

LIS 688: Seminar on Special Collections
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Fall 2020 Syllabus

Professor: Dr. Colin Post
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Office: **TBD**

Class Time: Thursdays, 5:30-8:20 PM (Eastern)
Class Location: Online
Office hours: **TBD**

Course Description:

A seminar covering critical issues in special collections, including collection development, preservation, access, and sustainability.

Learning Outcomes:

Through this class, students should achieve the following program learning outcomes:

- Connect people to information and information technology, particularly to promote a just and equitable society (PLO 1): We will be thinking about the specific role played by special collections in connecting people to unique materials like rare books and artifacts.
- Assess and respond to the needs of diverse communities (PLO 2): We will consider questions of access and outreach, addressing how special collections can meet the needs of diverse users.
- Analyze problems and propose solutions through the application of evidence (PLO 3): As a core requirement of the course, students will conduct research on a current issue facing special collections.
- Advocate for public policies, laws, organizations, and resources that promote a just information society (PLO 5): We will discuss how special collections fit within broader ecosystems of organizations and society at large, focusing specifically on advocacy as a responsibility of information professionals working in special collections.
- Embrace change to lead organizational innovation (PLO 6): Throughout the semester, we will reflect on the changing nature of special collections, thinking about both internal transformations in how special collections acquire and provide access to materials, as well as the dynamic place of special collections within information institutions.
- Communicate and collaborate with colleagues and communities (PLO 7): Students will work in teams on both oral and written assignments throughout the semester.

Required Texts:

There are no required textbooks for the course. All of the weekly readings will be drawn from journal articles, book chapters, and other texts that will either be freely available online, accessible through UNCG libraries or that I will post on Canvas. Find the schedule of readings below.

Communication:

If you have a problem, concern, or question, please communicate with me. The sooner you come to me with any concern, the sooner we can resolve the issue. Don't hesitate to bring up any issue—major or minor. I'll be checking in with the whole class periodically to make sure the course is going smoothly on all fronts.

The best way to get in touch with me is via email. However, for bigger questions about assignments, grades, and so on, I will want to schedule a meeting (via Zoom) to discuss in-depth.

I will also provide time for general questions during each class session.

Expectations for class:

This is a seminar class, and the class will follow a seminar structure. This means that the class sessions will be heavily focused on discussions of ideas and issues raised by the readings for a given week. I will take on the role of facilitating these discussions, but they will be driven by your interests, concerns, questions, and curiosities.

Attendance:

Because these in-class discussions are at the core of the course, attending the synchronous online class sessions each week will be a foundation for your success in the course. These weekly sessions will also provide time and space for us to build a community supportive of everyone's learning and growth.

I also understand that everyone has busy schedules and many commitments outside of class. I am generally understanding and flexible. Just let me know ahead of time if you need to miss a class session for any reason.

Forums:

Along with our weekly synchronous meetings, we will be using the forums to discuss key concepts and think through real-world applications and situations for ideas from the readings. Each week, I will post questions or prompts to think about as you read, and I will share other relevant items (e.g. stories on current events, links to interesting videos) to expand our conversation. Each week, you should make substantive and thoughtful contributions to the discussions. These contributions can be responses to my questions, comments on other students' posts, or your own questions that you'd like to pose to the class. The goal is to sustain engaging discussions among the class on the forums and NOT for each student to make one post directly responding only to my questions.

Assignments:

Assignments are listed in the Assignment Table below and will all be available on Canvas. A major expectation of this seminar is that you will produce a paper that engages with some important idea or ideas relevant to special collections. The research paper will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on something that matters to you and to add your own voice to the conversation. Many of the assignments in the class are designed to build up to this final research paper that you will turn in at the end of the semester. The annotated bibliography and prospectus assignments, in particular, are structured as check points to help you spread out work on the paper throughout the semester.

For all of the assignments, I will be happy to meet and discuss any questions you might have, including brainstorming ideas for the paper.

Late work will be accepted within a week of the due date, but I will subtract 10 points from the grade. If you have a conflict with a due date, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can find a solution. More information about each assignment may be found on Canvas.

Assignments should be turned in via Canvas, but if you encounter problems, you may email me the assignment as an attachment.

Assignment	Due Date	Percent of Final Grade
Special collections dossier	8/27 (sign up)	20%
Leading class discussion	9/3 (sign up)	10%
Annotated bibliography	10/1	10%
Prospectus	10/22	10%
Research paper	12/1	30%
Participation	Throughout	20%
Total		100%

Grading:

A = 95-100%, A- = 90-94

B+ = 87-89, B = 84-86,

B- = 80-83

C+ = 75-79, C = 70-74

F = 0-69

Accommodations:

UNCG seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS) in 215 Elliott University Center, 334-5440, oars.uncg.edu (<http://ods.uncg.edu/especially-for-faculty/>)

If you will need any accommodation in order to successfully complete the course, please contact OARS as soon as possible. I will be happy to work with you and OARS to make sure you are able to fully participate in the course.

Academic Integrity Policy and Student Ethics Statement:

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Integrity Policy, which you can find here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0rFGGhJvbDHUExSZmFFaWFmb00/view>. Each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community.

Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Pledge as part of the admissions and/or orientation into the program. **UNCG recommends each new student sign the Academic Integrity Pledge during new student orientation:** <https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/the-pledge/>

Students should recognize their responsibility to uphold the *Academic Integrity Policy* and to report apparent violations to the appropriate persons. Students who do not understand the *Policy* or its application to a particular assignment are responsible for raising such questions with their faculty member.

UNCG Plagiarism Policy:

(<http://sa.uncg.edu/dean/academic-integrity/violation/plagiarism/>)

- Plagiarism- Representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise.
 - Plagiarism may occur on any paper, report, or other work submitted to fulfill course requirements. This includes submitting work done by another, whether a commercial or non-commercial enterprise, including web sites, as one's own work.
- Types and Sanctions
 - Failure to Cite References: Intentional or obvious failures to properly cite sources. Recommended sanctions range from requiring the student to re-do the paper to a zero on the paper
 - Submitting, as one's own, work done by or copied from another: Includes work done by a fellow student, work done by a previous student, or work done by anyone other than the student responsible for the assignment. Recommended sanctions range from F on assignment to a recommendation for expulsion
- **UNCG Acceptable Use of Computing and Electronic Resources Article 10-** (Anti-plagiarism policy: http://policy.uncg.edu/university-policies/acceptable_use/)

Students agree that by taking courses at UNCG, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to an anti-plagiarism service for the detection of plagiarism. **I will not be conducting these reviews on all papers, but I will use this tool if it is warranted.** All submitted papers may be included as source documents in the reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. UNCG's anti-plagiarism service is maintained by ITS. The currently used service can be identified by contacting 6-TECH at 336-256-TECH (8324) or 6-tech@uncg.edu.

UNCG Copyright Ownership and Use Policy:

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro is dedicated to its mission of instruction, research and service. It is the policy of this University that its faculty, staff and students carry out their scholarly work in an open and free atmosphere, and that consistent with applicable laws and policy they publish the results of such work without restraint. Additionally, this University is administratively committed to providing an environment that maximizes the creative potential of its faculty, staff and students.

To that end, the University believes that support for and ownership of creative works should be given to the creator or creators of those works subject to the retention by the University of rights for internal educational use and research. Ownership of Copyright by the University is reserved for those works created at the direction of the University or pursuant to negotiated agreements. Additionally, the University supports the responsible, good faith exercise of full fair use rights by employees and students in furtherance of their teaching, research, service and other educational activities. This Policy implements these principles and commitments

(<http://policy.uncg.edu/university-policies/copyright/>)

Technology Support

6-TECH ITS Service Desk: 6tech@uncg.edu, (336) 256-TECH, (336) 256-8324, Open 24/7

[6-TECH Online](#), a web-based central access point for all of your technical needs! [6-TECH Online](#) will allow you to search for your own solutions from a global knowledge base, submit and view your own tickets, and more. All of these services available 24x7.

Note: [As a UNCG student you have access to Office 365/2016 for free on up to five devices.](#)

Schedule

Week 1 (8/20): Introductions and Overviews

What do we mean by ‘special collections’? We’ll think broadly about what special collections are, why we’re all interested in special collections, and preview some of the themes and issues we’ll be discussing throughout the semester.

Before class, please read the following:

Traister, Daniel. 2000. “Is There a Future for Special Collections? And Should There Be?: A Polemical Essay.” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 1 (1): 54–76.

And pick out at least one of the (very short) reflections on what makes special collections ‘special’ from the first issue of *RBM*: <https://rbm.acrl.org/index.php/rbm/issue/view/28/showToc>

Week 2 (8/27): Special Collecting and Special Collectors

This week, we’ll get into some of the prehistory of today’s Special Collections by looking at collecting practices in the early modern period, specifically cabinets of curiosities. Many of today’s institutional collections originate from these private collections.

Daston, Lorraine J. 1988. “The Factual Sensibility.” *Isis* 79 (3): 452–67.

Zytaruk, Maria. 2011. “Cabinets of Curiosities and the Organization of Knowledge.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 80 (1): 1–23.

Week 3 (9/3): Community-driven Collections and Communities of Collecting

In the previous week, we talked about how our current institutions emerged from private or small collections from earlier eras. This week, we’ll think about how many communities today are likewise engaging in special collecting practices that may form the foundation for cultural heritage into the future.

De Kosnik, Abigail. 2016. *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [introduction, pp. 1-20]

Flinn, Andrew, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd. 2009. "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream." *Archival Science* 9 (1-2): 71-86.

Burant, Jim. 1995. "Ephemera, Archives, and Another View of History." *Archivaria* 40: 189-98.

Week 4 (9/10): Professional Roles and Responsibilities

Who works with special collections and in what settings? We'll consider both the specific duties and roles of information professionals involved in special collections work, as well as the ethics and values undergirding these roles.

Clavir, Miriam. 1998. "The Social and Historic Construction of Professional Values in Conservation." *Studies in Conservation* 43 (1): 1-8.

Miller, Mary M., and Martha Horan. 2017. "Evolving Roles of Preservation Professionals: Trends in Position Announcements from 2004 to 2015." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 61 (4): 183-197.

Zinn, Howard. 1977. "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest." *The Midwestern Archivist* 2 (2): 14-26.

Week 5 (9/7): Curation

'Curating' has become a buzzword, with companies offering 'curated' selections goods and with social media platforms promising to help us curator our digital information. To make matters more confusing, 'digital curation' is an important term in the LIS field that doesn't quite line up with these popular notions of curation. We'll think through some different frameworks for curation and consider what curation looks like in special collections in particular.

Colbert, Edwin H. 1958. "On Being a Curator." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 1 (1): 7-12.

Dallas, Costis. 2016. "Digital Curation beyond the 'Wild Frontier': A Pragmatic Approach." *Archival Science* 16 (4): 421-57.

Jones, Jasmine, and Mark S. Ackerman. 2016. "Curating an Infinite Basement: Understanding How People Manage Collections of Sentimental Artifacts." In *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Supporting Group Work*, 87-97. GROUP '16. Sanibel Island, Florida: ACM.

Week 6 (9/24): Appraisal and Collection Development

A primary responsibility for special collections librarians and archivists is the appraisal of incoming materials or the active development of collections by acquiring new items. We'll consider a case study of building up a particular type of special collection, along with some general reflections on the philosophies informing what we keep (and what we don't).

McLeland, D. Courtenay. 2017. "Artists' Books Collection Development: Considerations for New Selectors and Collections." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 18 (2): 80–92.

Cook, Terry. 2011. "'We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are': Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future." *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32 (2): 173–89.

Week 7 (10/1): Appropriation, repatriation, and problems of custody

Often, the question of who 'owns' the material in a special collections is far from straightforward. Especially for older materials with incomplete provenance records, artifacts may have been stolen, appropriated, or acquired by other unethical means. Materials pertaining to or created by Indigenous communities are a particular focus this week, but these questions apply broadly to many 'communities of records' documented within information institutions.

Bastian, J. A. 2001. "A Question of Custody: The Case of the Archives of the United States Virgin Islands." *American Archivist* 64 (1): 96–114.

Underhill, Karen J. 2006. "Protocols for Native American Archival Materials." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 7 (2): 134–45.

Christen, Kimberly, Alex Merrill, and Michael Wynne. 2017. "A Community of Relations: Mukurtu Hubs and Spokes." *D-Lib Magazine* 23 (5/6). <https://doi.org/10.1045/may2017-christen>.

Week 8 (10/8): Analog Materials Preservation

Even as special collections acquire a greater diversity of materials, including digital information in many formats, rare books and manuscripts remain at the core of these collections. We'll consider some of the issues that face the long-term care of these materials, along with social, economic, and cultural dimensions of this work.

Iiams, Thomas M. 1932. "Preservation of Rare Books and Manuscripts in the Huntington Library." *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 2 (4): 375–86.

Starmer, Mary Ellen, Sara Hyder McGough, and Aimée Leverette. 2005. "Rare Condition: Preservation Assessment for Rare Book Collections." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 6 (2): 91–106.

Rachman, Yeni Budi. 2017. "The Use of Traditional Conservation Methods in the Preservation of Ancient Manuscripts: A Case Study from Indonesia." *Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture* 46 (3): 109–15.

Week 9 (10/15): Digital Preservation

How does the increasing amount of digital information in special collections (in the way of both digitized and born-digital objects) cause us to reconsider methods, frameworks, and approaches for preservation? We'll think about some of the new strategies and techniques involved in preserving digital material, as well as some of the bigger questions that these materials pose for special collections.

Smith, Abby. 2007. "Valuing Preservation." *Library Trends* 56 (1): 4–25.

Rinehart, Richard, and Jon Ippolito. 2014. *Re-Collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [chapters 1 and 7]

Week 10 (10/22): Access and Accessibility

Special collections can be some of the hardest materials in a library to access. Yet, providing access to these materials is an essential responsibility of special collections librarians. We'll look at some approaches that information professionals have taken to make these unique and rare materials accessible, and also engage with bigger questions about accessibility.

Jones, Barbara M. 2005. "Hidden Collections, Scholarly Barriers: Creating Access to Unprocessed Special Collections Materials in America's Research Libraries." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 5 (2): 88–105.

Heyliger, Sean, Juli McLoone, and Nikki Lynn Thomas. 2016. "Moving Toward 'Mega-Choice': The Evolution of Access Technologies in Special Collections." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 17 (1): 17–31.

Lund, Brady D., and Shari Scribner. 2019. "Developing Virtual Reality Experiences for Archival Collections: Case Study of the May Masee Collection at Emporia State University." *The American Archivist* 82 (2): 470–83.

Week 11 (10/29): Outreach

Complementing our discussion from the previous week, the focus this week on outreach gets into building connections to other communities and potential users of special collections. How can special collections expand who uses their materials and explore new ways of using these materials?

O'Sullivan, Kevin M., and Gia Alexander. 2020. "Toward Inclusive Outreach: What Special Collections Can Learn from Disability Studies." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 21 (1): 11-25.

Samuelson, Todd, and Cait Coker. 2014. "Mind the Gap: Integrating Special Collections Teaching." *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14 (1): 51–66.

Carbone, Kathy. 2015. "Artists in the Archive: An Exploratory Study of the Artist-in-Residence Program at the City of Portland Archives & Records Center." *Archivaria* 79: 27-52.

Week 12 (11/5): Advocacy

Related to access and outreach, advocacy makes special collections more visible within institutions and organizations and to society at large. Advocacy efforts can secure funding for important projects or highlight invisible work already being carried out. Special collections can play significant roles in addressing broader social issues, and advocacy is a key component in making that happen.

Hackman, Larry J., ed. 2011. *Many Happy Returns: Advocacy and the Development of Archives*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists. [selections TBD]

Week 13 (11/12): Metrics and Assessment

How can we evaluate and assess the work done in special collections? We'll consider both the potential and limitations of quantitative metrics for special collections.

Carter, Lisa R. 2012. "Articulating Value: Building a Culture of Assessment in Special Collections." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 13 (2): 89–99.

Dupont, Christian, and Elizabeth Yakel. 2013. "What's So Special about Special Collections? Or, Assessing the Value Special Collections Bring to Academic Libraries." *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 8 (2): 9–21.

Duff, Wendy, Elizabeth Yakel, Helen Tibbo, Joan Cherry, Aprille McKay, Magia Krause, and Rebecka Sheffield. 2010. "The Development, Testing, and Evaluation of the Archival Metrics Toolkits." *The American Archivist* 73 (2): 569–99.

Week 14 (11/19): Sustainability

Now that we've looked at special collections from many different angles, we will take a step back to consider some enormous questions about the sustainability of current practices. As our world changes as a result of global warming and shifting political contexts, how might special collections adapt or transform?

Pendergrass, Keith L., Walker Sampson, Tim Walsh, and Laura Alagna. 2019. "Toward Environmentally Sustainable Digital Preservation." *The American Archivist* 82 (1): 165–206. <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-82.1.165>.

Moustafa, Laila Hussein. 2016. "Cultural Heritage and Preservation: Lessons from World War II and the Contemporary Conflict in the Middle East." *The American Archivist* 79 (2): 320–38.