

# Fall 2023 Course: INLS 757 Principles and Practices of Archival Description

**Time:** asynchronous online

**Instructor:** Jackie Dean, Head of Archival Processing, Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC Chapel Hill

**Credits:** 3

**Office hours:** Thursdays 12:00-1:00 and by appointment

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## Description of INLS 757 from SILS Website

Prerequisite, INLS 556. Recommended preparation, INLS 520. Explores the history, principles, development, and use of archival description with a focus on EAD and MARC structures. Presents authority and subject analysis work and description for special formats.

## My Description:

During this course we will explore the standards used for archival description but also the many other factors that affect and sustain descriptive practice. We will take a close look at *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, the official content standard for creating archival description in the United States, seeing how its guidance and element set supports creating and maintaining description and engaging with the set of principles that it articulates. Beyond DACS, we'll look at how descriptive outputs are expanded and enhanced by digital means, social tagging, ontologies, and transcription. We will learn about the history and evolution of archival descriptive practice. We will consider the complexities of archival descriptive tools and how they do or do not connect information to those who seek it. My goal is that by the end of the course we will have developed holistic understanding of archival description that sets the foundation for further exploration, continued learning, and professional growth.

## Outcomes:

- Students will understand the purposes archival descriptions serve for both archives themselves and researchers/users
- Students will become familiar with several of the common structures for description and metadata, how to choose the appropriate elements, and the need for controlled vocabulary
- Students will synthesize information from archival history and archival theory to engage in the complexity of this practice
- Students will analyze existing finding aids and other materials, practicing evaluation of archival description
- Students will connect archival description to broader topics circulating in academia and society

## **Course Materials:**

This class is entirely no-cost, so you will never be asked to buy anything.

## **University Attendance Policy**

As stated in the University's [Class Attendance Policy](#), no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities: [University Approved Absence Office \(UAAO\) website](#) provides information and [FAQs for students](#) and [FAQs for faculty](#) related to University Approved Absences
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

## **Class Attendance Policy**

This is an asynchronous class, so your attendance manifests as posting thoughtful responses to forum prompts and replying to classmates' forum posts. If you need an extension or something comes up in life, disrupting your ability to participate in forums, reach out to me for me so I can help you find a solution.

## **Honor Code**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-administered honor system and judicial system for over 100 years. The system is the responsibility of students and is regulated and governed by them, but faculty share the responsibility. If you have questions about your responsibility under the honor code, please bring them to your instructor or consult with the office of the Dean of Students or the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance. This document, adopted by the Chancellor, the Faculty Council, and the Student Congress, contains all policies and procedures pertaining to the student honor system. Your full participation and observance of the honor code is expected ([honor.unc.edu](http://honor.unc.edu)).

## **Accessibility**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

## **Counseling and Psychological Services**

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website (<https://care.unc.edu>) is a place to access the many mental resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students,

offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

## **Title IX Resources**

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – [titleixcoordinator@unc.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsoc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsoc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

## **Policy on Non-Discrimination**

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on NonDiscrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu)) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

## **Diversity Statement**

I look forward to exploring archival description with you and welcome your thoughts, ideas, questions, perspectives, and concerns as we move through the material. I recognize and respect our diverse backgrounds, privileges, experiences, and learning styles. I will check in periodically throughout the semester for your feedback for me on how the course is going for you.

## **Syllabus Changes**

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible

## **Course Schedule**

Week 1: Introductions to each other  
Module 1: Introduction to description  
Module 2: Iterating and evolving description

Module 3: Archival authority and controlled vocabulary

Module 4: Format and media complexity

Module 5: User experience and searching

Module 6: Extending description: social tagging, transcription, metadata

Module 7: Rhetoric of description

Module 8: Researching