INTRODUCTION

What is an archive? What stories are to be found in the archives and what stories do we tell ourselves about the meaning and function of the archive? For many years now, and certainly since the publication of the French theorist Jacques Derrida's essay, Archive Fever, historians, archivists, and cultural theorists have been asking questions about the archive as much as they have been engaged in the actual practice of archiving, or making use of material found in archives. This tutorial considers some of those questions. It is not a hands-on course about how to use an archive, nor a celebration of material found in archives – although it will certainly consider the historians’ passion for the archives. Rather, the tutorial treats the archive as an object of study rather than a place of study, and it does so from a number of perspectives, examining the history of the archive, the politics of collecting, and the political and social function of the archive in various societies. Each week a specific topic will be considered, collectively illustrative of the breadth of recent enquiries into the logic of the archive. Topics will include, amongst others: the nature of the historian's encounter with ‘the past' in the archive; the shifting function of the archive in society; the
urge to collect and archive in early modern Europe; the role played by the archive in the creation of the modern nation state; the changing relationship between the professional archivist and the professional historian; the power relations embodied in the colonial archive; the role of the archive in 'speaking truth to power'; the silencing of the past through archival erasures; the role played by archives in the creation of 'usable pasts' in a world of identity politics; the recent desire to archive everything, not merely the written document; and the new archives of cyberspace.

COURSE GOALS

Most of all the goal of this tutorial is to get you to think about the meaning of the archive and to reflect on questions about those hallowed spaces in which we supposedly come close to uncovering the truth of the past: what, exactly, is an archive; what gets to be archived, and why; how have archives come to take the form they have; what practices of collecting have given shape to the archives we commonly use; what do societies deem to be collectible and hence archival, and how has this changed over time; what role do archives play in sanctioning and legitimating particular groups of people; what is the relationship between the archive and structures of power; how have recent digital technologies transformed the very notion of the archive and its contents?

Equally important, this tutorial, a writing-intensive course, is aimed at enhancing your ability to write about complex arguments made by others in a succinct and clear manner. Papers will be read and critiqued by the instructor and your tutorial partner, both for substance and style, in our weekly meetings. In addition, the ability to articulate a cogent oral critique is a skill that will also be stressed, the instructor paying as much attention to the improvement of oral as well as written expression. Finally, as this tutorial is about archives, you will learn about the history and practices of our very own archives here at Williams too.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

As is the custom with tutorials at Williams, the bulk of the semester will be devoted to tutorial meetings between two students and the instructor. Students enrolled in the tutorial will be paired and each pair will meet the instructor for an hour a week for ten weeks during the semester, five before Spring Break and five after. At each tutorial session one student will read a written paper aloud and the other student will present an oral critique of that paper from written notes. Each student will write five tutorial papers and offer five oral critiques. Furthermore, students will meet collectively with our own archivists at Williams and develop a research topic and write a sixth paper about archives at Williams, an oral summary of which will be presented to the entire class at the end of the semester.

Evaluation in the course will be based on the quality of the five tutorial papers and the defense of them, the clarity, precision, and insight of the five critiques, and the final research paper and oral presentation. I will meet with all students individually at two points in the semester to discuss the work undertaken in the tutorial and the progress on the final research paper.

The overall workload for the tutorial consists of the following:

- (1) Five tutorial essays (5-7 pages each)
  All students will be expected to complete the reading assigned for each of our ten weekly tutorial sessions and then to write five papers, each addressing the themes of the reading for the week in which the paper is written. Papers should never be more than seven double-spaced pages long – and should preferably be five or six pages in length. For the first three tutorial meetings during the course of the semester formal essay topics will be assigned (they appear on this syllabus, below). For all subsequent meetings you will be encouraged to focus on a question you would like to ask about the reading for that week, although some general thoughts about the reading will again be offered on the syllabus or distributed via email. All papers will be read aloud by the student who wrote them in our weekly tutorial meetings. Papers must be sent as an email attachment – both to the instructor and to your tutorial partner (as a Word document or as a PDF) – no later than 5:00 pm on the evening prior to the weekly tutorial meeting.
• **(2) Five oral critiques**
  For the week in which students don’t write the formal essay they will be expected to undertake the reading, closely consider the arguments made in their tutorial partner’s paper, and prepare a critique of their partner’s work. Critiques should be written, at least in outline form, and delivered orally in our weekly meeting. Critiques should focus both on the substance of the paper writer’s argument and its clarity and style of presentation. Our weekly practice will be for the essayist to read his or her paper aloud with a brief pause at the end of each paragraph for the student critic to comment, if necessary, on the flow of the argument and to seek clarification before moving on. A general critique of the essayist’s arguments should be delivered at the end of the presentation, prompting a more open-ended discussion of the essay and the reading on which it is based.

• **(3) An eight-page research paper and an oral presentation on the Williams archives**
  Each student in the tutorial will also undertake a small research project about our own College archives and/or special collections, based on the themes we are considering this semester but outside of the formal tutorial setting. Early in the semester there will be a group meeting for the entire class with very own Williams’ archivists who will help you to frame your individual exploration of our collections. There will be no tutorial meeting during the week before Spring break, nor during the final week of classes, in order to facilitate time for research and writing. You will be expected to write a final, eight-page paper (approx.) that will be due at an end-of-semester group meeting during reading period. You will also be expected at that meeting to make a short, oral presentation on your findings about our collections at Williams to the entire class.

• **(4) A weekly contribution to our own Archive of Archives**
  Students will be asked to select just one sentence from the reading every week that contains the word ‘archive’ (or ‘archives’, ‘archivist’, ‘archival’, etc) that somehow seems particularly appealing or important. We will create an archive of these statements on GLOW and you will be expected to contribute your weekly choice to our Archive of Archives. In every tutorial meeting both the essay writer and the critic will also be expected to read their chosen statement aloud (posted on GLOW the previous evening) and explain their reasons for contributing that statement to our archive.

**COURSE READINGS**

Given the nature of the tutorial, we will, where possible, engage with the arguments of just one or a small number of writers each week. Consequently, we will be reading a good number of books, often in full. All readings from books to be purchased for the course are marked with an asterisk (*) on the syllabus. The following SIX books have been ordered in the Williams College Bookstore on Spring Street:

In addition to these six books, a number of articles and book chapters we will be considering have been photocopied and are available in a one-volume course reader, which can be picked up between 9:00 am and 3:30 pm in the Office of Print and Mail in the Class of ’37 House, 51 Park Street. All readings therein are marked with a plus sign (+) on the syllabus. Readings should be undertaken in the order listed on the syllabus and brought to our tutorial meetings, should we need to consult them.

Note: The first two items in the reading packet for the course – a relatively short article by Marlene Manoff that nicely charts many of the themes we will be considering in our tutorial, and a brief report on a recent campus controversy involving archives – must be read in advance of our initial group meeting.

HONOR CODE

I also want to draw your attention to the provisions of the Honor Code as detailed in the College’s Student Handbook. We will discuss the Honor Code at the beginning of the semester as it relates to our tutorial; if you have any questions about how the Code pertains to work in HIST 487T, please don’t hesitate to see me. While I encourage you to discuss the writing assignments with each other, your written work must be your own.
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

introductory group session: Wednesday 5th February, 8:30 pm

INTRODUCTION TO THE TUTORIAL (15 pages)

[Group meeting for all students; please read these two articles before our initial meeting.]

PART ONE

THE FETISH OF THE ARCHIVE – SOME REFLECTIONS

week one: Monday 10th – Friday 14th February

LOVE AFFAIRS: THE HISTORIAN AND THE ARCHIVE, I (135 pages)

[This is a historian’s account of the thrill of the encounter with the fragmentary remains of the past, a meditation on converting archival research into historical narrative, and an expression of a historian’s love affair with the archive. It’s an easy read, but raises substantive questions about what an archive is and why historians often make a fetish of it. ESSAY TOPIC: What is the allure of the archive for Arlette Farge? What is it that drives her passion? What does she seek from the archive, what does she get from it, and what does she do with what she gets? What is it about the archive itself that makes it so alluring?]
**week two:** Monday 17th – Friday 21st February  
THE ARCHIVAL IMPULSE AND ITS MEANINGS (110 pages)  

[Derrida’s *Archive Fever* is a foundational text of what is now known as critical archival studies. It is also an extremely difficult text, a Freudian meditation on the impulse to keep records, an exploration of how an archive both determines what can be archived and produces the very events that it records. **ESSAY TOPIC:** What is the “archive drive” for Derrida, the will to collect? Where does it come from? How does it operate? And what does it lead to?]

**week three:** Monday 24th – Friday 28th February  
DERRIDA, DUST, AND FEVER: THE HISTORIAN AND THE ARCHIVE, II (135 pages)  

[Carolyn Steedman is one of Britain’s most eminent cultural historians whose book, *Dust*, reflects on Derrida’s essay, even playing a joke on his writing by discussing the ‘real’ fever one can catch in the archives. Unlike Farge’s archival romance, Steedman offers a series of meditations on the archive as a repository of “that which will not go away” and what historians can and must do when considering this. **ESSAY TOPIC:** If for Carolyn Steedman the archive is not a mere metaphor, as it was for Derrida, what is it, exactly, and what kind of work does it yield in her own historical practice on display here?]

**week three: day and time to be announced**  
*** SPECIAL GROUP MEETING ***

INTRODUCING THE WILLIAMS ARCHIVES  
Group meeting for all students with Sylvia Kennick Brown, College archivist, for a behind-the-scenes library tour and to discuss research on the archives and special collections.
PART TWO
ARCHIVES, ARCHIVISTS, AND HISTORIANS – SOME HISTORIES

week four: Monday 2nd – Friday 6th March
ARCHIVES, ARCHIVING, AND COLLECTING IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE (95 pages)

[Ann Blair has said of the Renaissance that it can be characterized by “a new attitude toward seeking out and stockpiling information” (Bevilacqua, 39). The three articles from a special issue of the journal Past and Present (and a part of the intro. by Alexandra Walsham), along with a chapter from Bevilacqua's book, examine the birth of an “archival consciousness” in early modern Europe. You might think about how archives became “socially meaningful institutions” in this period, about the “underlying agendas and assumptions” of specific collections (Corens, 271), and about how archival materials functioned in the social world of those who collected them.]

week five: Monday 9th – Friday 13th March
ARCHIVAL SCIENCE, HISTORICAL SCIENCE: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND CHANGE IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES (90 pages)

[Blouin and Rosenberg argue that in the nineteenth century the historian and the archivist occupied the same conceptual and methodological space, that archival and historical science developed along parallel paths but that as we move towards more recent times an “archival divide” has come to separate them. You might think about what the authors mean by the “archival divide,” along with the timing and reasons for its appearance.]
week six: Monday 16th – Friday 20th March
IN THE WILLIAMS ARCHIVES
No tutorial meeting this week; time to get seriously stuck into your research on the Williams archives and special collections. Continue your research after the break.

Saturday 21st March – Sunday 5th April
SPRING BREAK

PART THREE
POWER AND THE POLITICS OF COLLECTING

week seven: Monday 6th – Friday 10th April
SALVAGING THE PAST AND CONSTRUCTING THE ARCHIVE  (200 pages)

[Think about why, in the wake of the Holocaust, the assembling of archival documentation is so very important and how this informs the ways we consider the theft of archival documents. You might like to consider what it means to speak of a “diaspora of documents” in the wake of the Holocaust, to destroy the integrity of archives, to fragment rather than to assemble. More generally, think about the relationship between archiving, identity, memory, and loss.]
week eight: Monday 13th – Friday 17th April
THE POLITICS OF THE COLONIAL ARCHIVE  (175 pages)

[In reading Stoler’s book you might think broadly about “the politics of the colonial archive” – about what this might mean and how we understand those politics. As Stoler asks on the first page of her book, what can we learn “about the nature of imperial rule and the dispositions it engendered from the writerly forms through which it was managed”? More generally in terms of the tutorial’s themes, what does it mean, exactly, to read “along the archival grain,” and is this a practice that needs to be done not only in the context of the imperial archive but elsewhere as well?]

week nine: Monday 20th – Friday 24th April
THE ARCHIVE AND THE POLITICS OF WITNESSING  (150 pages)
  * Michelle Caswell, Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia (2014), entire.

[In her book Caswell traces what she calls “the social life of photographic records.” You might think about what this means, exactly. How do records come to have a “social life” – and how, and under what conditions, does collecting and archiving certain types of evidence become a form of witness, used to document and possibly to prosecute atrocity? More generally, and in the context of other work we have done this semester, you might think about the politics of collecting and how archives are constituted as part of larger political projects, and not just in the twentieth century.]

PART FOUR
ARCHIVING EVERYTHING IN THE DIGITAL AGE
week ten: Monday 27th April – Friday 1st May
QUEERING THE ARCHIVE (70 pages)
+ Don Romesburg, “Presenting the Queer Past: A Case for the GLBT History Museum,” Radical History Review 120 (Fall 2014): 131-44.

[The four essays from a special issue on “Queering Archives” from Radical History Review (and the first part of the editors’ introduction to that issue) – along with the article by Strub – focus on a number of wildly divergent archival practices and engagements with the archive, around questions of identity, that we have not hitherto considered. As you peruse this material you might think about the difference between a queer archive, finding evidence of queer lives in archives, archiving queers, and reading archives queerly.]

week eleven: Monday 4th – Friday 8th May
DIGITAL PRACTICES, MEMORY, AND ARCHIVAL FUTURES (70 pages)
+ David Thomas, “The Digital.” In The Silence of the Archive, eds. David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson (2017), chap. 3 (pp. 65-100).

[In different ways, these three pieces ponder the impact of the internet and digitalization on the archive and the very practice of history itself. They raise very different issues and you need to be attentive in particular to the dates when they were written.]

week twelve: Monday 11th – Friday 15th May
RETURN TO THE WILLIAMS ARCHIVES
No tutorial meeting this week; time to complete your research on the Williams archives – and to write your paper and prepare your oral presentation for our final group meeting.

Tuesday 19th May, 7:00 pm
FINAL GROUP MEETING AND RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS
Group meeting (and dinner) for all tutorial students at the instructor’s house. Final eight-page papers on the Williams archives/special collections are due at this time. Each student will also make an oral presentation of approx. five minutes on their Williams research.