

Course: INLS 757 Principles and Practices of Archival Description

Spring 2023

Time: 8:00-10:45

Instructor: Elliott Kuecker, Teaching Assistant Professor

Credits: 3

Office hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30

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 Detailed Description

This course gets at both the theory and practice of archival description. It is useful to engage with the theories that circulate regarding archival description so that we can understand some of the political implications of working in archives, the importance of language and rhetoric when it comes to describing our collections, and some of the professional debates that impact standards in the field. When we study the field's standards within something like *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, we see that they cite archival theory to bolster the practical decisions they make.

We will also study finding aids and engage in practical exercises with structures and software. Knowing the user's experience of discovery and retrieval—by becoming users ourselves—is helpful for influencing our own decision making when we practice archival description. Further, practice creating hierarchies and selecting elements will provide foundation for any future work in the field.

My approach to archival description is to think of it as having a variety of characteristics, all of which we will practice: strong observational skills, an interest in studying materials and how they fit together, savvy rhetorical choices in describing and writing, and a good imagination for anticipating user's needs.

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.

Assignments:

In class assignments:

1. Finding Aid Analysis
2. Descriptive Titling
3. Writing Basic Descriptions
4. Metadata
5. Transcription
6. Social Tagging National Archives
7. Media Complexity
8. Controlled Vocabulary
9. User Experience Testing
10. Rhetorical Analysis
11. Revision Description Activity
12. Topic Investigation

UNC Graduate Grading Scale

Graduate Permanent Grades

- H High Pass - Clear Excellence
- P Pass - Entirely Satisfactory Graduate Work
- L Low Pass - Inadequate Graduate Work
- F Fail

University Attendance Policy:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

- Authorized University activities
- Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
- 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:

We will spend most of our time doing in-class activities rather than homework. Come to class and complete the assignments and participate in our discussion. If you need to miss class, communicate with me about your absence. If life has become stressful and you dread coming to class or know you cannot handle the work, please talk to me about it so I can help you.

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).

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.

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), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at 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 Non-Discrimination 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) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

Diversity Statement

I am attentive to issues of difference, privilege, inclusivity, ability, and experience in our classroom. I take all of this into consideration when I select readings, lead discussions, create assignments, set the classroom pace, and manage classroom environment. I want you to feel like you are not only safe in my classroom, but that you belong in my classroom, that your ideas are wanted, and that your thoughts are respected. Please let me know if you have feedback for me regarding any aspect of this class, including material and delivery.

At the beginning of the semester, we will discuss respectful classroom discussions, preferences for pedagogic style, ideas for classroom themes, and more. You will be given opportunities to provide anonymous feedback and have one-on-one discussions with me throughout the course. There is also room for you to help direct the class themes. I hope you find my classroom to be both well-managed and collaborative. Thank you for being here!

Syllabus Changes

The syllabus may be edited during the semester. If so, students will be notified immediately and given an updated syllabus!