**History 201—Approaches to History**

Spring 2023

Professor Harkness

SOS B51

[deharkness@usc.edu](mailto:deharkness@usc.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:30 in SOS 161

Additional hours by appointment via Zoom

This course focuses on the archival nature of historical practice, and uses an archival lens to pursue questions of historical evidence, historical interpretation, and how historical information is presented to the public through a hands-on, laboratory style of teaching and learning. The goal for the course is for students to achieve significant levels of archival literacy that will provide them with important tools to use in other history (and humanities) courses. Students will develop facility in archival methods (such as paleography), acquire training in how to handle rare books and other materials, and get a thorough grounding in how to develop research projects and questions based on archival sources. We will also cover subjects related to the history of the book, including reading practices, writing practices, book production, and the development of the library.

Curiosity is essential in this course. Everybody will be exploring ideas, concepts, and objects with which they have little or no familiarity. Be prepared to get out of your comfort zone and be on a steep learning curve.

Because the approach to the course is hands-on, and involves access to rare books and manuscripts in both the classroom and special collections, attendance will weigh heavily in your grade. Like a laboratory, “make up” work or meetings in office hours cannot be substituted for missed classroom time. While medical or other emergency excuses will always be accommodated, simply missing classes will negatively affect your course grade.

**How your grades are calculated:**

Every student in the class starts with an A. It is up to you to keep it. How do you do so?

1. Be prepared for class by doing the reading and any other assignments by the dates indicated below [P]
2. Participate meaningfully and with curiosity in class discussions and hands-on practicums (obviously this is best achieved with regular class attendance) [P]
3. Complete the weekly response questions available on Google Forms (this will require approximately 8-10 cumulative pages of writing over the course of the semester), and any exercises (such as paleography tutorials, the completion of in-class practicums). These responses will include regular student assessments of their progress to date. [R]
4. Complete the take-home midterm assessment, which will be open book, require the use of primary sources, and is argument- and evidence-based of approximately 5 pages in length [W]
5. Complete the Final Exam Project, which will require the transcription and description of three documents, putting them in historical context using library and on-line resources, and explaining their significance to historians [W]

Items marked [P] will be weighed as 35% of your grade. Items marked [R] will be weighed as 30% of your grade. Items marked [W] will be weighed as 35% of your grade. We will collectively discuss expectations and how these grades will be arrived upon in our first class.

Student grades will be based on class attendance and participation, the completion of interim assignments, a mid-term practicum, and a final project.

PLEASE NOTE: Classes will be held in USC Special Collections on some days, noted below in the syllabus. Whenever students consult rare books, manuscripts, and archival materials in USC Special Collections they must do so in the library; they do not circulate. Please take this into consideration when planning your study and preparation time.

Required Books for Purchase:

Dane, *What Is a Book?*

**All other readings** **and course materials** will be available on Blackboard (BB), via links, files, and through USC Library resources.

**Student Responses for each week are due by the beginning of class on Thursday,** via Google Forms. These will be posted no later than the beginning of class on Tuesday.

**Reading /Practice Assignments should be completed BEFORE the class** in which they will be discussed.

**Practicums** begin in class and are completed at home.

**Schedule of Classes**

**Part 1: An Introduction to Manuscripts and Rare Books**

Tuesday 10 January *What is archival literacy for historians?* An

Introduction to History 201

Thursday 12 January A Brief Introduction to Paleography and an Even Briefer

Introduction to the History of Writing in the West

Response 1 Due

Reading/Practice: National Archives (UK), “Where to

Start?” (BB); National Archives, “Interactive Tutorial 1”

(BB) “Interactive Tutorial 2” (BB)

Tuesday 17 January Paleography

**Note: please do not wear white/light clothes if possible—**

**we will be working with pens and ink ☺**

Reading/Practice: Letter from JW Todd, 1892 (BB); Letter

from Ezra Harkness, 1833 (BB); National Archives (UK), Quick Reference Guide;

Thursday 19 January Manuscripts 101

Response 2 Due

Reading/Practice: Kwakkel, *Books Before Print*, pp. 1-117

(BB)

Tuesday 24 January **Class Meets in Feuchtwanger Room, Doheny Library**

Manuscripts as Living Texts 1

Reading/Practice: Kwakkel, *Books Before Print,* pp. 120-

242 (BB)

Thursday 26 January Manuscripts as Living Texts 2

Response 3 Due

Tuesday 31 January Medieval Books and Their Owners

Reading/Practice: Pettegree, 1-72 (BB); King, *The*

*Bookseller of Florence,* pp. 1-31 (BB)

Thursday 2 February From Manuscript to Print

Response 4 Due

Reading/Practice: Dane, 47-84

Tuesday 7 February **Class Meets in Feuchtwanger Room, Doheny Library**

Looking at Rare Books

Reading/Practice: Dane, pp. 17-46 and 85-170

Thursday 9 February **Class Meets in Feuchtwanger Room, Doheny Library**

Looking at Rare Books (cont)

Response 5 Due

Tuesday 14 February Print Culture and Literacy, 1500-1900

Reading/Practice: Pettegree, pp.123-178 and 245-319 (BB)

Thursday 16 February The Development of the Modern Library

Response 6 Due

Tuesday 21 February USC’s Libraries: Walking Tour and Discussion

Reading/Practice: Field Notes on USC Libraries

(practicum)

**Part 2: The Archival Encounter**

Thursday 23 February **Class Meets in the Feuchtwanger Room**

The Archival Survey: History As Archaeology

Response 7 Due

Reading/Practice: Approaching uncatalogued manuscripts

(practicum)

Tuesday 28 February Working with Unstudied Manuscripts: the World in a Box

Reading/Practice: Constructing a Manuscript Census (practicum)

Thursday 2 March Noticing Patterns, Developing Questions, Finding Answers

Response 8 Due

Reading/Practice: Meeting your individual document (practicum)

Tuesday 7 March Independent Work in the Archive: From Transcription to

Description

(Consultations available with Professor Harkness on Zoom)

Thursday 9 March Take-home Midterm Due no later than 3:30 PM CA time

Tuesday 14 March NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

Thursday 16 March NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

Tuesday 21 March **Class Meets in Feuchtwanger Room Doheny**

Refining Historical Questions: the Role of Library

Resources in Archival Research

Reading/Practice: Finding Research Resources (practicum)

Thursday 23 March Analyzing and Contextualizing the Archive

Reading/Practice: Contextualizing Your Document (practicum)

Response 9 Due

Tuesday 28 March Making the Archive Accessible to Other Historians

Reading/Practice: Collating and Ordering (practicum)

Thursday 30 March Making the Archive Accessible to Other Historians

Response 10 Due

Reading/Practice: Archive Description (practicum)

**Part 3: Doing Research in the Archives**

Tuesday 4 April Professor Harkness at Oberlin

Viewing: Dominique Luster, “Archives Have the Power to Boost Marginalized Voices” (BB)

Listening: Rachael Cerrotti, “We Share the Same Sky” (BB)

Thursday 6 April Encountering Your Individual Documents: Reading and

Assessing

Response 11 Due

Reading/Practice: Triangulation (practicum)

Tuesday 11 April Working with Your Individual Documents:

Reading/Practice: Noticing

Patterns and Constructing a Research Plan (practicum)

Thursday 13 April Developing Your Research Plan

Response 12 Due

Practicum: Finding Resources (practicum)

Tuesday 18 April Student Presentations: Contextualizing Their Archive

Thursday 20 April Student Presentations: Contextualizing Their Archive

Tuesday 25 April Professor Harkness available for consultation

Thursday 27 April Re-Assessing Your Archival Literacy

Thursday 4 May Final Exam Project Due at 4 pm