in communities themselves. Through readings, discussion, and analysis, this course will introduce students to a range of issues relating to grassroots community archives, archives of community organizations, and what happens when larger institutions partner with communities and community organizations to create archives. Students will also work with the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB), a local non-profit organization, to undertake an archivally-based public project.

Course Goals
● To explore major themes in community-based archiving, with a specific focus on the role(s) of library and information science (LIS) professionals supporting this work.
● To investigate the construction of community and identity-based memory, and the role of the archival record in this process.
● To develop an understanding of the landscape of community archives, with a focus on organizations in New York City.
● To critically examine the roles of race, power, and privilege in traditional and community-based archival settings.
● To gain hands-on experience using LIS skills to support a community organization.

Assignments and Grading
● Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates listed.
● Please submit written assignments by emailing your paper as a Word doc or a link to share a Google Doc (with editing access) to me at maggie.schreiner@nyu.edu.
● Assignments must be formatted as 12 point font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins with 1.5 spacing, and should follow Chicago Manual Style.
● Assignments turned in after the due date will be penalized by half a grade (e.g., an A will automatically drop to an A-) unless you have obtained advance permission from me.
Class Participation (20%)
Community Archive Profile (10%)
Review of Community Archives Tool (15%)
UHAB Newsletter Item (15%)
Final Project: for UHAB or Research paper and presentation (40%)

Community Archive Profile (3-5 pages)
Due: February 28th
Conduct a case study of a specific community archives project, and submit a written profile. A list of suggested community archives will be provided, and students can also propose other organizations. The profile should give a thorough overview of the archive, its history, its mission, and its innovations. The profile should answer the following questions:
  ● How does this project define its “community”?
  ● What were the origins of this project? When was this project founded? Why? By whom?
  ● What gaps in the archival record does it seek to fill? Does this project challenge traditional archival practice in any way?
  ● What archival "tools" does the project rely on and use? What kind of online presence does this project have? How does the project sustain itself?

UHAB Newsletter Item (500 words)
Draft 1 Due: March 14th
Draft 2 Due: April 4th
Select an item, or a set of related items from UHAB archives and write a 500 word research essay contextualizing the item(s) within UHAB history. These essays may be shared on the UHAB website and distributed to the organization’s membership through their newsletter. The essays should explore a theme in UHAB history, describe the connection to the item(s) selected, and be written in a concise and accessible fashion, similar to a blog post.

Final Project Proposal (2 pages)
Due: March 28th
Write a 2 page proposal outlining your plans for the final project. This proposal should include topic, rationale, format, outline, and initial bibliography.

Review of Community Archives tool (3-5 pages, with brief in-class presentation)
Due: April 18th
Choose a "tool" that community archives use in their work and submit a written review. A list of suggested tools will be provided, and students can also propose additional tools. The review should explain the tool, its utility, and any benefits and drawbacks. The paper should address the following questions:
● Describe the tool: what is it, how does it work, what are its origins?
● What sorts of projects use this tool? How does their use of this tool help them accomplish their mission? How does their use of the tool extend or reshape its traditional purpose?
● What does their use of this tool tell us about the needs, innovations, and challenge of community archives?
● Prepare a brief in-class presentation about the tool (5 minutes)

Final Project: for UHAB or Research Paper (with presentation)
Due: May 9th

There are two options for the final project:
1. Create a public-facing project related to the course partnership with UHAB. Projects related to UHAB should address the history of the organization and/or the archival collection, and should result in a finished product that can be used by UHAB staff. Proposed ideas will be further developed in consultation with UHAB staff. Possible topics suggested by UHAB include:
   ● Research the history of housing policy during the 1970s to present, including a timeline and/or description of other organizations active during this period.
   ● Research a specific aspect of UHAB’s history, or the history of collective housing.
   ● Creating a guide to UHAB’s archival materials on a particular theme; creating a guide to exploring the collection organized by theme.
   ● White paper suggesting methods that UHAB could employ to get their membership and wider community involved in their archive.
   ● Develop a project building off the materials gathered during the public collecting event.

Research and write a formal academic paper providing an in-depth exploration of a theme or topic relevant to community archives. This paper should include a review of the relevant literature.

A 10 minute presentation will be required for both options.
Course Schedule

Week 1: January 31st
Introduction, Expectations and Definitions


Week 2: February 7th
Building Memory


Week 3: February 14th
Community Archives Case Studies

• South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) website: https://www.saada.org/

Guest speakers: Jen Hoyer and Greg Mihalko, Interference Archive

**Week 4: February 21st**

**Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB) Collaboration**


• Association of Moving Image Archives' Community Archiving Workshops: http://communityarchiving.org/

Guest speakers: Urban Homesteading Assistance Board Staff Members

**Week 5: February 28th**

**UHAB Work Day**

**OFFSITE at 120 Wall Street, 20th Floor**

We will meet as a class at the UHAB offices, located at 120 Wall Street, on the 20th floor. You will need to check in with the security desk when you arrive, and get a visitor badge. Head up to the 20th floor, and then turn left out of the elevators.

**Work Day Tasks:**

• Inventory UHAB’s archival materials, using the provided spreadsheet
• Interview staff members about scope of collection and goals

Assignment due: Community Archive profile

**Week 6: March 7th**

**Race and Power**


### Week 7: March 14th

**Post-Custodial Models**

- Culture in Transit Toolkit, Community section: [https://metro.org/cit-toolkit/community/](https://metro.org/cit-toolkit/community/)
- Explore the following websites:
  - Memory Lab: [https://www.dclibrary.org/labs/memorylab](https://www.dclibrary.org/labs/memorylab)
  - XFR Collective: [https://xfrcollective.wordpress.com/](https://xfrcollective.wordpress.com/)
  - Digital Transgender Archive: [https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/](https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/)

**Guest Speaker:** Marie Lascu, XFR Collective

**Assignment due:** UHAB Newsletter item, draft 1

### Week 8: March 21st

**SPRING BREAK, No Class**

### Week 9: March 28th

**UHAB Collecting Event**

**OFFSITE at UHAB Community Training Center, 2283 Second Avenue (at 117th St.)**
We will meet as a class at UHAB’s event space, located at 2283 2nd Ave. We will work on set-up from 5-6pm, and then host a public event from 6-7:30pm. At the event, UHAB members will be invited to donate archival materials, or have their historic materials scanned for inclusion in a digital archive. The class will run the event, including interacting with donors, collecting metadata, and scanning donations. UHAB staff members will also attend to provide extra assistance.

Assignment due: Final Project Proposal

**Week 10: April 4th**

**Ethics and Labor**

- Williams, Stacie. “All Labor is Local” *Medium*. November 12, 2016. [https://medium.com/@Wribrarian/all-labor-is-local-344963e33051](https://medium.com/@Wribrarian/all-labor-is-local-344963e33051)

Assignment due: UHAB Newsletter item, draft 2

**Week 11: April 11th**

**UHAB Work Day**

OFFSITE at 120 Wall Street, 20th Floor

Additional work day in UHAB office for students completing final UHAB projects. If students are completing research papers, this class can be used as open research time.

**Week 12: April 18th**

**Visibility**

- Robertson, Tara. “Not All Information Wants to be Free: The Case Study of On Our Backs.” In: *Applying Library Values to Emerging Technology: Decision-Making in the Age*


Assignment due: Community archives tool review and in-class presentation

Week 13: April 25th
Institutional Partnerships

- NYC Trans Oral History Project: https://www.nyctransoralhistory.org/

Guest Speaker: Michelle O’Brien, NYC Trans Oral History Project

Week 14: May 2nd
Sustainability and the Limits of Professionalism


**Week 15: May 9th**  
**Final Project Presentations**

If a majority of students opt to complete projects relating to the course partnership with UHAB, then we will hold a small public event to share these projects with UHAB staff and community members. Alternately, students will present in-class on their projects.

*Assignment due: Final project and in-class presentation*