LIS 441: Appraisal of Archives and Manuscripts
Class Hours: Thursday, 6 – 9pm.
Instructor: Jeannette A. Bastian
Office Hours: Thursday 3-5 and by appointment.
Phone and email: 617-521-2808; bastian@simmons.edu

Course Description: This course examines archival appraisal, the most critical task of
the archivist. Through appraisal, the archivist determines which records have continuing
value for long-term preservation. Appraisal of records not only affects all other archival
functions but significantly impacts which part of the human documentary record will be
preserved as part of society’s collective memory.

GSLIS Student Learning Outcomes
Outcome #1: Demonstrate the ability to apply standards relevant to specific information
service activities.
Outcome #4: Analyze, synthesize, and communicate information and knowledge in a
variety of formats.
Outcome #7: Apply relevant research studies to tasks requiring problem solving and
critical thinking.
Outcome #9: Respond to diversity among individuals and communities through policies,
collections and services

Additional Course Outcomes:
1. Students understand the history and basic theories of archival appraisal
2. Students understand the methodologies and techniques of archival appraisal
3. Through practical experience students evaluate appraisal and acquisition policies.

Students must satisfactorily meet all the requirements described in the syllabus.
Extenuating circumstances or other valid reasons for not making up the course
assignments will be considered by the instructor, but the student will be required to
provide evidence of the severity of the circumstances preventing the student from
completing the assignments. Unexcused late submissions of assignments will lead to a
half reduction in your grade each day the assignment is late.

The Academic Support Center (ASC) at http://my.simmons.edu/academics/asc/
offers writing tutors and will help students with learning challenges. Reasonable
accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory,
 systemic, cognitive learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability and
anticipate that you will need a reasonable accommodation in this class, it is important that
you contact the Director of the Academic Support Center at 617-521-2471 early in the
semester. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact their instructors to
discuss their individual needs for accommodations.
Students should be aware that Simmons follows a College Honor Code. It can be found at http://my.simmons.edu/gslis/resources/student-info/honor-code.shtml

Course Requirements:

1. Appraisal Report: Due December 13. Student will evaluate the collecting or appraisal policy of an archival repository. The student will visit the repository or may use an online repository if it has both its policies and collections online, will evaluate the collection and the policies, interview the appropriate staff, read in the appropriate literature and prepare a short paper (at least five pages double-spaced) and be prepared to discuss it in class. The paper will address the following:
   - Description of the institution, the institution’s collection, its policy and/or practice (if it lacks a formal policy).
   - Evaluation of the institution’s policy and/or practice based on standard archival and records practice, supported by the archival literature
   - Suggest alternative or additional appraisal strategies that might be appropriate and effective for the institution and why. These must be grounded in the existing archival literature
   - Suggest ways in which the success of the policy and practice could be measured and evaluated.

Writing and footnoting style must adhere to a standard citation system such as APA or Chicago Manual of Style.

2. Group Reports: Due Dates As Assigned in Syllabus. Groups will be assigned to investigate and report to the class on an appraisal strategy from the following list (some class time will be given for the preparation of this assignment):
   - Macro-Appraisal
   - Sampling
   - The Black Box
   - Minnesota Method
   - User-based Appraisal
   - Documentation Strategy
   - Electronic Records

Presentations may be power-point or web presentations. All presentations must include the following:
   - Discussion of the appraisal strategy and how it works?
   - Key proponents of this strategy? Review of their writings.
   - Advantages and disadvantages of this strategy
   - Your critical assessment

3. Case Study: Due October 18. Students will be responsible for reading and analyzing one case study, presenting it to the class and submitting a report (at least five pages double-spaced) on it. The case study will be assigned by the instructor. The analysis should include the following:
• What is the case study about?
• What are the appraisal issues?
• How were the appraisal issues resolved?
• Your thoughts on the issues and their solutions? Were there other options?
• How does the appraisal literature support or not support the solutions?

Case Studies: (each student will be assigned one):

Tom Hyry, Diane Kaplan and Christine Weideman, “Though this be madness, yet there is method in ‘t”: Assessing the Value of Faculty Papers and Defining a Collecting Policy,” *American Archivist* 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 56-69.
Elisabeth Kaplan, “We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity,” *American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 126-151.
T. Z. Laver (2003). In a class by themselves: Faculty papers at research university archives and manuscript repositories. *American Archivist, 66* (Spring/Summer 2003), 159-196.


Joel Wurl, Documenting Displacement: The Migration of Archival Sources From Post-WW II East European Émigré Groups, *Archival Science, 5* (1) 2005): 79-

**Response Papers (four): Due at the classes indicated.**

Write a one to one and a half page (approximately 300-350 word) response paper on the readings assigned for that week. Summarize your thoughts on the readings and raise any questions you may have. The weekly reading assignments below indicate which weeks require response papers. **Response papers must be emailed to me the day before the class.**

**Grading:**

- Class Participation and Response Papers: 25%
- Group Project: 25%
- Appraisal Paper: 25%
- Case Study: 25%

**Recommended Texts:**


**Syllabus:**

**September 6. Introduction. An Appraisal Mindset.**

Case Study: Ohio Penitentiary Records

Required Readings


Case Studies in class:


Required Readings


September 27. Collecting Policies, Intrinsic Value.

Required Readings


Required Readings

Richard J. Cox, *No Innocent Deposits; Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), chapters. 1 and 2.

Carolyn Heald, “Are We Collecting the ‘Right Stuff’?” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995): 182-188.


**October 11. Government Appraisal Policies**

**Guest Lecturer:** Marvin Kabakoff, Senior Records Analyst, National Archives & Records Administration

**Required Readings**


October 18. Reappraisal and Deaccessioning

Required Readings


Begin Case Studies

October 25. Appraisal Models: Documentation Strategy, Black Box

Required Readings


November 1. Appraisal Models: Macroappraisal, Minnesota Method
Required Readings

Catherine Bailey, “From the Top Down: The Practice of Macro-Appraisal,” *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997): 89-128


**November 8: Appraisal Models: Electronic Records Part I.**

**Guest Speaker: Leah Weisse, WGBH**

Required Readings


Bruce Ambacher, *Thirty Years of Electronic Records* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003), ch. 5 and 6.

**November 15: Appraisal Models: Electronic Records Part II**


November 22: THANKGIVING HOLIDAY

November 29: Sampling, User-based.

Guest Speaker: Joan Krizack, Northeastern Univ.

Required Readings


December 6: Manuscripts and Memory

Meet at Simmons Archives. Donna Webber Guest Speaker

Required Readings


Richard J. Cox, No Innocent Deposits; Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal. Ch. 9.


December 13: Student Appraisal Reports Due