The Archive as Method: Virtual and Material Archives of the French Atlantic

Instructor: Nathan H. Dize (contact: Nathan.h.dize@vanderbilt.edu)
Time: TBA
Location: TBA
Office Hours: TBA

Description:

In the last two decades since the publication of Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Caribbean historical studies has undergone an ‘archival turn.’ Indeed, archives and formal institutions of knowledge have always been and continue to be an integral part of historical work, but Trouillot’s work has called into question the act of collection, the assembling of archives that speak to the “unevenness of historical power” (Trouillot 56). The ‘archival turn’ along with the concurrent wave of digital humanities scholarship, the tools and methods used to assemble archives, data sets, and interact with collections has resulted in new modes of writing and telling stories of Atlantic slavery. Thanks to the digitization of numerous collections and attempts to promote access to new material, scholars and historians of the French Atlantic zone are able to tell new stories while reaching new publics. This course uses virtual and material archives as the point of departure to consider several questions: What does it mean to create increased (digital) access to archival holdings? What affordances do print and digital modes of storytelling provide for researchers and institutions? What are the limitations of virtual and physical archives? What is the role of the scholar and/or researcher in the proliferation of new sources and narratives of French Atlantic slavery? How does the proliferation of digital archives and function full-text searching allow scholars to address the “silencing” of enslaved peoples, particularly women and children, in colonial archives?

There are three objectives for this course: to familiarize you with the most recent and innovative scholarship on the physical and virtual archives of French Atlantic slavery; to facilitate student interaction with local Louisiana and digital archives pertaining to the study of enslavement throughout the Francophone Atlantic; to develop your skills in identifying, interpreting, and constructing historical narratives that foreground the voices of the dispossessed in French colonial archives through 1) curation of online and physical exhibits 2) public “blog-style” writing and 3) a traditional research paper.

This course will familiarize you with the theories and methodologies of archival research on the Francophone Atlantic. You will be introduced to bibliography software (Zotero, EndNote, etc.) and learn how to conduct and organize your primary-source findings that will lead to your end of the term research paper.
Assignments

Digital Project Review

You will find or select a Digital History project pertaining to the French Atlantic world and conduct a scholarly review. Your review should identify the authors of the website, its provenance or institutional affiliation, the historical collection or artifacts presented on the site, and the intended outcome of the project. Reviews should not only assess the narrative of the digital project, but also evaluate the efficacy of the digital interface. Additionally, reviews should account for the project’s intended audience as well as suggest ideas for the website’s implementation in either community or educational settings. Reviews will be 1000-1,200 words.

The Anatomy of a Historical Blog Post

You will find a blog post from the list of historical blogs below pertaining to the French Atlantic or Circum-Caribbean and conduct a “peer-review” style assessment of the chosen post. You will be asked to identify and evaluate the following: the historical period and subject in question, the author’s thesis, the collections/works/archives the author has consulted, and how the author positions the piece towards either contemporary affairs or vis-à-vis a historical debate. Papers should be 500-750 words

Primary Source Explanation

In order to write your Historical Blog Post and your Research Paper, you will have to work with primary and secondary sources. Due three times over the course of the semester, you will have to provide me with notes and annotations of three primary sources. These notes should: identify the nature of the document (manuscript or print), provide a summary of the document (indicating main actors and context), indicate a secondary source base that might help you interpret the document, and assess the use of the document in writing your long-form work for the term.

Historical Blog Post

You will first select either an archive in New Orleans or a digital archive that you will focus on and conduct research on throughout the semester. After designating your archive of choice, you will find a collection and documents about which you will write a scholarly blog post. Your post should fit within the existing frame of French Atlantic or Francophone Caribbean research. In composing your blog post, you will have to: position yourself in relation to the field, designate a small number of documents that you will employ to narrate
a story about the subject at hand, and provide an interpretation that either weighs in on a
historiographical debate and/or tells a seldom-told story. Blog posts should be 1,200-1,500
words and should follow the Chicago Handbook for formatting citations.

Research Paper

Your research paper will be an extension of your Historical Blog Post, where you will have
to: weigh into a historiographical debate (e.g. slavery and sexuality, discourses of the
Haitian Revolution, etc.) to assess the scholarly work done on the topic and tell a story that
is indicative of the historiographical intervention you aim to articulate. Additional
formatting parameters to be provided, papers should be 3,000-4,000 words. You will present
your paper in the final week of classes.

Readings:

Bonilla, Yarimar. “THE PAST IS MADE BY WALKING: Labor Activism and Historical
Curtius, Anny Dominiq. “À Fort-de-France Les Statues Ne Meurent Pas.” International Journal
Farmer, Ashley D. “In Search of the Black Women’s History Archive.” Modern American History
Forsdick, Charles. “Cette île n’et pas une île: Locating Gorée” In At the Limits of Memory:
Legacies of Slavery in the Francophone World, edited by Nicola Frith and Kate Hodgson,
Fuentes, Marisa J. “Introduction.” In Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the
———. ““Venus’: Abolition Discourse, Gendered Violence, and the Archive.” In Dispossessed
Hodgson, Kate. “Haiti and the Memorial Discourses of Slavery After 1804.” In At the Limits of
Memory: Legacies of Slavery in the Francophone World, edited by Nicola Frith and Kate
———. “Pays-Là Chaviré: Revolutionary Politics in Nineteenth-Century Haitian Creole Popular
https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-3481510.
Hourcade, Renaud. “Shaping Representations of the Past in a Former Slave Trade Port: Slavery
Remembrance Day in Nantes.” In At the Limits of Memory: Legacies of Slavery in the
Francophone World, edited by Nicola Frith and Kate Hodgson, 90–108. Liverpool:
Liverpool University Press, 2014.


**Archives:**

- Archdiocesan Archives
- Archives of the Dominican Sisters of Peace
- Carmel Archives (contact: tgregoire@mindspring.com)
- Center for African and African-American Studies
- Southern University at New Orleans
- Louisiana National Guard Museums
- Jackson Barracks Military Library
- Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve
- Louisiana Historical Center
- Lovola University Special Collections and Archives
- New Orleans Public Library
- Notarial Archives Division
- Nunez Community College Archives (contact: 504-680-2609)
- Southeastern Architectural Archives
- University of New Orleans
- Ursuline Convent Collection, Archives and Museum
Digital Archives & Projects

Black Digital Humanities Projects & Resources

Latin American, Caribbean, [and Latinx*] Digital Humanities Projects & Resources

History Blogs:

Age of Revolutions

Black Perspectives

Haitian History Blog

Junto Blog

Nursing Clio

Tan Listwa

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Archival Thinking I, Silences and Distortions


Fuentes, “Introduction”

Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts”

Week 2: Archival Thinking II, Memories of the Dead

Saunders, “Defending the Dead, Confronting the Archive: A Conversation with M. NourbeSe Philip”


Ashley Farmer, “In Search of the Black Women’s History Archive”

Week 3: Digital Archives of the French Atlantic

*La Gazette Royale*

*Marronnage.info*
Theatre in Saint-Domingue
An Island Luminous
Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

Week 4: Material Archives (Visit to Tulane University Special Collections)

*Class meets at the University Special Collections*, practicum on primary source research, paleography, searching special collections and archival holdings, and reading strategies.

Week 5: Public Writing and the Archive

Ashley Farmer, “Archiving While Black” ([https://www.aaihs.org/archiving-while-black/](https://www.aaihs.org/archiving-while-black/))


Week 6: Music & Performance Archives of the French Atlantic

Johnson, “French Set Girls and Transcolonial Performance”

Hodgson, “Pays-là chaviré: Revolutionary Politics in Nineteenth-Century Haitian Creole Popular Music”

Hill, “‘Adieu Madras, Adieu Foulard’: Musical Origins and the Doudou's Colonial Plaint”

**Dues: Blog Post Dissection**

Week 7: Embodied Performance Archives of the French Atlantic

Bonilla, “THE PAST IS MADE BY WALKING: Labor Activism and Historical Production in Postcolonial Guadeloupe”
Hourcade, “Shaping Representations of the Past in a Former Slave Trade Port: Slavery Remembrance Day (May 10) in Nantes”


Week 8: Architectural Archives I, Monuments

Forsdick, “Monuments, Memorials, and Museums”

Hodgson, “Haiti and Memorial Discourses of Slavery After 1804”


Suggested Reading: Anny Dominique Curtius, “À Fort-de-France les Statues ne meurent pas”

Due: Digital Project Review

Week 9: Architectural Archives II, (Post)Colonial Edifices

Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History “The Three Faces of Sans-Souci”

Forsdick, “Cette île n’et pas une île: Locating Gorée”

Need other

Week 10: Urban Space as Archives

Rashauna Johnson, “Neighborhood Spaces”

Joseph-Gabriel, “Mobility and the Enunciation of Freedom in Urban Saint-Domingue”

Week 11: Archiving Gender and Sexuality

Fuentes, “’Venus’: Abolition Discourse, Gendered Violence, and the Archive”

Johnson, “Death Rites as Birthrights in Atlantic New Orleans: Kinship and Race in the Case of Maria Teresa v. Perine Dauphine”

Morgan, “Partus sequitur ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery”

Due: Historical Blog Post
Week 12: Literature as Archive I

Marie Chauvet, *Dance on the Volcano*

Interview w/ Kaiama Glover

Week 13: Literature as Archive II

Marie Chauvet, *Dance on the Volcano*

Siobhan Marie Meï review *SX Salon* (http://smallaxe.net/sxsalon/reviews/women-translation-and-haitian-revolution)

Week 14: Archival Futures

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *M Archive: After the End of the World*

Week 15:

*Student Presentations of Final Research Paper*

**Due: Final Research Paper**
A Phenomenology of Gede: Thinking with the Dead in Haiti

Instructor: Nathan H. Dize (contact: Nathan.h.dize@vanderbilt.edu)
Time: TBA
Location: TBA
Office Hours: TBA

Description:

In the Haitian religious tradition of Vodou, Gede is the lwa, or spirit, concerned with the beginning of life and the passage into the afterlife, death and regeneration. Gede is often regarded as the spirit of the people in Haiti because he has a direct connection to every living being, everyone may call on Gede for protection. Gede’s appeal also resides in his freedom, his ability to transgress the borders that constrain the living and the dead. This course proposes a study of Haitian literature through the lens of Gede as authors transgress temporal, spatial, and linguistic boundaries to communicate with and through the dead. Taking a case-study approach to Haitian literature and history, you will engage in the study of real and mythical figures of the Haitian past to explore how writers and artists “perform” Gede’s work of communicating with and through the dead. This course aims to provide a longue durée approach to Haitian time (more than 500 years of history) and to expose you to the variety of genres Haitians have used to regenerate the presence of those who have passed.

There are three objectives for this course: to familiarize you with a broad spectrum of Haitian writing about and through the memories of the dead; to facilitate student exposure to Haitian modes of thinking and religious praxis; to develop your skills in identifying, interpreting, and constructing historical narratives that foreground the voices of the dead through written and presentational assignments: 1) Vodou archive assignment 2) close reading annotations 3) Flash Analyses and 4) a final paper interpreting Haitian visual culture OR poetry.

Assignments:

Vodou Archive Assignment: The goals of this assignment are to think through and process the rhetoric of Vodou culture through the visual and auditory, presentational modes that work in concert with, rather than against the grain of Haitian folk knowledge. You will have to find a painting, song, photograph, or other visual or audio source in the Digital Library of the Caribbean’s ‘Vodou Archive’ (http://ufdc.ufl.edu/vodou/all) that you will annotate and present as part of a visual curation to be done in Adobe Spark (https://spark.adobe.com/). Further details on Adobe Spark® and the assignment parameters to follow.

Close Reading Annotations: The goal of this assignment is to train you in the analysis of written discourse and rhetoric through the dissection of language. Over the semester you will have to select a two-paragraph segment of one of the week’s readings (for poetry this could be one to three poems) and perform a textual mark-up of the passage. You will have to underline, highlight, and write in the margins of your excerpt (by hand) to extract the elements of style and figures of speech employed in the texts. This assignment is meant to serve as the necessary training for writing your final papers, which will perform the same type of literary analysis in long-form. A list of figurative language will be provided at the beginning of the semester on the course webpage. You will turn in EIGHT sets of annotations over the semester.
Flash Analysis: Using **FOUR** of your “Close Reading Annotations” you will write a page-long (single-spaced) analysis of the literary work in question. These “Flash Analyses” will help you hone the close reading and written skills necessary to complete your end-of-term final research paper. Further details on the formatting of this assignment to be provided during the first week of class.

Final Paper: This assignment is meant to be the product of the accumulation of the skills that you have learned over the course of the semester. You will have to write a 8-10 page analysis of a selection of poems OR a Haitian painting that assesses the work’s rhetoric and expression of the themes discussed throughout the semester regarding life, death, and spiritual regeneration. For poetry, you may consult online archives and/or the university library. For painting and visual culture, I have provided links to archives and galleries that hold collections of Haitian art.

Schedule:

**Weeks 1 & 2: Anacaona**

Roumain, Jacques. “Contribution à l’étude de l’éthnobotanique précolombienne des Grandes Antilles”


**Weeks 3 & 4 François Makandal**


**Weeks 5 & 6: Vincent Ogé**


Due: Vodou Archive Assignment

**Weeks 7 & 8: Jean-Jacques Dessalines**

Beaubrun et Coriolan Ardouin on the murder of Dessalines (*Extraits*)


**Week 9: Massillon Coicou**


Coicou, Massillon. *Poésies nationales*. Goupy, 1892. *Extraits*

**Weeks 10 & 11: Jacques Stephen Alexis**


**Weeks 12 & 13: Jean Léopold Dominique**

Demme, Jonathan. *The Agronomist* (film)


**Weeks 14 & 15: Les Morts anonymes**


Peck, Raoul. *Assistance mortelle* (film)

 Due: Final Paper