

Working in the Archives 1:

First Archive Visit

(Due Tuesday, January 30)

In this assignment, you will work with a partner to go to the UT Arlington Special Collections to engage in exploratory research on a topic drawn from the list I provide below. Each topic is an area that I know this particular archive has strengths in. Your choice of topics includes:

Slavery in Texas

The U.S.-Mexico War

Architecture

Homelessness in DFW

Mapping Texas before 1900

Texas and Texans in the Civil War

Photographic history of North Texas

Labor history in Texas before 1900

Sports in Texas prior to 1920

These are very broad topic areas, so you and your partner should think about how you can narrow your focus to something more specific within these broad categories. One way to do this is to visit the UTA Special Collections website and look for information about your topic and what Special Collections may have in its holdings: <http://library.uta.edu/special-collections>

The next step is to plan your visit. Make sure you contact Special Collections and let them know what you are researching, when you plan to visit, and if they can help you to find relevant materials to help you in your research. You will need to:

1. Call at least 48 hours ahead of when you plan to make your visit
2. Let them know what you are researching
3. Fill out their application to use their materials
4. Read their webpage about handling materials
5. Be polite!

During your visit, take careful notes of your research. **You will write an extended journal commentary based on your research while visiting the archive.** Start with a one-paragraph explanation of how the reading assignments we've read so far have helped you with your research (or how it may in the future), and then use the rest of your journal commentary to discuss the specific research you did at UT Arlington Special Collections. Make sure you take photos and scans of research findings.

Remember, to go with one partner and make sure you are working on the same topic. **On Tuesday, January 30th, you will present a slideshow in class of your archival visit and discoveries to accompany your journal commentary.**

Working in the Archives 2: Archive Scouting and Research

(Due Tuesday, September 26)

In this assignment, you will work on your own to discover what archives have holdings that appear relevant to a research topic of your choice. **You will not visit any archives for this assignment, but you must spend your time finding three archives in the local area (within 200 miles) that look promising for researching your topic.**

Your Journal commentary for next week will be a write-up explaining:

1. **Which** archives you discovered and plan to visit,
2. **Why** you think they are the best in the area for the topic you wish to pursue
3. **What** specific finding aids you were able to discover online
4. **How** those finding aids helped you to make your decision that these were your best options.
5. **What were the results** of calling the archives to plan a trip and get further assistance determining its usefulness for your project? Did they give you any further leads?

Constraints: Of the three archives you will write about, **only one of them may be a university or college archive or special collections**. I want you to use both what you have already learned and your imagination to decide which other archives and types of archives you wish to visit. Remember: museums, state capitals, county archives, and even cemeteries (among other types of archives) may hold keys to doing useful, interesting, and original work.

Also note that though I want you to only write about three archives that look promising for your research, in order to find them, **you will need to research many more than three to find the best fit for the project**. If you find more than three prospects, you may certainly note and mention them in your commentary.

Working in the Archives 3: Second Archive Visit

(Due Tuesday, February 20th)

This assignment is a follow-up to the previous one, in which you researched three archives within a 200-mile radius to find one with holdings relevant to your personal research interests.

In this assignment, you will choose one of the three archives you researched last week and arrange a visit to go there.

During your visit, take careful notes of your research. **Your extended journal commentary for the week will be based on your research while visiting the archive.** The entire commentary will be about the specific research you did at your chosen archive, like a mini essay paper.

On Tuesday, February 20th, you will present a slideshow in class to accompany your extended journal commentary on your findings.

Working in the Archives 4:

Audio Interview

(Due Wednesday, March 28th)

Interview Recording

Audio interviewing requires a whole set of skills and practice, so we are going to begin by jumping head first into exploring three of those skillsets:

- Planning the interview
- Recording the interview
- Editing the interview
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PLANNING:

In the first step—planning the interview—you will do three things:

1. Know your general topic
2. Write a set of questions to ask your subject
3. Set up and conduct the interview

Each of these will typically require some time and work. What, exactly, is your **general topic** or **theme**? Don't try to be too specific—what you end up recording may make you want to go in a different direction, but you should never start *without* direction.

Write out a set of **open-ended questions** that will allow you to get more audio than you need. “Yes” and “No” questions are the death of an interview—avoid them at all costs! Draft questions that allow the subject to explore their own presuppositions.

Finally comes setup. Take your time and make sure everything is working. Test everything. Then test it again. Then do your recording. Always make sure you take time to talk to your interviewee prior to recording to establish a sense of trust and comfort.

RECORDING:

Once you start recording, be direct. Don't be afraid to ask personal questions, with the permission of the interviewee. Then listen. Allow your interviewee to have time to think without interruption, and become comfortable with uncomfortable silences. Work hard not to interrupt. Also, take notes as the interviewee is speaking so you can ask follow-up questions you had not thought of.

EDITING:

Your final product will have the following:

- 5-minutes (and NO MORE or less) in length
- Intro music that fades in and fades out. The fading should overlap some of the talking WITHOUT obscuring what is being said at the start and end of your recording.

- At least **three spots** where **special effects sounds** indicate a **transition** in the conversation.
(Download music and sound effects from Freesound.org)

Export your work as an MP3 and use the link I emailed you to upload the file to my Dropbox folder.

This assignment is due for upload to my Dropbox account by Wednesday evening, March 28th before 11:59pm. I will email everyone the link for doing the upload.

Archival Research Project 5: The Final Paper

(Due Tuesday, April 24th)

Congratulations! The rest of the semester will be dedicated to researching and writing your final project—a full **12 to 15-page research paper**.

The paper may be focused on a literary, rhetorical, or cultural studies topic of your choice. The paper should also rely heavily on original archival research, but should also contain support material from traditional secondary research sources. Ideally, you will be working with original archival sources from nearby archives here in the state of Texas; However, if you already plan (or have the resources) to travel to archives outside of the state, you may certainly take advantage of that opportunity.

You may also use archival materials that have been scanned and sent to you from remote archives, though that ***must not*** be the only original material you use—I expect you all to spend time ***in*** the archives for this work.

In addition: Journal Commentaries

For each of our class meetings between now and the end of the semester, you will write a journal commentary about your research activities for the last week. In many ways, this is meant to be a reflection on your research practices. In your commentaries, I want you to discuss:

1. What you did during the week on your project
2. Where you went to do research
3. Who, if anyone, did you contact
4. How much time you spent working on the project
5. The results of your work over the last week

Bring your journal commentaries to class to use for discussion and to turn in to me.

The Final Paper will be due on Tuesday, April 24th.