Great Collections of New York City
Syllabus LIS 519 Summer 2015
June 15-19 2015

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Availability
During this course, I will be available from approximately 10am-5pm every day as we move from one site to another and during site visits. I can be reached by email at kyle.r.triplett@gmail.com. (Please do not use my temporary LIU email address.) During the week of visits, you can contact me via my cell phone: 917-648-3914.

Dates
Monday through Friday, variably 10-5 every day June 15 through June 19, 2015.

Places
Locations vary for ten collection visits and our classroom sessions. Complete schedule is at the end of this document. Directions for travel between sites are included via subway, but you may wish to seek out additional or alternate routes that suit you.

Palmer School Manhattan
NYU’s Bobst Library, Room 707, 70 Washington Square South, New York NY 10012. Note: Please do not attempt to communicate with me, or to leave materials for me, at the CW Post campus. If you need assistance with the office, The Bobst Library Palmer office is at 212-998-2680 for Alice Flynn, Program Director.

Course description
This course introduces students to special collections in a variety of significant research institutions in New York City. It does so through guided visits to repositories where the class will meet curators, see representative examples, and hear from professional staff about issues associated with the institutions visited. In the class sessions and in assignments, students will review trends and issues in special collections. The course is largely experiential and participatory. This class is particularly valuable to those planning to pursue rare book librarian or curatorial careers in special collections, but would also benefit those interested in research libraries in general. The course will give valuable access and exposure to important New York institutions and repositories, while challenging the students to think critically and creatively about the roles of special collections generally.
‘Special collections’ is the term given to library materials that have been segregated from general collections because of their need for protection and special handling. Reasons for concern might be rarity, fragility, costliness, and vulnerability to theft or mutilation. Special collections in libraries typically include rare books but might also include photographs, prints, trade cards, historical audio-visual formats, manuscripts, realia, and printed ephemera. Such materials are collected largely because of the evidential value of their physical properties although aesthetic values and associations may play a part in their selection. Such collections are often housed in historic or architecturally significant structures such as the ones that will be visited by students in this course. Their use and nature vary significantly depending to a large extent on the history, mission, and orientation of the parent institution. For further information on “special collections,” see the publications and website of the Rare Book and Manuscript Section of the American Library Association, Association of College and Research Libraries.

Course objectives
This course acquaints students with a set of major, national institutions located in New York City that have collections of rare books and special collections. It exposes students to both general theoretical issues and site-specific concerns of special collections units. The course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to meet and hear from curators of those collections and benefit from unprecedented access to collections and staff.

Learning outcomes
By the end of this course, students will have made tangible/visual acquaintance with some of the most famous special collections libraries in New York City, will have met and heard from leaders in this subfield, and will have a sophisticated understanding of the curatorial issues associated with managing libraries, and especially services, within these institutions They will be able to articulate well-founded plans for establishing and improving collections services that would balance general professional standards with specific contextual needs.

Palmer School Learning Objectives
This course addresses the following objectives:
1c, explain, compare and contrast different types of collections, libraries and information centers; and
4b, explain and apply management principles, processes and practices including those relating to innovation and strategic planning as well as human resources, financial, and operational functions of a library or other type of information organization.
Assignments

Daily
Students will attend five days of visits to rare book/special collections libraries throughout New York City. Included in this will be attendance and in-class activities. Required readings should be done before the session it is listed for on blackboard. Ancillary reading can be done as students prepare the final paper following the conclusion of the visits to collections.

Final Paper
Students will receive detailed instructions on the form of the final paper and the in-class assignments and thought pieces. There will be two short written assignments during the week. It is expected that students will do a substantial amount of reading on their own, beyond the required reading list, while preparing their final paper. A reading list for the class is included in this syllabus.

Many questions are present in thinking about special collections, their role in libraries, and their future. We will cover issues such as: access vs. preservation, instruction, relevancy, digital humanities, and concepts of collections and how they make physical libraries unique. The final paper will be a research paper based on observations of the collections that we have been shown, but also a thought piece on the future of special collections in the framework of libraries and management. You will need to have consulted works (readings from the course can be used) and on your own to both add a research element but also take a leap and develop ideas. As part of this, I encourage you to visit a collection in order to develop further thoughts on this as well. Students will produce critical analyses of issues discussed in special collections and propose potential future uses of these collections. The analyses will be based upon first-hand observations, upon class discussion, and upon extensive reading of both assigned sources and self-selected sources. Submit final papers via email at kyle.r.triplett@gmail.com.

The final project will be due on Friday July 10, no later than 5pm via email to kyle.r.triplett@gmail.com.
You will receive detailed instructions in class.

Commitment of time, grading, and expectations
Students must attend ALL sessions to get credit for the course.

Grading
Final Project: 50%
class participation: 30%
in-class assignments/thought pieces: 20%
All assignments must be typed and double spaced to allow room for the instructor's corrections. Pay attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Also, proofread your work. Spellcheck will not catch omitted words, repeated words, etc. Always reread the instructions before submission of an assignment to make sure that all the required components are included. These will be provided in detail well before an assignment is due, particularly the final project.

The State of New York requires that the instructor provide an estimate of the time that this course should require from students. We therefore provide this estimate: daily touring (37.5 hours), general reading (50 hours), preparation for and writing of the final paper (62.5 hours). The total is 150 hours, representing a typical graduate course as envisioned by the State.

Reading List
There is no textbook, readings are from articles that will be provided. To benefit fully from the library visits and to participate fully after the initial session, students should do the readings posted or sent. All are available electronically either via Blackboard or I will email them to you. Pay particular attention to trends and issues in special collections.

Course Readings and Recommended Exit Reading List

We will be reading selections from this list during the class, but also keep this as a supplement as you research your final paper or for further study. This list includes seminal articles and works in special collections research - do keep the list through your student careers as well, it will be useful for reference.


Blouin, Francis X. Jr. “Thoughts on Special Collections and Our Research Communities.”


Hubbard, Melissa A. “Bringing Rare Books to Light: The State of the Profession”. *RBM: A

Jones, Barbara M. “Special Collections for the Twenty first century” Library Trends; Vol. 52 No. 1 Summer 2003.

Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. Matthew G. Kirschenbaum website http://mkirschenbaum.wordpress.com/


RBMS Rare Book and Manuscript Section of the ALA. http://www.rbms.info/


Smith, Steven Escar. “From “Treasure Room” to “School Room”: Special Collections and Education.” RBM 7 no. 1 319 Spring 2006.


Taranto, Barbara. "It’s Not Just about Curators Anymore: Special Collections in the Digital Age." RBM 10 (Spring 2009), 30-36.


“Your Old Books. ” A guide sponsored by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section [RBMS] of the Assoc. of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], the Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association of America [ABAA], and the Rare Book School at the Univ. of Virginia. [rbms.info/publications/your_old_books_compact/YourOldBooksCompact2.pdf](http://rbms.info/publications/your_old_books_compact/YourOldBooksCompact2.pdf)


**Various specialized guidelines and ethics statements for special collections**


Instructions and Schedule of Visits

General instructions for visits
The course provides students unique and welcome access to a fascinating group of institutions and individuals. I have allowed for travel time and breaks around our visits. As indicated on the schedule, below. Note that this is largely an intensive “walking course” that takes place physically from variably 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on five consecutive days. Students must attend all sessions to receive credit for the course. Your participation grade will include not only attendance, but engagement and questions, not only to me as the instructor but to the various guest speakers. Please give the curators and librarians the respect that they deserve for devoting time and energy to showing us their great collections and sharing their knowledge.

Daily schedules
We will begin each day at some time between 10-10:30am. We will end no later than 5:30 p.m. each day. Plan to spend the whole day with the group. In order to receive credit for this course, you must attend every day’s sessions. You will not have time for personal errands, checking email, lunch dates, etc., during the days when this course meets.

Out and About
On Monday, we will begin with a discussion at Bobst Library. On other days, we will meet at the first library that we will be visiting for that day. It is your responsibility to get yourself to the libraries, especially to the first appointment of the day, on time. You will find directions below. Plan to pick up a subway map. Fill up your Metro card and/or buy train tickets, if necessary, before the course begins.

Timeliness: You must be on time for every appointment! Plan to arrive early for the first appointment of the day. It is your responsibility to get yourself to the first appointment of the day. Assume trains will be late and plan accordingly. We cannot wait for you for each appointment and you might not be admitted to the institution after the group has entered the rare book room because of local security policies. We will move between sites either together
or in small groups. Please do not go off on your own between visits; experience tells us that people get lost when they do so. Plan to travel between visits with some or all of the group. Down time between library appointments: Use this time for transportation, refreshment, and making notations on the visits. Discussion with colleagues en route will also be helpful to you.

Attendance: You must attend every day’s sessions to get credit for this course. If you become ill and cannot attend a day’s sessions, we expect that you will withdraw from the course. This course is experiential; reading about the institutions will not substitute for visits.

Equipment: Bring folding umbrellas and small backpacks or totes that you can leave outside rare book areas. Also bring very small purses or wallets for valuables that you can keep with you at all times. Also bring small notepads or journals and PENCILS for jotting down impressions (although you may not be able to take papers into the rare book areas). If you are not familiar with Manhattan, you may find a small compass to be helpful since many directions refer to “east,” for example. Realize if you do bring laptops or iPads, etc. we may have to leave backpacks in semi-secure places and you may not bring them into some rooms we are visiting. Please do not use cell phones during class; turn them off during class visits. Try to stay “in the moment” with the group.

Dress: We will be making visits to libraries every day and will be hosted by professional staff in those libraries. Choose respectful but still comfortable attire. Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes. Be prepared to walk considerable distances both indoors and outdoors. Please understand that some, and probably most, library spaces are not handicapped accessible. A light jacket or sweater would be advisable in case as usually reading rooms are chilly. Sun glasses, sun caps, and sun block are a good idea.

No visitors: We cannot accommodate visitors to the class because of security concerns in the rare book rooms. In many cases, the library will have a list of our class members and will admit no others. In many cases, the collections cannot accommodate more than the number of the class.

Eating: We will usually pause for a full lunch hour or half hour. Please bring snacks or lunches or plan on what you will find nearby. You may want to look up the locations before we arrive to plan a place that you might want to grab a bite. Please bring substantial snacks and water as needed. Please do not chew gum during library visits.
Schedule of Visits

Monday June 15

10:30-12 Class orientation and discussion. NYU’s Bobst Library, 2nd floor, Avery Fisher Center, Avery Room Classroom.

1-3 Fales Library & Special Collections. NYU Bobst Library. Host: Charlotte Priddle, Librarian for Printed Books.

3:30-5 Center for Jewish History. 15 W 16th St, New York, NY 10011 Host: Melanie Meyers, Senior Reference Services Librarian for Special Collections.

Tuesday June 16

10:15-12 New York Society Library. 53 E 79th St, New York, NY 10075. Host: Erin Schriener, Special Collections Librarian. Meet at New York Society Library lobby. Take the 6 train to 77th st stop and walk up to 79th st, the library is between Park and Madison.


4-5 Discussion - NYAM or Central Park

Wednesday, June 17

9:30 Meet in Bryant Park behind New York Public Library. 5th Ave at 42nd St, New York, NY 10018. Take BDFM to Bryant Park-42nd st. Or Take 7 train to 5th Ave. We will spend the whole day in NYPL special collections, visiting three major divisions.

10-11:30 Prints and Photographs Division. Host: David Christie, Prints Specialist.

1-2:30 Archives and Manuscripts. Host: Tal Nadan, Reference Archivist

2:30-3:30 Discussion in Bryant Park or classroom.

3:30-5 Rare Book Collection. Host: Kyle R. Triplett, Rare Book Librarian
**Thursday, June 18**

**10:00-11:30** NYU Bobst Library, 2nd floor Avery Fisher Center, West classroom. Lecture and discussion.

**1:00-2:00** New-York Historical Society. 170 Central Park West, New York City, NY 10024. Host: Joseph Ditta, Reference Librarian. Central Park at corner of 77th and Central Park West. Take B or C train to 81st st-Museum of Natural History stop.

**3:00-5:00** Morgan Museum and Library. 225 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Hosts: John McQuillen, Assistant Curator, Printed Books and Bindings and Carolyn Vega, Assistant Curator, Literary and Historical Manuscripts. Take B train to Bryant Park-42nd St stop and walk to Madison and 37th.

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**Friday June 19**

**9:30** Gather in front of Butler Library, Columbia University. Take the 1 train to 116 st-Columbia University. Walk east into campus toward the open area known as South Lawn. To the right, or south, is the Butler Library. We will meet in front of the library.

**10-12** Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Butler Library 535 W 114th St, New York, NY 10027. Host: Jane Siegel, Rare Book Librarian.

**1:00-5** Wrap-up session. Lecture and discussion. Final Project discussions. NYU Bobst Library West classroom, 2nd floor, Avery Fisher Center. We will have lunch and meet again at the front of Butler at 1pm. We will all walk together over to the BC 116th St stop and take the train to W. 4th St near Washington Square Park and walk to Bobst.