This seminar is an experiment designed to demystify “the Archive” by broadening our understanding of modern archival practices, performing research tasks among disparate collections in various stages of processing, and reading key theorizations of the archive in an effort to harmonize—or at least bridge—theory and praxis. Our readings will consist of a mélange of theory, practical guides, original sources, and literary fiction.

We will meet in the RBML itself (in one of the new 6th floor seminar rooms) in order to have access to archival materials during many of our class sessions. We will have the chance to consult with Penn archivists and curators, and to discuss such issues as the concepts of original order and provenance, intellectual and physical control, the politics of appraisal and archival curation, materiality and ephemerality; the gaps and aporias that surround and define any archive; the advent of “born digital” materials; and the evolving challenges of preservation. Students will have the opportunity to review materials contained in different kinds of collections, and at different stages on the journey from acquisition to reading room, and to share their own “archive stories” as lessons in method. Along the way, we will address some of the fundamental challenges of archival research: how to prepare, how to read finding aids, and how to sift through an excess of material. The course should foster critical conversation about how archives are constructed, consulted, and conceived in recent scholarship and literature, putting pressure on the latter as a malleable form of archival thinking.

Assignments will include performing a finding aid exercise, creating a detailed inventory of an unprocessed box, exercises in archival appraisal, and independent archival research followed by a presentation. The presentation will consist of a briefing report on the experience and reasoning behind your research choices, and their outcome in the field. For at least one class session over the course of the semester, each student will be appointed as chief discussant, in effect guiding the group by making correspondences with our readings. For your final assignment, you will be given the choice between writing a research paper or developing a research plan. The paper may expand on work you began during the semester related to the readings and/or archives we consulted. The other option would entail the construction of a detailed research plan, along with a rationale, for a future visit to a specific, or a few specific, repositories. (more details below).

Grading Requirements:
- Finding Aid Exercise, 10%
- Dreiser Case Study Presentation, 20%
- Lead Discussant Session, 25%
- Final Assignment, 30%
- Participation & Attendance, 15%

Required Reading List (Available at Penn Book Center, except O'Toole and Cox):
- Stephen King’s *The Shining*
- Theodore Dreiser’s *Best Short Stories*
- David Bradley’s *The Chaneysville Incident*
- Jack Kerouac’s *Visions of Cody*
- Michael Ondaatje’s *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*
- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*
- Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History.*
- James O'Toole and Richard Cox, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* [must order on your own]

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1, January 16  Introductions**
- Introduction to course/syllabus
- Staff introductions
- Reading room practice and policies
- What is an archival collection?

Task #1: Over the next 4 weeks, each of you will conduct research in the Theodore Dreiser Papers in order to come up with questions, points of interest, and particular examples for the class to consider in discussion. You must conduct your research ahead of time (that is, by the end of the week of Week 5 for Group #1, and by the end of Week 6 for Group #2); Group #1 you should email me on Tuesday, Feb. 18th, Group #2 by Tuesday, Feb. 25th, with a summary of the particular items you want the group to consider, so that the items can be brought to our seminar room for our classes on Thursday, February 20th and February 27th. You will be allowed to take digital snapshots in the reading room, but not photocopying.  

Since the TD Papers is a large collection, we will concentrate on his short stories. We will be using Howard Fast’s 1947 edition of Dreiser’s *Best Short Stories* and investigating common sources of archival evidence when using literary archives: drafts, notes, diaries, and memorabilia. There are 14 stories in Fast’s edition; you must each pick one of these stories and use it as your own focused case-study. Please also read Fast’s introduction to the edition.  

Once you’ve picked a particular Dreiser story, you should consult the contents of at least 3-5 boxes from the Series listed below. You may also choose a different series not listed below to consult for your own purposes (your personalized touch could help us discover new possibilities)

Series VI: TD Writings: Short Stories (8 boxes)
Series XIII: Notes Written and Compiled by TD (9 boxes)
Series XIV: TD Diaries (5 boxes)
Series XVII: Memorabilia
   Scrapbooks (12 boxes)
   Promotional Materials (1 box)

Weeks 6 & 7 will be used to hear your presentations, look at the material, and discuss the Dreiser short stories. The purpose is not only to discuss the literature itself or discover the kinds of evidence that the archive can provide, but also to pay close attention to our research process itself. Thus, your presentation should be written as a kind of narrative exposing the rationale behind your research choices and their eventual result.
Week 2, January 23: The Philosopher and the Historian

Lead Discussants:___________________________________________________________

Task #2: FINDING AID Exercise: Read the Theodore Dreiser Papers finding aid on the Penn Libraries website; highlight the moments that seem very important to you. Isolate anything you discover while reading that surprised you. What was essential for you to glean from your reading as a researcher? What questions, if any, remain for you (what would you be likely to ask an archivist about the collection?) Is anything restricted? Is anything “offsite”? What else do you need to know?

Week 3, January 30: The Archivists #1
- Reporting back on Task #2, Finding Aid exercise
  - Special “behind-the-scenes” Tour of the Stacks: how are collections stored, before & after processing; where and how do archivists work.

Week 4, February 6: The Archivists #2
- James O’Toole and Richard Cox, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006) [Chs 3-5, pp.87-146]
- PACSCL Hidden Collections Processing project (special visit by Holly Mengel)

Lead Discussants:___________________________________________________________

Week 5, February 13: The Horrors
- Stephen King, *The Shining*
- Michel Foucault, “Lives of Infamous Men”
NOTE: Group #1 should e-mail me on Tuesday, Feb. 18th with a summary of the particular items from the TD papers you want the group to consider, so that the items can be brought to our seminar room next class on Thursday, February 20th.

Week 6, February 20: Canonized Author: Dreiser as Case Study #1
- Theodore Dreiser, *Best Short Stories of Theodore Dreiser*. Ed. Howard Fast. (selections TBA; chosen by students)
- Material pre-selected by students is brought to class
- First set of presentations [story you picked, materials you consulted and rationale for choices; what did you find? Can you connect your reading and research to any other text from the course thus far?]

NOTE: Group #2 should e-mail me on Tuesday, Feb. 25th with a summary of the particular items from the TD papers you want the group to consider, so that the items can be brought to our seminar room next class on Thursday, February 27th.

Week 7, February 27: Canonized Author: Dreiser as Case Study #2
- Material pre-selected by students is brought to class
- Second set of presentations [story you picked, materials you consulted and rationale for choices; what did you find? Can you connect your reading and research to any other text from the course thus far?]

Week 8, March 6: Appraisal

- Special visit: Holly Mengel on the RVR and appraisal
- PACSCL Consortial Survey Initiative Ratings *PDF*

Research Value Ratings Exercise
- Read the description and inspect the containers of 3 selected collections from Penn’s backlog. Based on your experience, give each collection a “research value rating” from 1-10.

Week 9, March 13
SPRING BREAK, no class
Week 10, March 20: The Novel as Archive, the Novelist as Archivist

- Jack Kerouac, *Visions of Cody*

Lead Discussants:_______________________________________________________

**Note:** Next week we have our first look at samples from an unprocessed collection, the Howard Fast Papers. Please familiarize yourself with Fast by perusing this website dedicated to his life and work: [http://www.trussel.com/f_how.htm](http://www.trussel.com/f_how.htm)

**Required Reading for next class:**

Week 11, March 27: Tackling that Backlog
Week 11 will be devoted to consulting uncatalogued boxes from the Howard Fast Collection. In consultation with RBML staff and working in pairs, you will be given the task to create an inventory of an unprocessed box.


- Materials from the unprocessed Howard Fast Papers are brought into class. In groups of two, each pair will be assigned a box.
- Create an inventory of a box
- Identify interesting material
- What do you need to provide a context and provenance?
- Did you find anything related to Fast’s work on the Dreiser edition?

**In pairs, Create an inventory of a box:**
An uncatalogued box means that we have little or no information about its contents. As scholars, this provides us an opportunity to think about the collecting and classification practices of the creators, and what these may tell us about their time, their ideology, their work. Preserving that arrangement is thus paramount; we must therefore be diligent in following the tenets of original order and provenance when handling such collections. To that end, we will follow the “MPLP” method outlined in the Greene and Meissner piece. We will also have the pleasure of archivist Holly Mengel’s assistance during this session. As you look through the content of your box, please note the layers of material in a given box, date what you find as much as possible, create descriptions and generally explicate what you find. Special prize to the pair who finds materials related to Howard Fast’s edition of Dreiser’s short stories!
Week 12, April 3: Literature as Scrapbook
- Michael Ondaatje, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*

**Surprise scrapbooks brought to class**

Lead Discussants:_______________________________________________________

Week 13, April 10: Romance of the Archive/Fictionalizing History
- David Bradley, *The Chaneysville Incident*

- Materials brought to class: “3 documents concerning U.S. slavery”:
  a. Alabama Probate Commission to Divide Slaves, December 31, 1860 (probate division of slaves Caroline, Nancy, Jim, Redie, Dorcas, Oliver, Eliza, Jane, Emily, pursuant to order by Z.L. Bettis, Judge of Probate of Clarke County at Grove Hill, Alabama)
  b. Manuscript broadside appointing Henry Cronise constable of West Frederick Town, Frederick County, Maryland for purpose of "suppressing the assembling and tumultuous meetings of Negroes and other slaves," November 22, 1788.
  c. Appraised value of property of the state of Francis Smith, including seven female slaves and five male slaves, Washington County, Virginia, April 1, 1815.

Note: Optional for Lead Discussant(s): Independent work in the Charles Blockson Collection at Temple U.

Lead Discussants:_______________________________________________________

Week 14, April 17: Comics as Archive
- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*

- Charles Blum, Jr. Papers: correspondence (4 boxes) [research to be performed in advance; choose selected letters for class]. Finding Aid: http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/ead/ead.html?id=EAD_upenn_rbml_PUSpMsColl936&

Lead Discussants:_______________________________________________________
Week 15, April 24: Digital Archive

- “Agrippa,” poem by William Gibson
- Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* [selections]
- Niels Arden Oplev, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Sweden, 2009) [clips]

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT (alternative to research paper)**

In lieu of a final paper, your final assignment for this seminar will consist of a detailed research plan:

- Thoroughly investigate the finding aid of a collection in which you intend to conduct research in the future. This collection can be anywhere in the world. Based on your reading of the aid, and on the nature of your work, decide which items/folders/boxes you need to consult, accompanied by a rationale behind your choices. In addition, one of the items you wish to request should be based purely on what we may describe as a “hunch”.
- Based on what you have learned over the course of the semester, list and describe what you will need to conduct this research (what do you need before heading out? What are the applicable matters of access?; practical realities?). You will be evaluated on the thoroughness of your research plan.

You may choose to write it in the form you prefer, although you are encouraged to think of it as an actual proposed research project, complete with projected budget, timeline, list of collections, and contribution to scholarship.

Beyond the seminar:

- Optional: When you conduct the actual research, keep a road log of your adventures in order to assess the results of your planned visit. This field report could take the form of an “archive story” that takes the reader through the steps of your quest. Pay particular attention to the unexpected, and to the lessons you have drawn from the experience. Who knows, perhaps one day these stories will be compiled to become something more…