

HIST-690-001-The Administration of Archives and Manuscripts

Spring 2024

Assistant Professor (Term) George D. Oberle III

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Office: Fenwick Library 4002

Office Hours: or by appointment (in-person or via Zoom)

Our class meets in Horizon Hall, room 1007, unless otherwise noted.

**The Course:** What is the difference between an archive and a library? Who creates the archive and why? This course will explore these questions and introduce students to the history of archival institutions and practices. Students will learn how these institutions developed and evolved over time. Students will learn how the idea of what constitutes an archive developed and evolved and how specific archives, and the communities they were built to serve, vary as well. Each week the class will explore a core theory or type of institution, and guest speakers from these institutions will provide an overview of the work they perform. These professionals are core partners and make historical scholarship possible. Nevertheless, they have different ideas about how best to preserve the historical record. This is critical to understand so that we have better conversations for promotion our mutual goals. Because so much archival work is now digital, this course will require students to create a digital archival project as a class.

This course is designed to introduce students to both the history and historiography of the development of archives and the archival profession in the United States.

**Course Requirements:** This class meets in-person once weekly, unless otherwise noted. Students should do assigned reading beforehand and come to class prepared to participate in seminar-style discussions.

### **Written requirements**

#### **Assignments**

**Analytical Book Review.** The book review is not simply a summary of the book's contents; they are analytical essays. A good book review highlights the work's main research questions and answers (aka the thesis) and discusses the evidence used to answer (i.e., the sources, historical methods, and interpretive approach) by which the thesis is proved. Your review should analyze how the historian's methodology and sources (i.e., drawn from fields such as social history, cultural history, political history, intellectual history, etc.) shape the historian's argument and conclusions. Good reviews will include the work's strengths and weaknesses while also indicating the scope and limitations of their approach to the subject. It should consist of SHORT quotations or examples from the book to support your points. The concluding section of your essay should address one of these questions: What contribution does this work make to an understanding of the history of archives in the US? Does the piece add to, modify, or revise any other book (or books) we have read this semester? How does it relate to the more prominent themes we discussed in the first class? It should be noted that these are brief reviews. Long quotations are inappropriate and good, concise writing is essential.

**Papers are due at class time on the day we discuss the book. (expected length 4-5 pages.)**

Books with an asterisk (\*) next to them in the course schedule are eligible for review.

Students may be asked to clarify points about the book during class discussion, or later, in an individual meeting with the professor.

## **Group Project**

Students will help create a new archival project focusing on the annual practice of painting wooden benches by student organizations at George Mason University. The practice is governed by policies the [Clubs and Organization unit](#) under the [University Life](#) umbrella organization. In this project, students will explore documentation related to this traditional activity, develop a resource template in Omeka, and add items to this new archival collection. Students will use appraisal strategies to determine what is included in the collection and what is not. Students will also conduct oral histories of organizations selected for next year 2024-2025 and add them to the archival collection.

## **Final Project**

Students may choose **one** of the following options to fulfill their requirements of this project grade.

### **1. Archival Plan**

Develop a plan for an archival collection of your choice. The project should thoroughly outline the purpose of the project and the scope of the materials to be included in the collection. To be a good project plan, this document will engage with archival literature to determine best practices for archivists. Critical to this approach is to determine the appropriate method of appraisal and a strategy to process (make accessible through metadata etc.) the collection. Students will identify the platform (e.g. Omeka) in which the collection will reside and how users will access the content. What are the legal and ethical ramifications of how the collection will be accessed, and what are the long-term plans for preservation for the collection?

### **2. Short Research Paper/Annotated Bibliography on types of archives or methods.**

In consultation with the professor, students will develop a critical annotated bibliography of the history of an archival institution or method. The annotated bibliography will include correctly formatted entries for secondary sources related to types of archives and their historical development. Each entry must be accompanied by a few sentences explaining the contents of the source and its utility for understanding the type of archive and the practices used by the institution. The best projects will include examples of historical scholarship about the institution studied and examples of scholarships that use that archive. The paper will be 12-15 pages long and will consist of an introduction to the topic and a brief historical introduction to the types of archival institutions you are exploring. The paper will also include correctly formatted entries for a total of ten (or more) primary and secondary sources, each of which must be accompanied by a few sentences explaining the contents of the source and its utility for your project.

Some example topics include:

The emergence of historical societies, national archival institutions, state archives or libraries, academic archives, professional organizational archives, local archives, corporate archives, and private archives

Especially strong papers will consider the importance of how the institution developed and evolved while also trying to understand the core aspects of archival work that is done in those institutions. It may make sense to do a comparative analysis of institutions such as the development of state archival institutions such as the Library of Virginia and the Maryland State Archives or the state of Alabama archives. Perhaps exploring national archival collections at the National Library of Medicine with that of the National Agricultural Library.

Please note that historians use “Chicago” or “Turabian” “Notes and Bibliography” style footnotes or endnotes, and that this form of citation (done correctly!) is required for both the final paper and the proposal's annotated bibliography—and also for the shorter papers, if you choose to use citations in them. For proper citation formats, consult Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (many editions) or the University Libraries online copy of the [Chicago Manual of Style](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html). Brief overviews and examples are also widely available online (e.g., [https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)).

Due dates for all written work are noted in the course schedule below. Students must submit their work on or before scheduled due dates. Written work should be submitted via Blackboard in Word document files. For all assignments, late work will be penalized a minimum of one letter-grade.

Oral requirements consist of attendance and participation in weekly discussions, an informal presentation of the final paper, and leadership (or co-leadership) of class discussion for one predetermined week during the semester. Each week, class leaders should be prepared to raise analytical questions about the assigned reading to spur debate and discussion, thoroughly covering the contents of both books and articles. (I will be there to help, but ideally student leaders should generate and guide the class discussion.)

#### Discussions

All assigned books should be available at the university bookstore, as well as at amazon.com and other online booksellers. All journal articles are available at Fenwick Library in electronic format via JSTOR or other databases and accessible through the library catalog. In general, it is best to do the assigned weekly readings in the order in which they appear on the syllabus.

Course grades will be calculated as follows:

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|--|-----|
| • Analytical Book Review                       | 20% |
| • Group Project                                | 30% |
| • Final Project                                | 30% |
| • Participation (including leading discussion) | 20% |

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact Disability Services at 703-993-2474, <http://ds.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services.

The university offers an array of student-support services. For a complete list, go to <https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/graduate/mason-resources-for-graduate-students>.

Finally, please note that all students are subject to the George Mason University Honor Code (see <http://jju.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/honor.htm>). The penalty for cheating or plagiarism on any assignment will be—at a minimum—a grade of F for this course.

### **Tentative Schedule**

#### **Class 1: 22 January 2024**

Overview of Course and Assignments and discussion about what is an archive?

Readings:

**Please read in this order:**

SAA Definitions: <https://dictionary.archivists.org/>

SAA Definition of “Archives”

SAA Definition of “Record”

SAA Definition of “Document”

SAA Definition of “Papers”

SAA Definition of “Value”

SAA Definitions of “Content,” “Context,” and “Structure.”

Kathryn A. Scanlan, “ARMA v. SAA: The History and Heart of Professional Friction,” *The American Archivist* 74:2 (Fall/Winter 2011): 428-450.

Caswell, Michelle. “The Archive” is not an Archives.” Reconstruction 16.1 2016:

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7bn4v1fk>

Michael Brenes, “Historians Don’t Get Archivists. Here’s Why,” *The Chronicle*, August 2, 2018,

<https://www-chronicle-com.mutext.gmu.edu/article/historians-just-dont-get-archivists-heres-why/>

Rosenzweig, Roy. “Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era.” *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (2003): 735–62. [https://wrlc-](https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/19u1omk/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_38483190)

[gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC\\_GML/19u1omk/cdi\\_proquest\\_miscellaneous\\_38483190](https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/19u1omk/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_38483190)

**Class 2: 29 January 2024**

Readings:

John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (Duluth: Litwin Books, 2009). [https://wrlc-](https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/2mgtf9/alma9916038973404105)

[gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC\\_GML/2mgtf9/alma9916038973404105](https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/2mgtf9/alma9916038973404105)

New York State Archives, “The Records Life Cycle,” 2021.

<https://www.archives.nysed.gov/sites/archives/files/the-records-lifecycle.pdf>

Explore examples of Records Management Pages and Schedules:

- Fairfax County Archives and Records Management  
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/informationtechnology/archives/archives-records-management>
- Virginia Records Management: <https://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/>
  - See especially <https://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/retention.asp>
  - <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/records-management/>

As you look at the records management schedules think about what is being saved and what isn’t. Are there holes being constructed in our historical record? Whose stories are most important and what is the purpose of a records management program?

Guest Speaker Bill Keeler-Records Manager Fairfax County Archive.

**Class 3: 5 February 2024**

Before the Archive

Readings:

\*Alea R. Henle, *Rescued from Oblivion: Historical Cultures in the Early United States*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020). (e-book LibCat)

Student Discussion Leader:

#### **Class 4: 12 February 2024**

Guest Speaker Fairfax County Circuit Court Archivist Georgia Brown

Readings:

Library of Virginia, *A Guide to the Virginia Public Records Act*, (in Blackboard)

Library of Virginia, "Origins of the CCRP program" (in Blackboard).

Library of Virginia *CCRP News*. (in Blackboard)

James, Russell D. "All Holdings Are Local: Archivists and Local Government Archives." *Journal of archival organization* 2, no. 3 (2004): 75–82. [https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC\\_GML/19u1omk/cdi\\_openaire\\_primary\\_doi\\_67d64a3823e21a69a3978da3448b1234](https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/19u1omk/cdi_openaire_primary_doi_67d64a3823e21a69a3978da3448b1234)

Cox, Richard J. "Leadership and Local Government Records: The Opportunity of the Joint Committee on the Management, Preservation, and Use of Local Government Records." *The Midwestern Archivist* 10, no. 1 (1985): 33–41. (Library Databases)

Gloria Bartowski, "Fundamentals of Managing Local Governmental Archival Records." *Local Government Records Technical Information Series*, No. 40, 1995. (in Blackboard.)

Introduce the Group Project to the class. Homework will be to browse through the 2017 OneDrive folder and RSO pages linked here.

#### **Class 5: 19 February 2024**

**The class will meet in DiSC Lab in Fenwick Library, room 2715.** Dr. Fahringer will lead the first part of the session and I will join the class after I do a library research session for another professor.

Readings

Dennis Meissner *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*

This is a "how to do it" type book. Please do not read every single word in this book.

\*Helen Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (e-book LibCat)

Discuss the group archival project and the documentation.

Show the documents related to the Student Benches at Mason Digital Archive and think about the metadata schema. Brainstorm what should be captured. What are the differences between online records and the paper records in the binder? Scan paper documents that are not digitally captured that you select (appraise) as the valuable resources for the project.

#### **Class 6: 26 February 2024**

Specialty Archives and Libraries

Thomas Balch Library

Read: "Thomas Balch Library 100 Years 1922-2022: A Century of Knowledge." (I will hand out the print version to the class but there is also an electronic copy in BlackBoard.)

Guest Speakers: Alexandra and Laura Balch Library –Zoom Session

Submit metadata template by email to [goberle@gmu.edu](mailto:goberle@gmu.edu) and [afahring@gmu.edu](mailto:afahring@gmu.edu) by noon on 2/26/2024. During class we will discuss your templates and we will design an Omeka Resource Template that encompasses the various fields. We will add documents from the "archive" as items to Omeka using the agreed upon resource template.

Readings for Omeka

User Manual <https://omeka.org/s/docs/user-manual/>

Planning Tips <https://omeka.org/s/docs/user-manual/s-planning-tips/>

Omeka S Directory of Projects <https://omeka.org/s/directory/>

Black Lives Next Door <https://research.centerformasonslegacies.com/s/blnd/page/home>

Black Lives Next Door in Fairfax

<https://research.centerformasonslegacies.com/s/blndfairfax/page/lloyd-washington>

## 4 March 2024 SPRING BREAK

### Class 7: 11 March 2024

Government Role and the Archive

Guest Speaker-Professor Michael O'Malley-Ancestry and Who Owns History

Readings:

Katharina Hering, "The representation of NARA's INS records in Ancestry's database portal,"

*Archival Science* (March 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-022-09386-3>

Records Schedule Health Department Vital Records

[https://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched\\_specific/601-189.pdf](https://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched_specific/601-189.pdf)

\*Lara Jennifer Moore, *Restoring Order: The Ecole Des Chartes and the Organization of Archives and Libraries in France, 1820-1870* (e-book LibCat)

Student Discussion Leader:

### Class 8: 18 March 2024

The Organization's Archive

Guest Speaker Joanna Lee to discuss Mason's Digital Repository System (MARS).

Readings

George Mason University Libraries, Digital Archive and Preservation Task Force, "Building On Our Strengths: Final Report of Digital Archiving Task Force, 2005. <https://hdl.handle.net/1920/16>

GMU Libraries "Digital Repository Services." <https://library.gmu.edu/repositories>

(Other possible digital repository readings may be forthcoming)

Reading

\*George Schwartz, *Collecting the Globe* (e-book LibCat)  
Student Discussion Leader:

### **Class 9: 25 March 2024**

Guest Speaker- Dr. Eric Gonzaba “Wearing Gay History”

Review project and documentation here: <https://wearinggayhistory.com/>

Also see reviews in library journals.

Moravec, Michelle. *The Journal of American History* 103, no. 3 (2016): 871–871.

Dana Goodin, “Review of Wearing Gay History: A Digital Archive of Historical LGBT T-Shirts,” *Dress* 45:1, 103-105.

\**Documenting Rebellions: A Study of Four Lesbian And Gay Archives in Queer Times* (e-book LibCat)  
Student Discussion Leader:

### **Class 10: 1 April 2024**

The Specialization of Knowledge and the Emergence of Professionals.

\*Robert Townsend, *History's Babel* (e-book LibCat)

Student Discussion Leader:

### **Class 11: 8 April 2024**

The Imperial Archive

\*Cheryl Beredo, *Import of the Archive: US Colonial Rule of the Philippines and the Making of American Archival History* (e-book LibCat)

Student Discussion Leader:

### **Class 12: 15 April 2024**

The Contested Archive and the Construction of Historical Knowledge

Mary Kandiuk, ed, *Archives and Special Collections at Site of Contestation* (e-book LibCat)

Discussion Leader: Oberle

### **Class 13: 22 April 2024**

The Belfast Case-Archives and Oral History. Eithics in the archival profession

Readings

Beth McMurtrie, “[Secrets from Belfast: How Boston College’s Oral History of the Troubles Fell Victim to an International Murder Investigation.](#)” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2014)

- Sinead C. Borgersen, “When Ethics and Law Clash: A Look at the Ethical, Legal, and Moral Issues Arising from the Boston College Belfast Oral History Project,” *Libri: International Journal of Libraries and Information Services* (2016)
- Christine Anne George, “Archives Beyond the Pale: Negotiating Legal and Ethical Entanglements After the Belfast Project,” *American Archivist* (2013) (Search Library Resources)
- Joe Humphreys, “[Historians Fear Boston Tapes Controversy Will Damage Research into the Troubles.](#)” *Irish Times* (2014) in BlackBoard

- Helen Kara, “Ethics Versus the Law: The Case of the Belfast Project,” in *Ethics, Integrity and Policymaking* (2022) See Library Catalog.
- James Allison King, “‘Say Nothing’: Silenced Records and the Boston College Subpoenas,” *Archives & Records* (2014) See Library Journals
- Beth McMurtrie, “Secrets from Belfast: How Boston College’s Oral History of the Troubles Fell Victim to an International Murder Investigation,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2014) See library journals
- Ted Palys and John Lowman, “Defending Research Confidentiality ‘To the Extent the Law Allows’: Lessons from the Boston College Subpoenas,” *Journal of Academic Ethics* (2012) See Library Journals

See the Background Information at the SAA site: <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/oral-history-section/the-belfast-case-information-for-saa-members>

#### **Class 14: 29 April 2024**

In lieu of the class meeting, we will convene at the Bench Painting Party on 4/30/2024. This event will allow us to document the next generation of benches that will be painted, and we can conduct short interviews with the students from the selected organizations.

<https://si.gmu.edu/bench-painting-party/>

**Final Project and all work on the Group Project Due 5:00 p.m. 6 May 2023**