**Rare Book and Special Collections Spring 2018**

INF 388K 5-Rare Book/Special Collectns – 27366

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Office hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, 8–2

**Course Description**

Special collections are composed of objects that require specialized storage and care due to their uniqueness, rarity, contextual significance, and/or reputation. This course will introduce students to the concepts, development and organization, and preservation of such collections.From Late Prehistoric Caddoan vessels to Lead Belly recordings to David Foster Wallace’s papers, the diversity of the objects and documents in UT’s special collections reveal the educational value of the collections, and their many possibilities for use, and challenge us to consider how we can be better stewards of their riches. We will explore similarities and differences among the ways these collections are preserved and described. Other topics to be covered will include collection development, conservation/preservation, digitization and newer technological initiatives, bilingual collections, storage, fundraising, reference, and more. Selected readings and in-class conversations will create a framework for interviews with professionals in the field, such as curators, librarians, software developers, art dealers, and education coordinators.

**Assignments**

Over the course of the semester, each of you will be responsible for three collections. One will be a teaching collection, one a collection of items from multiple repositories (Collection A), and one a personal collection (Collection B), which you will create according to your own interests and expertise. As the class progresses, you’ll learn what it means to be effective stewards of these collections, and by the end of the class you should be able to explain why each collection matters—why it exists—by defending the value of its items.

**Teaching collection**

In groups of three, you’ll select up to fifteen items from the Ransom Center to teach to the rest of the class. Find an existing university level course and study its syllabus. Which works of art, manuscripts, costumes, books, etc., in the Ransom Center’s archives support the reading list? I’ll play the role of that course’s instructor and we’ll work together via e-mail to decide how we’ll co-teach the class. Each group will have 40 minutes to present. The dates for presenting are:

Feb 8

March 8

March 29

April 12

**Collection A**

Select twenty items from four different repositories. Your first task is to tell a compelling story about why these items belong together. Your ultimate task will be to turn them into a digital collection. At least five of the items should not already exist online.

Things to consider:

* How do the items relate to one another?
* What is the provenance of each item? What’s its story?
* Who is the collection’s primary audience?
* What is the economic value of the collection? What’s its social, political, artistic, educational value? Who determines value? What does value mean?

**Collection B**

This collection should challenge you to explore the meaning of “collection.” I leave you with the freedom of no strict parameters, except that you must be able to offer a compelling argument for why your selection qualifies as a collection — and the majority of the class should buy your argument.

**Assignment 1** (15%): Write collection sketches and scope and content notes for Collections A and B.

**Assignment 2** (15%): Create finding aids for Collections A and B

**Assignment 3** (15%): Pitch, write, and submit a short article or blog post—under 400 words—about an item in Collection A.

**Assignment 4** (15%): Digital collections

Participation: 40%

**Grades**

This course will be interactive, and something like an extended symposium. The amount of reading one can do about special collections is endless, and it’s more or less meaningless without firsthand experience. During the semester you’ll have many opportunities to speak with professionals who have worked with special collections and/or collectables for decades. The readings will help you to prepare for these conversations, and a substantial percentage of your grade will be based on your participation in these conversations.

The grades on the assignments will reflect your engagement with the materials you’ve selected. The objects in archives acquire new lives through the energy and meaning we give them, and this is your chance to champion collections in an environment that is relatively unencumbered by rules and restrictions.

**Readings**

**Week 1, Jan. 18: Introduction**

“the event, the process, the original, in its uniqueness, is irrecoverable, undefinable.” — Verne Harris

John Jeremiah Sullivan, “The Ballad of Geeshie and Elvie,” *The New York Times Magazine*, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/04/13/magazine/blues.html>

[“American Folksongs on Commercial Recordings: <https://archive.org/details/lomax_201706>]

Padgett Powell, The Cork, <http://www.oxfordamerican.org/magazine/item/668-the-cork>

Daniel Traister, “Is There a Future for Special Collections? And Should There Be? A Polemical Essay,” https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/35aa/5c0d78f97f89d26ac2eafcf2cc36a4f44da7.pdf

Julian Bond and Jeanne Theoharis, “Why don’t scholars have access to Rosa Parks’s archives?” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-dont-scholars-have-access-to-rosa-parkss-archives/2011/08/29/gIQAKezHoJ_story.html?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.9764528d64ed>

HRC Using the Collections: <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/info/>

HRC Policies, Fees, and Forms: <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/forms/>

**Browse:**

Foreword, Introduction and Acknowledgments, and "A Heritage of Greatness": Andrée Bober, ed., *The Collections: The University of Texas at Austin,* http://thecollections.utexas.edu

Association of College and Research Libraries. Rare Books & Manuscripts Section. "Guidelines: Competencies for Special Collections Professionals." 2008. http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/comp4specollect

Association of Research Libraries (ARL): Special Collections [www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/index.html](http://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/index.html)

**Assignment:** Create a user account with the Ransom Center

**Canvas:** Why take this class?

**Week 2, Jan 25: History of Special Collections / Access and Public Services**

Thomas Staley, “Literary Canons, Literary Studies, and Library Collections: A Retrospective On Collecting Twentieth-Century Writers,” <http://rbml.acrl.org/index.php/rbml/article/view/51/51>

Julia Herrada, “Letters to the Unabomber: A Case Study and Some Reflections.”

Elaine Smyth, “A Practical Guide to Writing a Collection Development Policy” <http://rbml.acrl.org/index.php/rbml/article/view/164>.

**Browse:**

Cornell’s collecting policy: <https://rare.library.cornell.edu/collections/policies>

Make a Gift, University of Virginia Library: <http://small.library.virginia.edu/gifts/>

HRC Guide to the Collections: <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/guide/>

ACRL Guidelines on the Selection and Transfer of Materials from General Collections to Special Collections: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/selctransfer>

William Joyce, “The Evolution of the Concept of Special Collections in American Research Libraries,” <http://rbml.acrl.org/index.php/rbml/article/view/29/29>

*The Collections: The University of Texas at Austin,* http://thecollections.utexas.edu

**Week 3, Feb 1: Collection Development**

Peter Van Wingen, "Your Old Books," <http://rbms.info/yob/>

Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography,* <https://www.dropbox.com/s/t3q21sj40d6tpaa/gaskell-new_introduction_to_bibliography_chapter_1.pdf?dl=0>

John Carter & Nicolas Barker, *ABC for Book Collectors 8th ed.,* <http://www.ilab.org/download.php?object=documentation&id=30>: **Entry on “Rarity”**

**Browse:**

HRC rare book curator Aaron Pratt’s webpage and catalogue: http://aarontpratt.com/site/

[Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association of America](https://www.abaa.org/) (ABAA) — Features a “Collector’s Corner” with a variety of information for book collectors, including “Introduction to Book Collecting,” by Allan and Patricia Ahearn, and other “member publications”; a glossary of terms; a frequently asked questions page; and a list of “book collecting links.” It also includes a searchable directory of ABAA member booksellers.

[Independent Online Booksellers Association](http://www.ioba.org/pages/) (IOBA) — Includes glossaries of book terminology and condition definitions and a semi-annual magazine on book selling and collecting, the IOBA Standard. It also includes a searchable directory of IOBA member booksellers and links to multi-dealer databases and auction sites.

[Rarebooks.info](http://rarebooks.info/) — Aims to be a comprehensive web resource for learning about rare books. It offers three levels of access: free, free with registration, and paid subscription membership. The free levels include access to a glossary of terms and links to libraries, museums, national associations, and private collections worldwide.

**Exercise:** Pick a book for transfer to special collection.

**Week 4, Feb. 8: Rare Book Libraries**

**Assignment 1 due / Collection descriptions**

Frank Boles, “Disrespecting Original Order.”

Kathleen Roe, *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*

David E. Patterson, “A Perspective on Indexing Slaves’ Names,” https://www.jstor.org/stable/40294164

Michelle Caswell, “Using Classification to Convict the Khmer Rouge,” <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/00220411211209177>

**Week 5, Feb, 15: Access and Description**

**Assignment 1b due / Revised collection descriptions**

Skip Hollandsworth, “The Talented Mr. Wittliff,” <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/the-talented-mr-wittliff/>

<http://glasstire.com/venues/stephen-l-clark-gallery/>

Browse Wittliff Collections website: <http://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/#f4e8a925f_f=Visitor>

**Week 6, Feb. 22: The Wittliff Collections**

Location: Stephen Clark Gallery

**Week 7, Mar. 1: Curatorial**

**Assignment 2 due / finding aids**

Robert A. Schrier, “Digital Librarianship & Social Media: the Digital Library as Conversation Facilitator,” http://www.dlib.org/dlib/july11/schrier/07schrier.html

Peter Carini, "Archivists as Educators: Integrating Primary Sources into the Curriculum," http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lls&AN=39656803&site=ehost-live

Sara Haviland's handout for a document analysis from her unit on "Civil Rights in Brooklyn" at the Brooklyn Historical Society's Teach Archives.org: http://www.teacharchives.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Haviland-in-archives-handout-1.pdf

Jason W. Dean & Emily Grover, “Social Media as Entrée into Special Collections Reference Works,” http://rbm.acrl.org/index.php/rbm/article/view/16669

**Week 8, Mar. 8: Education and Outreach**

I Am Not Your Negro

<http://catalog.lib.utexas.edu/search~S29?/ti+am+not+your+negro/ti+am+not+your+negro/1%2C3%2C5%2CB/frameset&FF=ti+am+not+your+negro&1%2C1%2C/indexsort=->

Danuta Kean, “Unseen Sylvia Plath letters claim domestic abuse by Ted Hughes,” https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/apr/11/unseen-sylvia-plath-letters-claim-domestic-abuse-by-ted-hughes

“Huntington Curators Uncover Unique Volume Comprising Two Sections of a 16th-Century Chinese Encyclopedia,” http://huntington.org/WebAssets/Templates/content.aspx?id=17577

—Response to the find by “CD Couture”: https://medium.com/archives-records/archival-discoveries-fantastic-finds-or-signs-of-a-field-in-need-of-help-93d1e2cfc306

**Week 9, Mar. 22: Publicity / Archives in the popular media**

Nicholson Baker. “The Author vs. the Library,” http://archives.newyorker.com/?i=1996-10-14#folio=051

Nick Paumgarten, “Deadhead,” <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/11/26/deadhead>

Ben Lerner. “The Custodians,” <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/01/11/the-custodians-onward-and-upward-with-the-arts-ben-lerner>

**Week 10, Mar. 29: Preservation and Conservation**

Anthony Grafton, *Future Reading,* <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/11/05/future-reading>

Susan Manus, “The World Digital Library Backstory,” http://blogs.loc.gov/thesignal/2012/01/the-world-digital-library-backstory/

Association of Research Libraries, Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Academic and Research Libraries, http://www.arl.org/storage/documents/publications/code-of-best-practices-fair-use.pdf

**Browse:**

Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/

The World Digital Library: https://www.wdl.org/en/

Reading the First Books project webpage: https://sites.utexas.edu/firstbooks/

Latin American Digital Initiatives: http://ladi.lib.utexas.edu

**Week 11, April 5: Digitization**

**Assignment 3 due: article**

Carla M. Summers, “Archival Donor Relations and Development: Keeping a Balance,” http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1102&context=provenance

Society of American Archivists, “A Guide to Deeds of Gift,” https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/deeds-of-gift

D.T. Max, “Final Destination: Why Do the Archives of So Many Great Writers End Up at Texas?” http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/06/11/070611fa\_fact\_max

**Week 12, April 12: Donor relations and fundraising**

Cathy Davidson and David Theo Goldberg. “A Manifesto for the Humanities in a Technological Age,” http://sect.uchri.org/archives/3/pdfs/Manifesto\_Humanities.pdf

David M. Levy, “Contemplating Scholarship in the Digital Age,” *Rare Books & Manuscripts Librarianship,* vol. 6, no. 2 (fall 2005). rbm.acrl.org/content/6/2/69.full.pdf

**Browse:**

Mirador: http://projectmirador.org/

International Image Interoperability Framework: http://iiif.io/

From the Page: https://fromthepage.com/

**Week 13, April 19: Digital humanities**

Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, Richard Ovenden, and Gabriela Redwine, “Digital Forensics and Born-Digital Content in Cultural Heritage Collections,” Council on Library and Information Resources report (Washington, DC: December 2010). https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub149/pub149.pdf

**Week 14, April 26: Born Digital**

**Final due.**