

# MATERIAL HISTORIES OF THE HUMAN RECORD

<https://materialhistories.yale.edu>

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## GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN MATERIAL HISTORIES OF THE HUMAN RECORD

The archive, the book: Our ability to bear witness, hold history to account, and imagine a more just future is at the core of the humanities as a scholarly project. The certificate in Material Histories of the Human Record is designed to expose students to multiple forms of expertise within Yale's special collections libraries, equip emerging scholars with new analytical skills, and teach them the methodologies that scholars, librarians, archivists, conservators, and curators employ as they preserve, interrogate, and steward the human record. Drawing on Yale Libraries' extraordinary collections and staff expertise, and the ongoing faculty interest in the histories and politics of archives, the material text, and metadata, the graduate certificate in Material Histories of the Human Record fosters innovation at the interstices and intersections of disciplines.

"Material histories" signals an expansive interest in a wide variety of materials and media – not only manuscripts, written documents and paper-based records, but also papyrus fragments, tablets, photographs, film, textile, audio, three-dimensional works, and other formats. The purview of the certificate also necessarily includes an engagement with the opportunities and challenges of new digital methods for preservation, cataloging, and research. Areas of particular focus for the certificate may include: archival studies and theories of archives; global histories of the book; material formats and their histories; the non-neutrality of metadata; privacy and questions of evidence; social injustice in/and/as the historical record; preservation and conservation science; international law, the book trade, and provenance.

## *Eligibility*

The certificate is open to graduate students pursuing the Ph.D. or a professional school degree, with the approval of their director of graduate studies (DGS). Interested students should meet with one of the certificate's directors during their first two years of graduate study. Requirements for the certificate must be completed by the time that the student's dissertation (or equivalent program requirement) is filed.

## *Requirements for the Certificate in Material Histories of the Human Record*

Students who wish to receive the certificate must complete the following course work, research, and teaching requirements:

**Coursework** Each student must take MHHR 700 and MHHR 701, Theory and Praxis of Material Histories. In addition, each student is required to take two elective courses, which also count towards the student's doctoral coursework in their department. At least one of these courses would need to be substantively taught with collections; the other course may be a directed reading or focus on archives, book history, or metadata as a theoretical or historical object of study. Each student is expected to organize their elective courses around a concentration related to their departmental coursework and doctoral research. Students should consult the co-directors about which courses might be eligible as electives.

**Practicum** In addition to the two elective courses, in order to facilitate specialization, students are expected to propose a capstone project with one of Yale's cultural heritage institutions (to be approved by the student's DGS and the co-directors of the Certificate). This project must be completed before the student's terminal graduation date. It must be structured as a directed reading/independent study for course credit (MHHR 990). From the start of their pursuit of the certificate, students consult with the co-directors on what kinds of projects would work best for them. Possible projects include assisting with: the curation of an exhibition, reparative archival description, the Black Bibliography Project, provenance research, scientific conservation analysis. The practicum should culminate in either a final paper and/or a public presentation (which might take the form of a symposium, a finding aid, a descriptive bibliography, an edition, an exhibit, a digital humanities project, etc.). The co-directors maintain an ongoing list of possible opportunities and also help to facilitate new ones based on students' and librarians' interest. Students are then be matched with an appropriate adviser/mentor who help guide the project.

**Teaching** Students commit to doing significant teaching in the collections through one of the following pathways: (a) serving as a teaching fellow in a course with a substantial collections-based curriculum (such as courses associated with the Six Pretty Good Ideas first-year program); (b) assisting with a Beinecke intensive course three to four times a semester; or (c) supporting collections-based courses on a one-off basis four to six times over the course of a year. The co-directors also work on creating Graduate Professional Development opportunities for students within the Yale libraries which can be used as a substitute for the teaching requirement. Students should plan to consult early with the certificate co-directors and their DGS to plan for

this requirement. Students must register for MHHR 950 in the semester when they plan to complete their teaching requirement for the certificate.

## CERTIFICATE WORKSHOP

### **MHHR 700a and MHHR 701b, Theory and Praxis of Material Histories** Staff

This year-long workshop focuses on the concepts, debates, methodologies, theories, and real-world constraints of the material histories of the human record across a range of formats and media. Organized around six rubrics—Collecting, Describing, Displaying, Embodying, Disembodying, and Representing—we aim to cut across long-standing divides between collections, archives and libraries, on the hand, and scholarly/artistic spaces of the academic world; between preservation and consumption; between privacy and publicity; between the social sciences and the humanities. Through critical readings that engage with diverse geographic and temporal subjects; the close analysis and physical handling of rare books, maps, manuscripts, images, objects, and textiles; and an orientation to cultural heritage and library professional practices and procedures, students learn the critical interventions of the history of the book and the archival turn in the humanities; the key concepts and genealogies of archives and library special collections; and the generative collaborations currently underway between faculty and librarians to jointly address legacies of racism and white privilege, advance intellectual freedom and parity, and define the ethical stewardship of the material histories of the human record today. This workshop takes the form of a half-credit course in each semester that meets six times a term (every other week). This course must be taken before or after MHHR 701 to earn 1 full credit. We welcome all curious students to the first class, but permission of the instructors is subsequently required for enrollment/registration. ½ Course cr per term

### **MHHR 701b, Theory and Praxis of Material Histories** Ayesha Ramachandran and Melissa Grafe

This year-long workshop focuses on the concepts, debates, methodologies, theories, and real-world constraints of the material histories of the human record across a range of formats and media. Organized around six rubrics—Collecting, Describing, Displaying, Embodying, Disembodying, and Representing—we aim to cut across long-standing divides between collections, archives and libraries, on the hand, and scholarly/artistic spaces of the academic world; between preservation and consumption; between privacy and publicity; between the social sciences and the humanities. Through critical readings that engage with diverse geographic and temporal subjects; the close analysis and physical handling of rare books, maps, manuscripts, images, objects, and textiles; and an orientation to cultural heritage and library professional practices and procedures, students learn the critical interventions of the history of the book and the archival turn in the humanities; the key concepts and genealogies of archives and library special collections; and the generative collaborations currently underway between faculty and librarians to jointly address legacies of racism and white privilege, advance intellectual freedom and parity, and define the ethical stewardship of the material histories of the human record today. This workshop takes the form of a half-credit course in each semester that meets six times a term (every other week). This course must be taken before or after MHHR 700 to earn 1 full credit. We welcome all curious students to the first class, but permission of the instructors is subsequently required for enrollment/registration. ½ Course cr