



Thinking Visually about American History

HIS 446. American Cultural History

Spring 2020

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Hours: 1-2 W, and

by appointment

History Department Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/>

History Department Website: <https://his.uncg.edu/>

**Note that this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Any necessary changes in the syllabus or course schedule will prioritize effectiveness for student learning.*

Course Overview and Learning Outcomes

This course is cultural history because it explores ideas, social practices, lifestyles, and identities. Unlike other history courses you may have taken, this course is not organized according to a chronological framework. Instead, our focus will be on practicing some of the methodologies used by cultural historians to analyze non-narrative primary sources.

In particular we will investigate three different types of primary source texts from a material culture perspective. Our interpretive approach will go beyond analyzing words on the page to consider the text itself as physical and visual evidence. In addition to digital resources you will be using original primary sources from our University Archives. Our focus for the first case study will be probate inventories—lists of the property a person owned when they died. What can these inventories tell us about how people lived in eighteenth-century Virginia? In case study two we will explore the meaning and experience of scrapbooking for interpreting student identities in the early twentieth century. Finally, case study three focuses on the ways that cookbooks document community, domesticity, class, and identity. The interpretive approaches you practice this semester will improve your ability to analyze primary sources as historical evidence.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate the following knowledge, skills, and habits of mind:

- Evaluate methods of interpretation applied by scholars of assigned readings.
- Apply various historical methods to interpret non-narrative primary sources as historical evidence.
- Develop effective research questions for contextualizing primary sources and locate appropriate resources for addressing those questions.
- Use effective visual rhetoric to present interpretation of primary sources.
- Apply historical writing benchmarks effectively (see rubric posted to Canvas). These include:
 - Factual and interpretive accuracy
 - Persuasiveness of evidence
 - Sourcing of evidence
 - Corroboration of evidence
 - Contextualization of evidence

Assignments

Case Study 1. Probate Inventory Analysis	25%
Case Study 2. Scrapbook Analysis	35%
Case Study 3. Cookbook Project	40%

All of these projects will involve using assigned readings, and sometimes additional research, to analyze primary sources. Though none of these assignments will be traditional research papers, you will improve your ability to apply methods of historical analysis to interpret primary source evidence. **Discussion Board assignments** will offer important opportunities for feedback on work that will eventually be submitted for a grade. As work in progress, Discussion Board postings will be graded simply as complete or incomplete. Your postings must be complete and must fully address the question for credit. Late Discussion Board postings will not be accepted for credit, but you can earn credit for posting a discussion board assignment by the deadline even if you miss class. **Failure to submit Discussion Board postings by the deadline will result in 2 points subtracted from the appropriate unit assignment average for each skipped Discussion Board assignment.**

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance Policy

1. Consistent attendance— Attendance is mandatory. This is a seminar, not a traditional lecture course. We will be critically evaluating the content of the readings and practicing the application of analytical skills during each class period. You will not be able to make up for your absences by copying someone else's notes. For this reason, consistent attendance is essential to your learning in this course. I will take

attendance at the beginning of every class. You must attend at least one hour of the class period to be counted for full attendance for the class. If the University is closed for inclement weather you will not, of course, be counted absent. If it snows and the University is open, class will be held as scheduled and attendance counts. If I am unable to attend class due to unforeseen circumstances, I will distribute an email message and post an announcement to Canvas at least two hours (if possible) before class is scheduled to begin. Documentation for absences will not be collected except in cases where an extended absence may be necessary (for example, hospitalization). **There will be a 3% reduction of the student's final grade for each absence after the first 3.** Beyond even this penalty, a student who seriously neglects attendance and class preparation risks failing the course. If you are experiencing a personal crisis that requires you to miss more than 2 classes, please let me know *at that time* (not afterwards). Practice the kind of responsible communication and professional behavior you will be expected to demonstrate as a teacher.

2. Thorough preparation for class—readings must be completed before class and assignments must be turned in on time, including Discussion Board postings. Postings must be complete and must fully address the question for credit. Discussion Board assignments are typically due before class because they will form the basis for class discussion and peer review. For this reason, late Discussion Board assignments cannot be accepted for credit.
3. Regular contributions to class discussions—participation is not formally graded as a specific percentage of the final grade but the success of this course for your learning depends on active intellectual engagement with your peers. Peer review will be integral to development of your archive project.

Academic Integrity

UNCG considers academic dishonesty to be a serious offense. Dishonest behavior in any form, including cheating, plagiarism, deception of effort, and unauthorized assistance, may result in such sanctions as a failing grade on an assignment or failure in the course depending on the nature of the offense. Students must follow the guidelines of the University Policy on Academic Integrity:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0rFGGhJvbDHUExSZmFFaWFmb00/view>

Electronic Communication

Students are responsible for checking UNCG email on a regular basis to keep up with communications sent outside of class time. Students are encouraged to utilize email and other forms of digital communication when interacting with the instructor (lctolber@uncg.edu). When using email, students are to be professional and courteous. Students should also remember email is an asynchronous form of communication. Thus, while a prompt response may be desired, it may not always be possible (especially late at night and on weekends). Students should allow at least 24 hours (48 hours on weekends) for a response. That said, the instructor answers emails in the timeliest fashion possible.

Late Assignment Penalty

Meeting deadlines is an essential element of professional behavior. Please note that ***unless arrangements have been made well in advance of due dates***, graded assignments will be penalized by a **3% reduction in the final assignment grade for every day the assignment is late**. Graded assignments later than one week will not be

accepted for credit without an extremely impressive explanation. Using effective quantitative reasoning, your grade average can recover from an F on an individual assignment more successfully than it can recover from a "0". It is better to turn in an incomplete assignment on time than to turn in nothing at all. As explained in the participation policy above, late Discussion Board assignments will not receive credit.

Academic Accommodations

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. If you feel you will encounter any barriers to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS). The OARS staff can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can learn more about OARS by visiting their website at <https://ods.uncg.edu/> or by calling [336-334-5440](tel:336-334-5440) or visiting them in Suite 215, EUC.

Health and Wellness

Your health impacts your learning. Throughout your time in college, you may experience a range of health issues that can cause barriers to your learning. These might include physical ailments, illnesses, strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. Student Health Services and The Counseling Center can help with these or other issues you may be experiencing. You can learn about the free, confidential mental health services available on campus by calling 336-334-5874, visiting the website at <https://shs.uncg.edu/> or visiting the Anna M. Gove Student Health Center at 107 Gray Drive. Help is always available.

Required Texts/Readings/References

- Auslander, Leora. "Beyond Words," *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 110, No. 4 (October 2005): 1015-1045.
- Garvey, Ellen Gruber. *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.
<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195390346.001.0001>
- Herman, Bernard L. "The Bricoleur Revisited." In *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field*, pp. 37-63. Edited by Ann Smart Martin and J. Ritchie Garrison. Winterthur, Del.: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum; Knoxville, Tenn.: Distributed by University of Tennessee Press, 1997.
- Marling, Karal Ann. "Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book: The Aesthetics of Food in the 1950s," pp. 203-240. In *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Ott, Katherine, Susan Tucker, and Patricia P. Buckler, "An Introduction to the History of Scrapbooks, pp. 1-25." In *The Scrapbook in American Life*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. NY: Palgrave, St. Martin's Press, 2002.

Tipton-Martin, Toni. *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015. [selections]

Recommended:

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. NY: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. This book will serve as the style standard for the course. It is based on Turabian style.

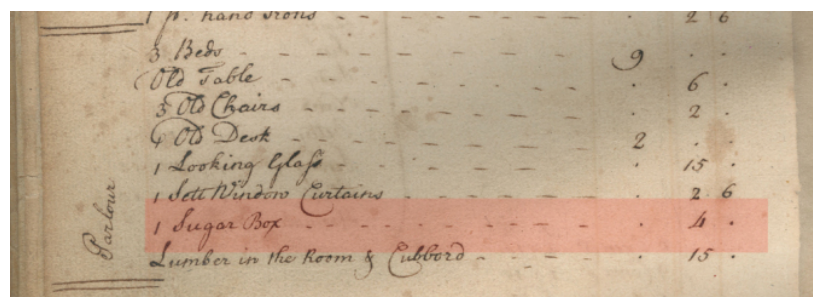
Course Schedule

January 13 Course Overview and Introductions

Discussion Board: Select an object from your life that reflects an aspect of your cultural identity. Describe the object in detail. What is its purpose or function? Explain why you chose this particular object as a meaningful reflection of your cultural identity. If it is a mass-produced object be sure to explain how it reflects something meaningful about you as an individual. Post your 1-page, single-spaced essay to the Discussion Board **by noon on January 14**. Be prepared to discuss your object in class on Wednesday. Optional: bring your object or a photograph of the object to class to share with us.

January 15 Objects and Meanings

January 20 MLK Holiday, No Class



1 Hand Irons	2 6
3 Beds	9
Old Table	6
3 Old Chairs	2
4 Old Desks	2
1 Looking Glass	15
1 Set Window Curtains	2 6
1 Sugar Box	4
Lumber in the Room & Cupboard	15

Case Study 1: Firedogs, Looking Glasses, and Sugar Boxes

What can probate inventories tell us about how people lived in eighteenth-century Virginia?

January 22 **Historians and objects as evidence**

Read: Auslander, Leora. "Beyond Words," *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 110, No. 4 (October 2005): 1015-1045.

January 27 **Introduction to Probate Inventories**

January 29 **Reading an article for methodology**

Re-Read: Auslander, Leora. "Beyond Words," *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 110, No. 4 (October 2005): 1015-1045.

February 3 **Using a probate inventory as historical evidence**

Read:

Herman, Bernard L. "The Bricoleur Revisited." In *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field*, pp. 37-63. Edited by Ann Smart Martin and J. Ritchie Garrison. Winterthur, Del.: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum; Knoxville, Tenn.: Distributed by University of Tennessee Press, 1997.

Discussion Board: Post research questions by **noon on Feb 4**. See instructions posted to Canvas.

February 5 **Probate Inventory Analysis Workshop: Asking good research questions**

Discussion Board: due by **noon on Feb 9**. See instructions posted to Canvas.

February 10 **Probate Inventory Analysis Workshop: Applying historical methodologies from assigned readings**

Discussion Board: due by **noon on Feb 11**. See instructions posted to Canvas.

February 12 **Probate Inventory Analysis Workshop: Research findings**

Case Study 1. Probate Inventory Analysis due by midnight on Feb. 14.



Case Study 2:

Writing with Scissors

How are scrapbooks “authored” and what can they tell us about student identities in the early twentieth century?

February 17 Introduction to the History of Scrapbooks

Read:

Ott, Katherine, Susan Tucker, and Patricia P. Buckler, “An Introduction to the History of Scrapbooks, pp. 1-25.” In *The Scrapbook in American Life*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

February 19 Meet your scrapbook (class meets in Jackson Library, Hodges Reading Room)

February 24 Scrapbooks as Objects

Read:

Garvey, Ellen Gruber. *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. Introduction, Chapter 1. Reuse, Recycle, Recirculate; Chapter 2 Mark Twain’s Scrapbook Innovations

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195390346.001.0001>

Discussion Board: due by noon on Feb 25. See instructions posted to Canvas.

February 26 Scrapbook analysis workshop I

March 2/4 Spring Break

March 9 Writing with Scissors--authorship

Read:

Garvey, Ellen Gruber. *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. Chapter 3 Civil War Scrapbooks, Chapter 4. Alternative Histories in African American Scrapbooks.

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195390346.001.0001>

March 11 Scrapbooks and Gender

Read:

Garvey, Ellen Gruber. *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. Chapter 5 Strategic Scrapbooks

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195390346.001.0001>

March 16 How do archives (re)shape scrapbooks?

Read:

Garvey, Ellen Gruber. *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. Chapter 6. Scrapbook as Archive, Scrapbooks in Archives, Chapter 7. The Afterlife of the Nineteenth-Century Scrapbook.

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195390346.001.0001>

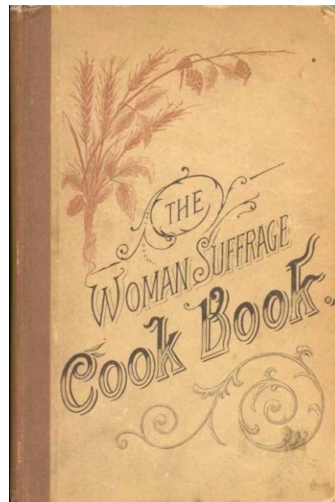
Discussion Board: due by noon on March 17. See instructions posted to Canvas.

March 18 Scrapbook analysis workshop II

Case Study 2. Scrapbook analysis due by midnight March 20.

Case Study 3: Eat My Words

How do cookbooks document community, domesticity, class, and identity?



March 23 **Meet your cookbook (class meets in Jackson Library, Hodges Reading Room)**

Read:

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. NY: Palgrave, St. Martin's Press, 2002. **Introduction**

March 25 **Cookbooks and Communities**

Read:

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. NY: Palgrave, St. Martin's Press, 2002. **Chapters 1 and 2**

March 30 **Cookbooks and Authorship**

Read:

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. NY: Palgrave, St. Martin's Press, 2002. **Chapters 3 and 4.**

Discussion Board: due by noon on March 31. See instructions posted to Canvas.

April 1 **Cookbook project workshop**

April 6 **Cookbooks and Gender, part 1**

Read:

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. NY: Palgrave, St. Martin's Press, 2002. **Chapters 5 and 6.**

April 8 **Cookbooks as Politics**

Read:

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. NY: Palgrave, St. Martin's Press, 2002. **Chapter 7**

Tipton-Martin, Toni. *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015. [**selections posted to Canvas**]

April 13 **Cookbooks and Gender, part 2**

Read:

Williams-Forsen, Psyche, "The Dance of Culinary Patriotism: Material Culture and the Performance of Race with Southern Food," pp. 312-332. In *The Larder: Food Studies Methods from the American South*. Edited by John T. Edge, Elizabeth Engelhardt, and Ted Ownby. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2013

April 15 **Cookbooks and Technology**

Read:

Marling, Karal Ann. "Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book: The Aesthetics of Food in the 1950s." posted to Canvas

Discussion Board: due by noon on April 19. See instructions posted to Canvas.

April 20 **Cookbook project workshop**

April 22 **Cookbook project workshop**

April 27 **Cookbook project workshop**

April 29 **Last Day of Classes. Summations and Evaluations. **Final Case Study 3 Project due****