

Prof. Carolyn Guertin • MW 6:00-8:50 pm • Preston Hall 310 • Spring 2009

University of Texas at Arlington

Office: eCreate Lab PH 311 Hours: MW 4:00-6:00 or by appointment

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Course Website: <https://mavspace.uta.edu/guertin/archive/>

Engl 5380/History 5348: Archive/Database/Interface

The archive may well be the guiding metaphor of the information age. It is a multimodal repository that we dip into to retrieve data and images; it is a measure of our biological origins written in DNA; it is a language of classification; it is a storehouse of trauma; it is an ongoing source of artistic inspiration and technological innovation. The history of how we write, store and create memories is integrally intertwined with what it means to be human. Memory is messy, built of associations, fragments, snapshots and whiffs of the past, derived from the senses and the body rather than from logic or knowledge. It is only through technology and art -- the interfaces of memory -- that we make sense of the past. Students will apply their theoretical explorations to exploring in-depth 'forgotten' local narratives, cultural events or artifacts in the face of the prevailing Texan aversion to remembering its history.

Taking a historical overview of archival systems and making direct use of UT Arlington's Special Collections, we will look for the places at which inscription, data and aesthetics meet. We will ground our discussion in several specific topics: the history of memory, the architecture of memory, the concept of inscription and the body as a writing surface, information aesthetics and conceptual modeling, and the affect of the database as a storehouse and source for digital art. We will look at critical theory, historical writings, technologies, interfaces, and analog and digital art, to get a sense of the role of the archive, and its descendant the database, in the 21st century. The course involves the use of applied theory: firstly, theories of the archive along with real use of Special Collections; secondly, an investigation of the database and how it informs digital repositories, and finally, an interrogation of the nature of the interface and the use of iMovie to create a digital video (in iMovie 06) from a combination of archival materials and location footage on a narrative topic of local historical interest. Can also be taken as a History credit as HIST 5348.

Course Texts:

Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998.

Graff, Harvey J. *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of An American City*.

Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Merewether, Charles. *The Archive: Documents in Contemporary Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2006.

Vesna, Victoria. *Database Aesthetics: Art in the Age of Information Overflow*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007

Schedule Week-by-Week (may be subject to revision from time to time. Check the website for the most current information):

Jan 26th: Introduction to the Archive

Jamie Baron, “Contemporary Documentary Film and ‘Archive Fever’: History, The Fragment, The Joke” from *Velvet Light Trap*. No. 60. (Spring 2007). (PDF)

Screenings: *Tailenders Trailer* (Adele Horne, 2006):

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3091816335721813889>

Interview Adele Horne: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=JOs4Ycw4r-I>

Date of *Tailenders* screening TBA.

Man With The Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929, 68 minutes)

Feb 2nd: Archive Fever

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*

Sigmund Freud, “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad” (Merewether 20-24)

Sven Spieker, “Freud’s Files” (from *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008. 35-49) Handout.

Andy Warhol, “The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again) (Merewether 031)

Feb 9th: The Archive as Medium

Book On Library Reserve: Okwui Onwezor, “Archive Fever: Photography Between History and the Monument” + “Artists Pages” (the remainder of the book).

Giorgio Agamben, “The Archive and Testimony, 1989” (Merewether 038-040)

Screening: *Nuit et Brouillard* (Night and Fog), (Alain Resnais, 1952, 30 min)

Guest speaker?

Feb 16th: Private Archives and Inscriptions on the Body

From Merewether:

Renée Green, “Survival: Ruminations on Archival Lacunae, 2002” (Merewether 049-055)

Christian Boltanski “Research and Presentation of All that Remains of My Childhood 1944-50, 1969 (025)

Ilya Kabakov, "The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away, c. 1977" (038-039)

Susan Hiller, "Working Through Objects, 1994" (041-048)

Paul Ricoeur, "Archives, Documents, Traces, 1978" (066-069)

Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive, 1986" (070-075)

Cummings & Lewandowska, "From Enthusiasm to the Creative Commons" (Merewether 149-153)

Screening: 2008 Man with a Movie Camera: The Global Project (Bard, 2008)

Feb 23: Mythmaking and Historical Evasions

Harvey Graff, *The Dallas Myth*

Screening: Excerpts from *Dallas*, the TV series

Mar 2nd: Special Collections

Mar 9th: Caméra-stylo, Cinema Verité, Personal History and the Home Movie

Introduction to iMovie and film editing

Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Observations on the Long Take." *The Cinematic: Documents of Contemporary Art*. David Company, Ed. London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel/MIT, 2007. 84-87.

Screenings: JFK Assassination, (Zapruder, 1963, 26 sec) and other films

Mar 16th-20th: Spring Break

Mar 23rd: Personal Archives and Private Histories

Read: Marsha Orgeron and Devin Orgeron "Familial Pursuits, Editorial Acts" from *Velvet Light Trap*. No. 60. (Spring 2007) (PDF).

From Merewether:

Marcel Broodthaers, "Interview with Jürgen Harten and Katharina Schmidt, 1972 (082-084)

Margarita Tupitsyn, "Against the Camera, For the Photographic Archive, 1994" (103-107)

subREAL, "Politics of Cultural Heritage, 1999" (113-117)

Thomas Hirschhorn, "Interview with Okwui Enwezor, 2000" (117-120)

Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse, 2004" (143-148)

Works of James Castle: <http://www.gregkucera.com/castle.htm>

"Reputed Illiterate: The Art Books of James Castle":

<http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/exhibit-reputedly-illiterate>

Screening(s): Selections from *James Castle: Portrait of an Artist* (Jeffrey Wolf, 2008) OR *James Castle: Dreamhouse, His Art and Life* (Thomas E. Trusky, 2008). *The Devil and Daniel Johnston* (Jeff Feuerzeig, 2005, 110 min)

Mar 30th: The Art of Memory and New Narratives

Lev Manovich, "Database as Symbolic Form" (Vesna 39-60)

Grahame Weinbren, "Ocean, Database, Recut" (Vesna 61-85)

Bill Seaman, "Recombinant Poetics and Related Database Aesthetics" (Vesna 121-141)

Raqs Media Collective, "First Information Report, 2003" (170-171)

Screening: "Variable Identity," *Soft Cinema* (Lev Manovich, 2005)

Apr 6th: (Re)Inventing Histories: What is an archive? Who is the author? Where is the future?

Sharon Daniel, "The Database: An Aesthetics of Dignity" (Vesna 142-182)

From Merewether:

Michel Foucault, "The Historical *a priori* and the Archive" (026-030)

Merewether, "Archives of the Fallen, 1997" (160-162)

Gayatri Spivak, "The Ranir of Surmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" (163-169)

Dragan Kunjundzic, "Archigraphia: On the Future of Testimony and the Archive to Come" (172-176)

Akram Zaatari, "Photographic Documents/Excavation as Art, 2006" (181-184)

Screening: *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962, 28 min)

Apr 13th: Generative Stories and Neo-Encyclopedists

Warren Sack, "Network Aesthetics" (Vesna 183-210)

Mary Dery, "Memo Mori":

<http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-1-0202/msg00033.html>

Glenn Collins, "The 500 Hours of 9/11" *New York Times Online*:

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/30/nyregion/30archive.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

Screening: Will Wright, "Spore":

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8372603330420559198>

Apr 20th: The Archive as Witness

Diana Taylor, "Lost in the Field of Vision: Witnessing September 11th" *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham & London: Duke, 2003. (PDF)

Jayce Salloum, "Sans Titre/Untitled: The Video Installation as an Active Archive" (Merewether, 185-193)

Watch (before class): *In Memoriam: New York City 9/11/01* (HBO, 2002)

Ralf Schuster, "New York, September 2001" (2004): http://www.archive.org/details/rssh_1

And "Reflections of Ground Zero" Parts 1a, 1b and 2:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8hN-aNWWBE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eKyhfG6MF0&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vAZDBDDtz0&feature=related>

Screening: *Man on Wire* (James Marsh, 2008, 94 min)

Apr 27th: Voicing Countercultures

Ann Cvetkovich, "In the Archive of Lesbian Feelings" from *An Archive of Public Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham & London: Duke, 2003. 239-271. (PDF).

Screening: *Tarnation* (Jonathon Caouette, 2004, 91 min)

May 4th: Data, Information Overload and Storytelling

Steve Dietz, "Database Imaginary: Memory_Archive_Database" (Vesna 110-120)

Online Texts:

Cory Arcangel, "Data Diaries": <http://www.turbulence.org/Works/arcangel/>

Biggs, Simon. "Babel: A Data Browser": <http://hosted.simonbiggs.easynet.co.uk/babel/>

Chicago Art Gallery: "The File Room": <http://www.thefileroom.org/>

George LeGrady, "Making the Invisible Visible":
<http://www.whitney.org/arport/gatepages/november05.shtml>

Judd Morrissey, "The Last Performance": <http://thelastperformance.org/title.php>

W. Bradford Paley, "TextArc": <http://www.textarc.org/>

Noah Wardrip-Fruin, "Regime Change and News Reader":
<http://www.noahwf.com/rcnr/index.html>

"Shredder": <http://www.noahwf.com/rcnr/index.html>

Screening: Selections from *City2City: A Compilation of Ten Films and Videos by Artists from Around the World*. (2006)

Assignments:

An online blog with a **weekly response** to readings and/or screenings from the course. Go to <http://blog.uta.edu> to login to your account. Be sure to email your blog URL to the professor at carolyn.guertin@gmail.com. You do not need to respond to all of the texts every week, but you should always respond in-depth to at least one of the major works. Due Mondays before class. 250 words/week or more. (20%)

A **presentation** of your research material, on a topic related to local history that explores a forgotten or unsung narrative of a local text (any medium), figure, family, media outlet, place, building, district or well-defined group. Your chosen subject should demonstrate historical significance and incorporate original, previously un- or underexplored material. You should be prepared to actually show us the archival materials that you have located. These may include scanned or digitized versions of documents, copies of historical photographs, film clips, books or artifacts. You may also include your own photographs or other materials that you think relevant. Your presentation should detail what your starting point was for your search and what you have uncovered as you have delved into special collections and other sources. Make sure that you take this beyond show and tell! Frame your material with an argument indicating your position. Try to incorporate ideas or questions raised by some of the theorists or artists we have read or seen, and demonstrate how the archival nature of special collections has influenced or shaped what you can say about your subject material. A PowerPoint slideshow accompanying your talk is probably the easiest way to present your materials, but you may present other options to the professor for approval if you want to take a different approach. All material reproduced or adapted from other sources should be credited. (30%)

A **digital video** (10 minutes or more in length) that interweaves historical materials—including stills, video clips and scanned documents—with video footage that you have shot. The film should be edited and may include voiceovers or ambient sound. You may interview people as resources for your video, but please use them sparingly. They should supplement your other

materials, not be the foundation for the work as a whole. This is an extension of your earlier presentation topic and the material that you have found in Special Collections or other archival sources. Your earlier work should only be a jumping off point. Your final project should demonstrate engaging writing, interesting visuals and a compelling narrative. You will be graded on the quality of your production, writing, and editing. We have direct-to-hard-drive digital video camcorders available for 24-hour or weekend loan, and MacBooks (Macintosh laptops) are available to be signed out. Instruction for all hardware and software that you need to complete the course assignments will be provided in class and you can stop by the eCreate Lab any time from 9:00 to 5:00 Monday to Friday for additional assistance from the professor (by appointment) or from the Lab Assistants. See the eCreate Lab and its Website (<http://www.uta.edu/english/ecompute>) for more details.

Attendance Policy

As a seminar course, attendance is naturally mandatory. If you cannot attend for exceptional circumstances, please discuss this with me. Absences will affect not only your work, but your classmates'.

Grading

Your grade is based on how well you meet the requirements of each assignment (creativity, application of theory, sound design principles, grammar, spelling, quality of your argument, visual composition), as well as your general participation. As much as possible, I will try to give you full information about why you have received the grade you did and how you might improve it at the next go.

Late Work

If you foresee problems making a deadline, please discuss this with me in advance. Extensions can often be arranged (once) for reasonable conditions. Any work that is handed in late, without provision having been made, will lose 2% per day.

Academic Integrity & Scholastic Dishonesty

http://www.uta.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/academic_integrity.php

Introduction

It is the policy of the University of Texas at Arlington to uphold and support standards of personal honesty and integrity for all students consistent with the goals of a community of scholars and students seeking knowledge and truth. Furthermore, it is the policy of the University to enforce these standards through fair and objective procedures governing instances of alleged dishonesty, cheating, and other academic/non-academic misconduct.

What is Academic Integrity?

Academic integrity is defined as being a firm adherence to a code or standard of values. It is a commitment on the part of the students, faculty and staff, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values:

- Honesty • Truth • Fairness • Respect • Responsibility

Student Responsibility

You can assume responsibility in two ways. First, if you choose to take the risk associated with scholastic dishonesty and any other violation of the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline, you must assume responsibility for your behaviors and accept the consequences. In an academic community, the standards for integrity are high. Second, if you are aware of scholastic dishonesty and any other conduct violations on part of others, you have the responsibility to report it to the professor or the assistant dean of students/director of student judicial affairs. The decision to do so is another moral dilemma to be faced as you define who you are.

What Constitutes Scholastic Dishonesty?

Cheating

- Copying another's test or assignment.
- Communication with another during an exam or assignment (i.e. written, oral or otherwise).
- Giving or seeking aid from another when not permitted by the instructor.
- Possessing or using unauthorized materials during the test.
- Buying, using, stealing, transporting, or soliciting a test, draft of a test, or answer key.

Plagiarism

- Using someone else's work in your assignment without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Making slight variations in the language and then failing to give credit to the source.

Collusion

- Without authorization, collaborating with another when preparing an assignment.

All cases and suspected cases will be dealt with via official channels.