Course Proposal: Advanced Research in Africana Studies

Course Description
This course is designed to prepare students for advanced, primary research in Africana Studies. Students will be exposed to both the theories and practice of using archival materials and primary documents to produce original research appropriate for advanced interdisciplinary study. This will be accomplished through a combination of in-class study, oral presentations, and research experiences at area archives, historical societies, or other organizations, and a final research project. Students will also be introduced to related subject matters, such as public history and digital humanities. The course will pay particular attention to the potential and pitfalls of archival research in the Africana Studies field.

Required Texts

Martha Howell, From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Method, Cornell, 2001


Matthew Gold, Debates in the Digital Humanities, Minnesota Press, 2011


Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory, University of Georgia, 2006

Grading:

Participation and Discussion (20%):

The most vital and interesting part of any academic inquiry is the discussion of ideas: not simply the writers’, but yours as well. I will encourage you to speak thoughtfully and openly about the materials and your responses to them. Once per semester, each student will be responsible for bringing a set of three questions to pose the class for class discussion.

Midterm Exam (20 %):

The short-answer midterm will cover key concepts from units 1-3.

Response Papers (25%):

You will be required to write five short 3-4 page papers for each unit in response to class readings or case studies. These papers will ask you to analyze, synthesize and apply theoretical material.
Final Presentation and Research Paper (35 %):

The final research presentation and research study will be based on a case study of your choosing. The presentation will be 20 minutes in length and accompanied by a 15-page research paper and annotated bibliography.

Students will be required to incorporate digital research into their final research papers.

Absences, Late Work, and Missed Examinations.

Late work will only be accepted under the most extenuating of circumstances. Missed examinations can be made up if missed for similar circumstances. In both cases, if you know of circumstances in advance that will keep you from your obligations, let me know beforehand. Any more than three absences will negatively affect your grade; chronic lateness adds up to absenteeism.

Academic Integrity:

I do not expect total perfection or absolute brilliance from each and every one of my students. What I care about is whether you commit to the honest struggle that accompanies learning—that is, putting forth a genuine effort to grow intellectually. That means your work must be your own in all ways. The unacknowledged use of the words and ideas of others in your writing (meaning without proper citation) is a serious infraction of the academic code and will be dealt with accordingly.

Pledge

“‘I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: ‘Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.’ “For the remainder of the code, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html

Additional Support for Students

Disability Support Services

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/
**University Counseling Center**

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include crisis and emergency mental health consultations and confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. Contact USS at 202-994-5300. Also see: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices)

**The University Writing Center**

Students can seek additional help with writing and assignments in Gelman Library.

**Security**

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
Course Schedule

Unit 1 (Weeks 1-3)
Introduction to Archival Research: Theoretical Frameworks and Methodological Practices
This section of the course will introduce students to theories and methods in archival research. Students will learn why a certain method is used and the desired outcome. Each discussion of a particular method will include a section of “best practices.”

Learning Outcomes:
• Defining Archives
• Locating Archival Materials
• Handling Archival Materials
• Evaluating Primary Documents
• Evaluating Oral Histories
• Evaluating Cultural Artifacts

Sample Case Study:
The Walter Fauntroy Papers, The George Washington University
The Papers of Duke Ellington School for the Arts, George Washington University

Readings
• Martha Howell, From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Method, Cornell, 2001

Unit 2: (Weeks 4-6)
The Potential and Problems of the Africana Archives
Using specific case studies of archives and archival materials, students will how archival research has transformed the field of Africana Studies through the recovery of “subjugated knowledge.” Students will pay particular attention to the importance of “unofficial” archives (that is, those housed outside of traditional repositories) in challenging “official” historical narratives. The information in Units 2 and 3 will carry over into all following units.

Learning Outcomes:
• Examine the kinds of documents and cultural artifacts being recovered and archived
• How recovery shapes historical knowledge and research
• How to formulate historical hypotheses from rare or incomplete source material

Sample Case Studies:
• The University of North Carolina, Documenting the American South
• Henry Louis Gates, ed., The Bondswoman’s Narrative (Recovered novel; 1855-9; 2003)
Readings:
• Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, University of Georgia, 2006

Unit 3 (Weeks 7-8)
Digital Pasts, Digital Futures
In the second unit, students will assess how archival digital resources and scholarship have affected academic research practices and will analyze the current debates emerging in the digital humanities field.

Learning Outcomes:
• Students will become familiar with the history of the digital humanities
• Students will learn how to evaluate digital material
• Students will learn how to employ it in research

Sample Case Studies:
• Frederick Douglass’ Paper, Freedom’s Journal and selected abolitionist newspapers in Readex African American Newspapers (1828-1998); Gelman Library
• “The Black Panther Party Paper” and other Civil Rights era publications, in Readex African American Periodicals, 1825-1995; Gelman Library
• “The Black Freedom Struggle in the 20th Century,” Proquest History Vault; Gelman Library
• Additional Selections from The Slavery and Freedom Research Guide at Gelman Library

Readings:

Unit 4 (Weeks 8-10):
Application of Archival Research
This unit will build on units one through three. Students will gather research completed using theories and methods, and through a series of exercises, learn how to apply theory and method to students’ self-selected research projects.

Learning Outcomes:
• To learn how to formulate a research question
• To learn how to apply archival research
• To learn how to develop an original research project from primary documents and cultural artifacts

Readings:
• Selections from *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013

**Unit 5: Public History (Weeks 11-12)**

**Research and/in the Public Sphere**
The fifth unit in this course will offer an introduction to the field of public history. We will emphasize the impact of archival research on sites where encounters with history are shared, communal and interactive experiences. During this unit, students will travel to at least one public history site in Washington, D.C.

**Learning Outcomes:**
• Trace the development of public history from the 19th century forward
• To understand the relationship between archival research and public history
• To evaluate the impact of public history projects
• To analyze the role public history has assumed in Africana Studies

**Sample Case Studies:**
• The African American Civil War Memorial and Museum, Washington, D.C.
• The Frederick Douglass Home and Museum, Washington, D.C.
• The Martin Luther King Center, Atlanta Georgia (access on line)

**Readings:**

**Unit 6 (Weeks 12-15)**

**Research Presentations**
Students will present the research from their individual final projects, respond to class feedback about their presentations and projects, and hone their final research papers. They will be encouraged to present material at GW’s Undergraduate Research Days.
**Additional Materials List (NOT REQUIRED RESOURCES)**

**Defining and Using Archives: Introduction to Archival Research Method**


**“The Allure of the Archives”: The Archives and Cultural Theory**

Carolyn K. Steedman, *Dust: The Archives and Cultural History*, Rutgers, 2002


**The Archives and Digital Futures**


Anne Burdick, *Digital Humanities*, MIT, 2012

Steven E. Jones, *The Emergence of the Digital Humanities*, Routledge, 2014

**Public History**

James Gardner and Peter LaPaglia, eds., *Public History: Essays from the Field*, Kreiger, 2004


**Specific Resources for Africana Studies: Archives and Public History**


Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race and*